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MOLDOVA

The Thematic Review of Education Policy of Moldova describes the current status of the education system and reform efforts underway. The country is introduced by general and demographic data; language, the geographic and historical context; the political, economic and the labour market situation; it also describes the structure and the legal framework. The whole education system is covered, from general education to vocational education, from higher education to lifelong learning, but focusing on early childhood and care, teachers and teacher training, curriculum and governance and administration. Equity in access, attainment and achievement are central issues, and special consideration is given to ethnic and minority questions and education for children with special needs. Attention is paid to decentralisation and financing of education; to quality, assessment and evaluation in education; to pre-service and in-service teacher training; working conditions and teacher salaries, the role of school inspectors; textbook provision and material and resources in general. The report describes issues and barriers at all levels of the education system and gives recommendations for policy makers, practitioners and donors.

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

General Data[41]

Independence:	27 August 1991. Admitted to the United Nations on 2 March 1992. Constitution adopted on 29 July 1994. Parliamentary democracy (unicameral, 101 deputies elected every 4 years).
Area:	33 700 km^2 incl. Transdnistria.[42] Moldova is the second-smallest country in the Former Soviet Union, after Armenia).
Population:	4 281 500 (start of 2000, estimated). Approx. 700 000 of these live in Transdnistria. Age structure: 0-14 years: 27%; 15-64 years: 64%; 65 years and over: 9%. The youngest age group (0-14) comprises more males than females; in all other groups, there are considerably more females than males. Urban/rural population: 46/54%.
Population density:	127 per km^2; highest density in FSU republics.
Demographic data:	Birth rate: 10.6 births per 1 000 population (1999). Infant mortality rate: 18.2 per 1 000 live births (1999). Death rate: 11.3 deaths per 1 000 population.

41 Sources for these data are CEPS, Ljubljana (Statistical Data for Background Purposes of OECD Review, Moldova, August 2001); Government of Moldova web sites; National Observatory of the Republic of Moldova, *National Report 2000*; the Department of Statistical and Social Analyses; and various Ministries. NOTE that it is not always explicitly clear whether data *in*clude or *ex*clude Transdnistria. Wherever possible, this report will include such information; but caution is advised as to the reliability of any data given here.

42 Eastern bank of the Dniestr river (capital: Tiraspol), plus the right-bank city of Tighina (Berdery). Transdnistria still has 20 000 Russian (14th Army) military personnel within its territory.

	Population growth rate: -0.2 (2000, est.). Total fertility rate: 1.4 children born per woman (down from 2.4 at the start of the 1990s). Life expectancy at birth: 64.2 for males; 71.5 for females (1999).
Migration:	During the Soviet period, there was an influx of labour from other regions of the USSR. From 1990, large numbers of highly qualified labour (approx. 28 000 per year, dropping to 3 000 per year by 1998) returned to Russia. More recently, temporary migration for employment is common, both legally and illegally. Estimates are (2000) that as many as 600 000 Moldovans are working in Romania, Israel, Greece, Italy, Portugal, USA, Germany and Hungary. In some parts of Moldova, about one-third of children are cared for by relatives or neighbours because their parents are working abroad.
Ethnic composition:	Moldovan 64.5%; Ukrainian 13.8%; Russian 13%; Gagauz 3.5%; Bulgarian 2%; Jewish 1.5%; Roma 0.5%; others (Belarus, Polish, German) 1.2%. (Census of 1989).
Languages:	Moldovan,[43] Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian.
Religions:	Eastern Orthodox 98.5%; Jewish 1.5%; small number of Baptists (<1 000).
Literacy [= age 15 and over can read & write]**:**	96% (99% males, 94% females).

[43] The notion that Romanian and Moldovan are two different languages (Moldovan of Slavic origin and Romanian of Latin origin) has recently gained ground, and "Moldovan" (rather than Romanian) is now the official language in the Republic. It uses the Latin script. "Moldovan" in Transdnistria uses (mostly) the Cyrillic script. The language factor has become a clear demarcation line among the inhabitants of Moldova and in the relations between the two banks of the Dniestr river, and affects schools as well. See section on Transdnistria in this report.

GDP per capita:	USD 2 033 (EUR 2 178.1) PPP[44] (1999). Average monthly wages in 1999 were MDL 303 (EUR 24); MDL 166 (EUR 13.1) in agriculture, MDL 193 (EUR 15.3) in education, MDL 440 (EUR 34.8) in state administration. Some estimates (UNDP, 2000) are that 66% of the population lives below the poverty line. Share of the private sector in GDP: 51.4% in 1999 Agriculture and agro-processing (notably viticulture) accounted for 23.3% of GDP in 1999; services for 50.5%; industry 16.2%.
Employment/ Unemployment:	Population of working age (16-65) 2 364 359, of whom 1 447 000 were employed in 2000. Officially listed unemployed: 187 231. *Registered* unemployed (Q1, 2000): 2%. According to *Labour Force Survey* (Q1, 2000): 10.5%. Age group 15-29: 40% of all unemployed. Long-term unemployment (> 1 year): 74% of all unemployed.
Levels of education governance:	Unclear as of October 2001. The Law on Administrative and Territorial Reform (1998) consolidated the 38 mid-level jurisdictions (mostly *raions*) into 11 *judets* including the autonomous region of Gagauzia and the Municipality of Chişinău. However, there is now (September 2001) a plan to revert to the earlier *raion* structure with 28 *raions;* some *judets* may remain as over-arching structures covering several of these smaller *raions*. There are thus 3 or 4 levels: central Ministry; *judet* Councils; and/or *raion* Councils; and local governments with their mayors (municipalities, cities, villages/communes).

Introduction and Context

The purpose of these OECD Thematic Reviews is a narrow one, restricted to a survey of education systems in SEE and their present status and needs. The

[44] Purchasing Power Parity. This is a calculation on a comparable scale at the international level, introduced by the UN Project of International Measurements, using "purchasing power" as the factor of comparison. Expressed in MDL (Moldovn lei), GDP per capita was MDL 4 105 (EUR 324.5) in 2000.

background literature on the Republic of Moldova and its political and territorial history is extensive, and therefore no detailed discussion is necessary here except as political, ethnic or language issues affect Moldova's education system. A brief overview of the Republic's context will therefore suffice; but see also sources listed in the References at the end of this report, in particular the two books by Charles King.

The Country

Given its geographical location at one of Europe's crossroads of empires and peoples, the territory of the present Republic of Moldova has traditionally been populated by a variety of ethnic groups. Although this cohabitation has not always been amicable, it has established a "habit" of multi-ethnicity in cultural and social terms that is still reflected in today's language and citizenship laws. For example, the Constitution (June 1991) is among the most inclusive in post-Soviet Europe: all persons living in Moldova on the date of the declaration of its sovereignty were automatically eligible for citizenship, regardless of ethnicity, language or other criteria.[45]

The Republic of Moldova declared its independence on 27 August 1991, and since then has experienced many of the same problems facing other newly independent republics in the region: economic decline, political instability, inter-ethnic and separatist antagonism, and an uncertain relationship with the Russian Federation as well as with its former Romanian motherland. "Poised precariously between Bucharest and Moscow", Moldova is struggling to construct a distinct national identity at the same time as it faces a crumbling economy and territorial separatism (Transdnistria and Gagauzia).[46]

History and Geography

"Moldova", as an independent political entity within its present borders, never existed before 1991. From the mid-14th to the early 15th century, an independent Principality of Moldova existed briefly between the Carpathian Mountains and the Black Sea, but it soon became a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire.[47] In 1812, the eastern half of present-day Moldova – the "Bessarabia"

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45 Charles King, *Post-Soviet Moldova: A Borderland in Transition.* 1997, page 52.

46 *Ibid.,* page 16. A more complete picture is given in Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia and the Politics of Culture,* 1999.

47 Portions of the medieval Principality of Moldova now lie in Romania and Ukraine as well as in the present Republic of Moldova, and some Moldovan nationalist factions want these lands to be united in a "Greater Moldova". Others,

region, between the Prut and Dniestr rivers – was annexed by the Russian Empire while the western half was incorporated into newly created Romania in 1859. After the First World War, in 1918, political leaders in Bessarabia voted for union with Romania, and it remained a province of the Romanian Kingdom between the two wars. The "Bessarabian Question" remained a source of constant tension between Moscow and Bucharest during the inter-war period.

In 1924, an autonomous Soviet republic was created on the Romania's eastern border. This "Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic" (MASSR) was established inside (then Soviet) Ukraine on October 12, 1924. This area, known to Romanians as "Transdnistria", had changed hands some twelve times during the Russian civil war, but by 1920 was Ukrainian and therefore by 1924 part of the Soviet Union. Ethnic Ukrainians formed nearly 49% of the republic's 1926 population, while 30% were Moldovan, 9% Russian, and 8% Jewish. Bessarabia remained in Romanian hands. Moscow claimed that Bessarabia remained an illegally occupied portion of Soviet Moldova; the banks of the Dniestr were heavily fortified shots fired across the river were frequent, and sorties into Bessarabia from Transdnistria were commonplace.

In 1940, Bessarabia was annexed by the Soviet Union, and united with a strip of land east of the Dniestr – "Transdnistria" – to form the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). Although Transdnistria had (and still has) a sizeable Moldovan/Romanian population, the Dniestr has long been regarded as the eastern border of Romanian "ethnic and cultural space", while Russian "space" begins across the river.

Transdnistria

The separatist "Transdnistrian Moldovan Republic" or simply Transdnistria, situated in the eastern region of Moldova, was declared on September 2, 1990 as the Dniestr Moldovan Republic (DMR). Clashes along the Dniestr river, between Moldovan police and Transdnistrian irregulars, escalated in the spring of 1992 with involvement of volunteer and Cossack

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however, see union with Romania into a "Greater Romania" as the most desirable and logical outcome. In the past few years, "Moldovanist" factions have argued that while Moldova and Romania are linked by a shared history, they are nevertheless two separate nations in two separate states, with two separate languages: Romanian and "Moldovan". The issue of separatist Russian-speaking Transdnistria and Gagauz/Russian speaking Gagauzia creates further internal tensions and contradictions in defining a Moldovan national, cultural and linguistic identity.

forces from Russia and the Ukraine, culminating in June 1992 in major fighting around Bender and intervention of the Russian 14th Army under Alexander Lebed. Moldovan forces were driven from Bender. At least 1 000 people we wounded or killed on the Moldovan side alone, and some 30 000 refugees fled westwards across the Dniestr. In July 1994 the new Moldovan Constitution promised special autonomous status for Transdnistria. However, a January 1996 joint Russian-Ukrainian-Moldovan statement recognises Transdnistria as a "constituent part" of Moldova, committing sides to co-existence within a "common state". *De facto,* however, Transdnistria maintains its separatist stance.

The violence and fighting of 1992 were quickly mythologised as "a war for the independence of the Transdnistrian fatherland". School books and history texts used in Transdnistrian schools, for example, came to treat the 1992 violence "with the language and symbolism of the Soviet Great Patriotic War, teaching Transdnistrian schoolchildren that independence had been sanctified with the blood of their heroic compatriots…[making] a solution that would allow Transdnistria to remain within Moldova profoundly difficult".[48] As of the end of 2001, there were reportedly still 20 000 Russian 14th Army personnel stationed in Transdnistria, in spite of a 1994 accord on the withdrawal of Russian troops.

The situation of Moldovan-language schools on the left Bank of the Dniestr River and the city of Bender

One of the most striking characteristics of the separatist regime was, and still remains, the violation of certain basic human rights on its territory, including the right to mother tongue education.

The proclamation of Romanian as the official language of the state, and the introduction of Latin script (replacing Cyrillic), were major developments in post-Soviet Moldova. However, they also became major sources of tension with Transdnistria, which did not recognise these decrees on its territory. The language issue (in particular the use of Latin script in Moldovan-language schools) has become one of the most acrimonious and repressive conflicts affecting schools, families and children.

At present, on the left Bank of the Dniestr and in the city Bender, there are 51 operational pre-university institutional establishments teaching in Moldovan

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[48] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia and the Politics of Culture,* page 197.

(using Cyrillic script), which account for about 12 000 students; 7 mixed schools – Russian/Moldovan (211 Moldovan students); 33 groups of vocational schools (676 students); and 29 groups at Tiraspol University (472 students).

These schools comply with the separatist curricula and are subordinated to separatist authorities. The curricula, textbooks and other didactic materials are old and do not meet modern standards of education.

Another seven educational institutions in Transdnistria are subordinated to the central Government (Ministry of Education) of Moldova and teach Moldovan in Latin script (which is, essentially, Romanian). The total number of children in these schools is about 5 378, Bendery – 2 014, Tiraspol – 780, Ribnita – 760, Dubosary – 650, Roghi – 150, Grigoriopol – 734, Corjevo – 290.

They are financed from the central budget under Government Decision N 750, as of October 10, 1994: "On direct financing from the Republican budget of Moldovan schools located on the left bank of Dniestr and city of Bendery with teaching in Latin script and meeting the repeated requests from parents, students, didactic staff".

These seven schools function in extremely difficult conditions due to policies designed to suppress the teaching of the mother tongue in Latin script. They are situated in premises which are totally unsuitable (even in war-damaged buildings), they are overcrowded (some teach in two and even three shifts due to lack of space – *e.g.*, Tiraspol school), they are poorly equipped (no specialised labs or equipment or sports facilities). Besides, cases of harassment have taken place (teachers found to violate separatist language laws are dismissed, forbidden to travel to central government controlled territories, etc.). For this reason, only a limited number of teachers of these schools have the courage to attend training courses, seminars or other activities organised by the Moldovan Ministry of Education on the right bank.

In spite of severe pressures these schools are following the curriculum approved by the central Government, using the textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education and financed under the General Education Project of the Government of Moldova and the World Bank.

At present these schools are deprived of any legal status, and operate unofficially, without a licence (only one received in 1999 official permission – a licence – to operate as a private school which has since expired). The major problem, however, is that they are not considered part of the "normal" educational system and receive no support from the local authorities. The Ministry of Education of Moldova has to bear all expenditures related to the

support of these schools (salaries for teachers, rent for the space, utilities, transportation, repair and maintenance costs, etc.). Under the current Draft Budget Law for 2002, it is envisaged to increase the allocations for Moldovan-language (Latin script) schools in Transdnistria by 30%.

A solution to the problems of schools teaching Moldovan in Latin script could be reached in the broader context of negotiations between the central Government and the Transdnistrian enclave. In the meantime, a working group led by a Deputy Minister of Education has been set up to co-operate with Tiraspol authorities in charge of education, with the view to finding ways of normalising the situation of Moldovan schools teaching in Latin script located on the left bank.

A number of meetings have already taken place, in the presence of UNHCR and OSCE representatives. In the framework of these meetings, a number of important issues were raised, such as the content of education, implementation of curriculum for different subjects, textbook supplies to these schools, opportunities of employment for school graduates, financing, educational standards, licensing and accreditation of these institutions as public schools, validation of graduation documents etc.

The working group co-operates closely with international institutions, including OSCE, UNHCR, and UNICEF and with the Moldova Social Investment Fund. Some of them, *e.g.* UNHCR, have given considerable financial assistance for left-bank schools and the city of Bendery. Between 1998 and 2001, UNHCR allocated about USD 155 000 (EUR 165 393) for school rehabilitation and supplies.

The Japanese Government recently approved a grant of USD 800 000 (EUR 853 670.6) for assistance to Moldovan schools located in the Transdnistria separatist region. The World Bank in partnership with the UNHCR (umbrella agency) and MSIF (implementing agency) will administer this grant.

Tension, however, remains high and recent reports indicate further repression by the separatist regime on the seven remaining schools teaching Moldovan in Latin script.

Gagauzia

In August 1990, the Gagauz (Orthodox Christians of Anatolian Turkish origin) settlements in the impoverished southern *raions* of Comrat, Ciadir-Lunga, Basarabesca, Vulcanesti and Taraclia declared their own “Republic of

Gagauzia". Apart from a few skirmishes, no serious fighting took place between Moldovan and Gagauz irregulars, and serious negotiations between Comrat and Chişinău resulted, first, in the provision of "special status" for Gagauzia in the 1994 Constitution, and then a more specific law on local autonomy (December 1994) setting Gagauzia up as a "national-territorial autonomous unit" as a component of the Republic of Moldova. This unit, known as *Gagauz Yeri*, has its own flag, a locally elected president, executive committee and legislative assembly. Three languages – Gagauz, Moldovan and Russian – have equal status.

Social disadvantage has long been the lot of southern Bessarabia, and the Gagauz have been one of the most disadvantaged ethnic groups. At the end of the nineteenth century, illiteracy rates stood at 88% for men and 98% for women. Under the Soviets, a Cyrillic Gagauz alphabet was developed only in 1957, and a few Gagauz-language schools were opened, but closed again in the early 1960s when the language of instruction in all schools became Russian and Gagauz disappeared from the school system altogether.

Teacher qualifications were also problematic. By 1990, the percentage of teachers with higher degrees was lower in Gagauz *raions* than in the rest of the MSSR Only 647 Gagauz were studying in higher education, and about a quarter of all teachers had only secondary school diplomas themselves. Lack of access to potable water led to severe health problems: in 1990, more than 50% of children in the Comrat *raion* had functional health disorders, in particular kidney, respiratory and digestive ailments. Access to medical care was, however, far below the republican average. A serious earthquake in May 1990 added to the problems of the region.

In the past few years, there has been a considerable revival of Gagauz language and culture. There is a Gagauz university in Comrat, and Gagauz-speaking teachers teach Gagauz (in Latin script) in schools. Local radio and television broadcasts have helped to revive folk traditions, and there is a museum of Gagauz history and folklore in Comrat. The "Gagauz question" has turned from one of territorial separatism to one of effective local government, albeit still with financial dependence on the central government in Chişinău.

Schools in Gagauz Yeri

The school system is governed by Republic of Moldova education laws and regulations, and subordinate to the MoE in Chişinău, through a Gagauz Education and Sports Department in Comrat. Boarding schools and VET schools are paid entirely from Chişinău, but Gagauzia raises its own local taxes

to support the 14 lyceu (from the Gagauz main budget) and the pre-schools and general secondary schools (from local budgets).

There are 32 000 students in all in the Gagauz school system, in about 136 institutions from pre-school through university (66 pre-schools; 3 primary schools 1-4; 11 gymnasia 5-8; 26 full secondary schools, 1 Moldovan-language and 25 Russian-language); 14 lyceu – most of them Russian language; 3 VET schools referred to as "training-production colleges", such as agricultural farms;[49] Comrat State University and (new) Comrat National University; 2 colleges; and a pedagogical college (in Comrat). There is also a private Turkish-Gagauz lyceum, which teaches in English, Gagauz and Turkish. Most teaching is in Russian, but there is a serious shortage of Moldovan language teachers. Moldovan curricula are used, but "adapted to Gagauz conditions". However, they are not satisfied with the number of hours available to teach Gagauz language and history.

Problems specific to Gagauz schools are:

- Old and poorly maintained buildings. The last school was built in 1988; some schools have never been completed, and none has been properly maintained.

- acute shortage of textbooks, especially Russian language books. Russia has offered to provide books, but the curricula are not the same. The rental scheme works well, but Gagauz and Bulgarian language textbooks are three to four times more expensive than Moldovan or Russian ones, and in some classes a single book is shared by several children. External testing (*e.g.*, grade 9) is in Russian.

- Social problems – poverty, unemployment, and inadequate health care. More than 30% of children cannot live at home because their parents have gone abroad to find jobs; relatives look after them where possible, but many children are without adequate care, and there has been a rise in street children and children at-risk. Some humanitarian help is available, *e.g.* for providing food in schools. There is also an increasing problem with non-attendance and drop-out.

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[49] These were common in Soviet times, but no longer exist in most of Moldova. There are plans to offer vocational training also in general secondary schools (9th graders) to ensure that students have job skills when leaving school.

- Relations with the MoE are good, but the administration wants to set its own education law and assert its autonomy more strongly.

Demography and Language

According to the latest census figures available (1989), ethnic Moldovans comprise 64.5% of the population. Ukrainian, Russian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, Jewish, Roma, Belarus, Polish, and German minorities are dispersed throughout the Republic, although the Gagauz live mostly in the autonomous Gagauz region known as *Gagauz Yeri* (capital: Comrat). Rural populations are mostly ethnic Moldovans, while the major cities (Chişinău, Bălți, Tiraspol and Bendery) have large ethnic Russian and Ukrainian populations. Outside the major cities, the most significant concentration of ethnic Russians is in Transdnistria, where they form 25% of the population but still rank third behind ethnic Moldovans and Ukrainians. Russian remains *de facto* Moldova's second official language.

Birth rates began to decline in the 1990s and are still falling. **Between 1999 and 2014, the population numbers for grades 1-12 are expected to fall by 40%** (from 816 800 in 1999 to 489 900 in 2014). Obviously, grades 1-4 will be the first to be affected; by 2004, there will be 25% fewer children in these grades than in 1999.

This will have a profound impact on the school system, especially in rural areas where smaller schools are already affected by a drop in enrolments,[50] and in schools serving a number of minority-language groups where class sizes may become too small to sustain the necessary teaching staff in more than one language. Conflicting demands of *access* for everyone versus *efficiency* in a resource-starved system will soon need to be resolved by policy makers, on the basis of reliable, national, up-to-date school-mapping information which does not exist at present.

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[50] One school visited by the team in Todiresti had to reduce from two grade-1 classes in 1999/2000 to one class in 2000/01, making one teacher redundant. Problems of drop-out and non-attendance due to increasing rural poverty (see elsewhere in this report) are acute.

Table 1. **Demographic trends: 1999-2014 (in '000)**

Age Group	1999	2004	2009	2014
1 to 6 year old (pre-school)	285.4	242.3	258.5	256.7
7 to 10 year old (G 1/ 4)	247.7	185.0	156.9	170.0
11 to 15 year old (G 5/ 9)	364.9	298.9	223.5	194.9
16 to 18 year old (G 10/ 12)	204.2	216.0	167.8	125.0
19 to 23 year old (higher education)	307.2	339.8	334.8	257.1

Source: Population Projections; CEPS Ljubljana; Institute for Public Policy, Chişinău.

Economics

Moldova's already weakened economy suffered another blow from the monetary crisis in Russia in August 1998; economic performance was poor in 1999, and has still not recovered, although the steep decline seen in 1998 has been halted. Real GDP fell by 4.4% in 1999 (compared with a 6.5% drop in 1998), industrial production by 9% (15% in 1998), and agriculture by 8% (11% in 1998). During 2000 the economy registered a modest growth of approximately 2%, its first since reforms began in 1997.[51]

[51] "Vocational Education and Training in NIS and Mongolia: National Report, The Republic of Moldova", National Observatory for the Republic of Moldova, 2000, page 5.

Table 2. **Main macro-economic indicators for the Republic of Moldova**

Population (1999) 4.2.8 million *incl. Transdnistria*				**Population growth rate (1994-2000) –03% per annum GDP per head at market exchange rates (2000): USD 350**		
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
-1.4	-5.9	1.6	-6.5		-4.4	
1.4	1.5	1.5	7.7		39.3	31.3
Average inflation rate	30.2	23.5	11.8	7.7		
Consumption/GDP (%)	82.9	94.3	97.4	100.9	87.8	95.8
Budget deficit/GDP (%)	-6.7	-7.6	-7.8	-3.3	-3.2	-4.1
Broad money change, % end of year	66	15.6	34	-9	42.7	39.8
External State debt, USD millions	825.7	1 040.9	1 216.7	1 360.1	1 344.7	1 330
External State debt/GDP (%)	57.2	62.5	63.0	80.5	116.0	103.7
Exchange rate average (MDL/USD)	4.49	4.59	4.63	5.38	10.52	12.40
* Up to 1998: registered unemployment; from 1998: according to ILO methodology.						

Source: Government of Moldova, National Bank of Moldova. In: UNDP Human Development Report 2000, page 73.

Poverty

With the average income standing at USD 35 (EUR 37.3) per month in September 2001, poverty affects a large, and growing, part of Moldova's population, and the effects of poverty on school attendance and duration of schooling in European and Central Asian transition countries are well documented.[52] The poor face three specific problems with regard to education: (1) the system as a whole does not work well, and while this affects all children, the children of the poor suffer most; (2) the cost of education to families has gone up, so that education – as a commodity – competes with other claims on the shrinking household budget; (3) the perceived benefits of education (in terms of higher earnings or better jobs) are still low, undermining long-term incentives for families to invest in education. Although a "taste" for education remains, there is an increasing risk that poor children drop out of education and inevitably fall into poverty themselves.

School and textbook fees, for example, are usually charged as a flat fee; this hits poor families more than more affluent ones because flat-rate charges

[52] Nancy Van Dycke, *Access to Education for the Poor in Europe and Central Asia: Preliminary Evidence and Policy Implications.* April 2001. Technical Discussion Paper. Washington: The World Bank, ECSHD.

absorb a higher percentage of their family income; moreover, poorer families tend to have more children (see section on Early Childhood in this review), so that they face higher overall costs. It is therefore no surprise that in Moldova absenteeism and drop-out rates among the poor have risen. In Gagauzia, the team was told "Sending a child to school is a catastrophe for a family…costs can be as high as USD 100 (EUR 106.7) per year in clothes, books and fees".

Moreover, the perceived benefits of education are low. Among the unemployed in Moldova, the poverty rate for those with no education or 1-4 years of primary education is only slightly higher (at 32%) than for those with a university education (27%). Those with secondary education make up two-thirds of all unemployed (64%).[53] The level of education thus seems to offer little insurance against unemployment and poverty. Also, having a job does not, *per se*, guarantee an escape from poverty: 45% of working age persons in Moldova are classified as poor, yet two out of three of them are employed.

Set against these unhappy statistics is that, compared to its Western CIS neighbours, Moldova has a high percentage of its population with general secondary or vocational secondary education (45% for general and 27% for vocational, for a total of 72%). For Russia these figures are 24%/12%, and for the Ukraine 31% /9%.[54]

The Education System

Age at which compulsory education starts:	6/7
Age at which compulsory education ends:	15/16
Years of compulsory schooling:	9
Structure of the education system:	• Nursery school (ages 3-6); one year pre-school preparation (ages 6-7) ISCED level 0 • Primary school (4 years, ages 7-10) ISCED 1

53 World Bank Poverty Assessment for Moldova, 1999.

54 World Bank Education Strategy Paper, 2000.

- Gymnasium (5 years, ages 10-15/16) ISCED 2
- Lyceum (3 or 4 years) or general secondary (3 years) ISCED 3A
- Secondary vocational school (ISCED 3C) or Polyvalent VET School levels I and II (ISCED 3C)
- School of trades (ISCED 4B) or Polyvalent VET School level III (ISCED 4B)
- University (4-6 years) ISCED 5A
- College (2-3 years) ISCED 5B
- Post-university (graduate studies, doctorate, post-doctorate) ISCED 6

Examination/transition points:

Grade 4 national tests in mother tongue language and mathematics; grade 9 examinations at the end of compulsory education [cohort size 2000: 59 920]; *lycea* entrance exams; grade 11 completion exams. Since 1994, there has also been a Baccalaureate exam at the end of grade 12 in lyceu. In addition to the formal examinations after grades 9 and 11/12, students take school-based "promotion exams" at the end of each secondary school grade where no graduation examination is given. A certificate of full secondary (grade 11) education or the Baccalaureate (grade 12) gives the student the right to apply for higher education. University faculties set their own entrance exams.

Post-compulsory (grade 9) destinations:

In 2000/01, *27 122 students (45%) did not continue*. 21 931 (36.6%) went to general secondary or *lyceum*. 1 854 (3.1%) went to vocational secondary (some after grade 8); 8 467 (14.1%) to Polyvalent vocational

	secondary; and 546 (0.9%) to 5-year Pedagogical Colleges. See Table 7 below.
Higher education:	The Higher Education (HE) sector has grown rapidly since 1995/96 (up by 15%), with most of the growth in part-time and correspondence students (up by 44%). In 2001, there were 49 legally operating university level HEIs (14 of them State universities, 35 private), and 61 tertiary education colleges (43 State and 18 private). Nearly 29% of the 19-22 age cohort is in HE – 22.5% in university and 6.5% in non-university studies. (212 per 10 000 inhabitants in universities, 70 per 10 000 in non-university colleges [1999/2000].)

Special features

Moldova shares with other transition countries a number of problems that particularly affect the social sector, including education. A combination of government cut-backs, poverty, conflict, political instability, and a legacy of rigid approaches to education mean that an increasing number of children may not receive the basic education they are entitled to. In 1999, UNICEF's MONEE Project calculated that one in seven children of compulsory school age does not attend regularly or does not attend at all.[55]

The main challenges for Moldova's school system, are:

- Lack of resources, and lack of a coherent strategy to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

- Falling birth-rates, enrolments and attendance. By 2009, there will be 36% fewer children in primary schools. Drop-outs are estimated at 9% of children in grades 5-9; and only 45% of students continue in school after grade 9 (i.e., after the age of 15/16).

[55] UNICEF ICDC, *After the Fall: The human impact of ten years of transition.* November 1999. Florence: The MONEE Project, page 6.

- Rising costs for families: "extra" hours in school, textbooks, clothing, shoes. Income, location and "connections" have become important factors in education access.

- Declining quality of education, in terms of school environment (lack of heating, poor building maintenance, lack of safe and clean sanitary facilities, lack of books, equipment and learning materials); in terms of content (too many subjects taught in too little time; remaining knowledge and memory based rather than performance and skills-based); and in terms of delivery (reduced number of instructional hours and days, many schools on shift systems, low- or unpaid teaching staff who need to find additional employment to survive). The World Bank found (2001) that the average 5 year old in Moldova now can expect nearly 3 years less education than in 1990/91, and nearly 4 years less than the average OECD 5 year old.[56] This means that Moldova is building less human capital for its future than other countries, reducing the nation's prospects for recovery (see Table 3 below).

- Political instability and continuing tensions, e.g. with Transdnistria and (to a lesser extent) with Gagauzia. Frequent changes in the top leadership in the Ministry of Education hinder long-term vision and continuity in education policy. Political difficulties (e.g., with separatist groups) take attention away from the interests of children and the quality of their learning.

- Disparities in provision, affecting rural, poor, disabled, and (some) ethnic minority populations such as Roma. Four-fifths of the children who dropped out of school before finishing their compulsory education in Moldova came from rural areas.[57]

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[56] The World Bank, *Moldova's Education Sector: A Financing Strategy to Leverage System-wide Improvement.* August 2001, page 59.

[57] *After the Fall, op.cit.* page 10.

Statistics[58]

Data on age-specific population numbers by ethnicity are not available, and thus enrolment rates by ethnicity cannot be calculated. However, data from the Centre for Statistics Moldova (CSM) show that 20% of students enrolled in grades 1-12 come from minority groups. This is shown in Table 4.

Data on schools by language of instruction (Table 5) show that in the 1998/99 school year 25% (390) of grade 1-12 schools conducted instruction in minority languages, with Russian language schools predominating.

Table 6 shows the number of students by language of instruction. The percentage of students receiving minority language instruction in grades 1-12 (day instruction) and secondary professional education, combined, is virtually identical to the percentage of minority students enrolled (see Table 4): 20%. Thus, it appears that if a minority student is enrolled, he/she seems to receive instruction in his/her language.

[58] It is difficult to be consistent in the way Moldovan statistics are presented, because figures sometimes include (and sometimes exclude) Transdnistria, and – as is so often the case – different sources give different answers to the same question. Nevertheless, the statistics included here will give a fairly accurate picture. The reader is also directed to the data available from the Centre for Educational Policy and Statistics (CEPS) at the University of Ljubljana. These were prepared by the Institute for Public policy, Chisinau, in 2001. See References.

Table 3. **Trends in gross enrolment rates and expected years of education (1990/91-1999/2000)**

Level of Education	**School Year**			
	1990/91	**1997/98**	**1998/99**	**1999/2000**
Pre-school (ages 1-5)	67.6	31.2	29.8	23.2
Pre-school (age 6)	141.9	97.4	91.1	85.7
Primary (grades 1-4)	109.0	98.6	99.9	101.8
Lower secondary (grades 5-9)	111.9	87.8	87.5	91.0
Upper secondary (grades 10-12)	37.1	29.3	31.7	28.8
Professional and Polyvalent	34.3	16.9	16.5	16.5
Colleges	21.6	10.8	9.7	8.3
Universities	23.6	21.7	23.8	25.2
Expected Years of Education				
Including pre-school	19.2	13.9	13.9	13.7
Excluding pre-school	15.8	12.3	12.8	12.5
OECD (excluding pre-school)			16.4	

Notes: The rates for 1990/91, but not for 1997/98, 1998/99, or 1999/2000, include the Transdnistria population and enrolments. Gross enrolment rates are calculated by dividing enrolments at a given level by the total population in the age group corresponding to that level. When enrolment rates are greater than 100, it is because those enrolled at a given level of education include children at ages outside the usual age range for that level.

Sources: World Bank, MoE, IPP, CEPS Ljubljana.

Table 4. **Distribution of grade 1-12 students by gender & ethnicity (1999/2000)**

Ethnic Group	Total	Boys	Girls
Total	**666 103**	**331 020**	**334 453**
Moldovans	533 456	265 751	267 705
Ukrainians	44 794	22 361	22 433
Russians	37 865	18 609	19 256
Gagauzians	32 522	16 094	16 428
Bulgarians	11 258	5 612	5 646
Jews	1 090	510	580
Roma (Gypsy)	1 798	1 002	796
Other nationalities	3 320	1 711	1 609

[1] Including secondary professional students.

Source: CSM and Claude Tibi *et al., op. cit.* 2001.

Table 5. **Number of grade 1-12 schools by language of instruction and school year**

Language of Instruction	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Moldovan	1 065	1 081	1 097	1 115
Russian	281	277	277	266
Moldovan and Russian	113	115	111	114
Ukrainian and Russian	7	8	3	3
Bulgarian and Russian	1	1	1	3
Hebrew	2	2	2	2
English	1	1	1	1
Turkish	-	-	1	1
Total Schools	**1 470**	**1 485**	**1 493**	**1 505**

Source: Statistical Yearbook. and Claude Tibi *et al, op. cit.*, 2001

Table 6. **Number of students by language of instruction, level of education, and school year (thousands)**

Level of Education	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Pre-school				
Moldovan language	122.6	110.7	104.4	94.7
Russian language	37.9	35.5	33.9	30.6
Bulgarian language	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4
Ukrainian language	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2
other languages	-	0.1	0.0	0.1
Grades 1-12 (excluding secondary professional)				
day-time teaching				
Moldovan language	477.5	485.0	492.0	495.1
Russian language	156.9	156.3	153.9	148.4
Ukrainian language	2.2	1.7	0.3	0.3
Hebrew language	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.6
other languages	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.6
evening teaching				
Moldovan language	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
Russian language	2.0	1.8	1.6	1.4
Secondary professional (day-time teaching)				
Moldovan language	27.0	25.8	24.5	25.4
Russian language	6.4	6.3	6.2	7.1
Moldovan and Russian language	0.1	0.1	-	-

Source: Statistical Yearbook and Claude Tibi *et al., op. cit.*, 2001.

Transition flows after compulsory education

After grade 9, students take a school-leaving examination as well as (for those who wish to continue in upper secondary) an entrance examination into the school they wish to enter.

In 1994/95, the grade 9 cohort was said to be 67 000.[59] At that time, about 34.4% of grade9 graduates went to general secondary (GSS) schools, 14.4% to the (at that time, new) lyceu, and a total of 36.2% went to various forms of vocational and technical schools (9.5% to "colleges" offering 4 to 5 year courses, 15% to 3 year technical/vocational schools, and 10.7% to 2 year vocational schools). This indicates that at the time, roughly 70% of students continued post-grade 9.

Table 7 shows more reliable figures for the last 2 years. Between 2000 and 2001, the size of the cohort rose by 15% to nearly 60 000, but the number of students continuing in general (GSS) education or in lyceu dropped from 30 810 in 2000 to 21 931 in 2001 (from 60% in 2000 to 36.5% in 2001), while enrolment in secondary professional and polyvalent schools remained constant (10 449 and 10 321). Polyvalent schools, however, were more than four times more popular than professional secondary schools.

In summary, in 1995 70% of grade 9 students continued in *some* kind of education; in 2000, 82% did; while in 2001 this had dropped sharply to 55% of the grade 9 cohort. This indicates that fewer young people are now motivated to remain in school, even though youth unemployment rates are high and it cannot be assumed that many of the youngsters (45%) leaving the system did so because they had found work. The benefits of staying in school are clearly not convincing to many young people and their families (see section on *Poverty*, above).

[59] Without Transdnistria. These figures are not reliable but were the only ones available at the time.

Table 7. **Transition flows after grade 9, 2000 and 2001**

School year	Transition post-grade 9 (cohort size)	GSS (10-11)	Lyceu (10-11-12)	Professional/Voc. secondary (some also take grade 8 students)	Polyvalent vocational secondary (2+2+1)	Pedagogical colleges (5 years post-grade 9)	Percentage of grade 9 cohort continuing in some type of education
1999/2000	51 145	14 753	16 057	10 449		560	82%
2000/2001	59 920	21 931		1 854	8 467	546	55%

Sources: CEPS Ljubljana, Statistical Data for Thematic Reviews, and review team calculations.

Table 8. **Competition on entrance exams to colleges and higher education institutions**

Applicants per 100 places	Year				
	1985	1990	1995	1997	1998
Colleges					
In all college institutions	212	289	240	175	156
industry	185	236	182	164	108
civil engineering (construction)	162	189	131	185	-
law	-	-	411	197	193
transport and communications	207	228	178	122	
agriculture	190	222	140	143	
economics	236	325	355	175	117
healthcare	223	363	346	190	117
education	230	340	274	225	256
arts and cinema	229	204	189	150	-
Higher education institutions					
In all HE institutions	194	227	174	154	134
industry	149	173	156	196	123
agriculture	173	185	150	157	126
law	-	-	228	169	160
economics	-	-	131	132	120
healthcare	194	217	223	210	152
physical education and sport	-	-	215	176	173
education	220	264	187	148	100
arts and cinema	201	200	198	170	179

Note that applicants for education courses in colleges substantially outnumber those who wish to study education in universities.
Source: Statistical Yearbook 1998.

Governance, Administration and Management

Introduction

In general, public perception of the quality of government in Moldova is not favourable. Different reasons are given, but the one most persistently mentioned is corruption, which, according to public surveys, ranks second – after poverty – as Moldova's greatest problem. International studies place Moldova among a group of countries with a high corruption index – in one 2000 study, for example, Moldova ranked 76th among countries studied, judged to be worse than the Ivory Coast and only slightly better than Ukraine and Venezuela. The causes of corruption are legal *(outdated or ineffective legislation)*; institutional *(lack of transparency in decision-making; unofficial connections among top officials*); economic *(low and often delayed wages for government employees*), political *(frequent power shifts, vested interests, hidden "agendas"),* social and moral *(erosion of ethical values among public officials*, *insufficient pressure form the media, public tolerance – even expectation – of corrupt behaviour).*

More surprising is that education and health are perceived as Moldova's most corrupt public sectors, more so than customs, the police force, etc. About 81.5% of households believe that corruption in the education system is likely to happen always, very often, or frequently.[60] Most schools, of course, have no choice but to ask parents to pay for a range of routine services, activities, and building maintenance. However, many parents are now expected to supplement teachers' salaries, to pay for "extra" lessons, additional books and materials. Many also expect to have to make so-called "gratitude" payments to build good relations with teachers or school directors. About 70% of parents believe that unless they make such payments, their child's grades will suffer. In addition, more than two-thirds (73%) of parents believe that they will need to make "unofficial payments" to secure a university place for their child. Often the "price" for passing a test is openly known; it can vary from USD 50 (EUR 53.3) to USD 500 (EUR 533.4). Considering that the average monthly wage in the education sector is now about USD 35 (EUR 37), it is clear why such bribes are hard to resist.[61]

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60 Centre for Strategic Studies and Reform (CISR), *Corruption and Quality of Governance*, 2001, page 50 et seq.

61 There was even, until very recently, a web site for students which displayed a "price list" for tests in some institutions.

To improve both the actual and perceived quality of education governance in Moldova, it will be necessary to update and strengthen the legal framework, and develop an active, explicit strategy to combat corruption; make decision-making more transparent and participatory; raise wages of public officials and teachers; strive for political stability and continuity of leadership; and ensure that neither the government nor the media condone or tolerate corrupt behaviour in public life. Clearly, these are near-impossible tasks in Moldova's present circumstances.

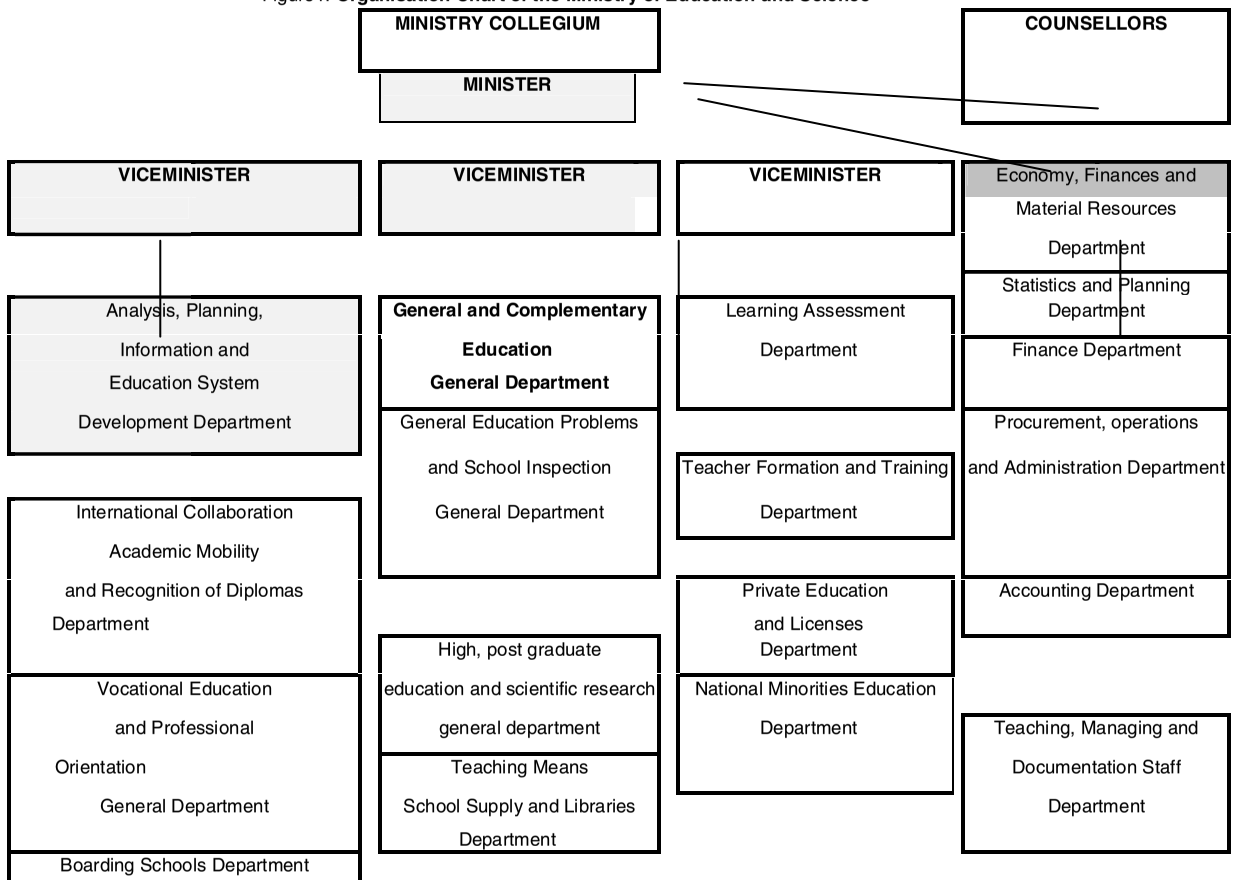
Governance and Administration of Education in Moldova

Public institutions (including universities and schools) are created by the Government, not by the Ministry of Education. There is a special Division for Social problems under the Government Chancellary which oversees education issues, and which authorises the opening (or closing) of public institutions at the request, with justification, of the Ministry. Private Higher Education institutions are established by the Chamber for Licensing.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in Chişinău is the State body responsible for public education in Moldova. The MoE has a number of Departments, Directorates, and Sections, each responsible for specific sectors or functions.

At the time of the review team's visit, the sub-Ministerial levels of governance and management were being restructured, and as of October 2001 the decisions about "territorial reform" had not been finalised. A draft organisation chart follows as Figure 1.

Figure1. **Organisation Chart of the Ministry of Education and Science**



The Law on Administrative and Territorial Reform (1998) consolidated the 38 mid-level jurisdictions (mostly *raions*) into 11 *judets* including the autonomous region of Gagauzia and the Municipality of Chişinău.

The new government's 2000/01 election campaign, however, argued that these *judet* administrations were too large and too far removed from local concerns. There is now (October 2001) a plan to revert to the earlier *raion* structure, with approximately 28 *raions;* some *judets* may remain as over-arching structures covering several of these smaller *raions*. At the time of this writing, there are thus 4 or 5 levels of educational governance: central Ministry; *judet* Councils; [and/or *raion* Councils]; local governments with their mayors (municipalities, cities, villages/communes); and schools.

Decentralisation

As part of its transition towards a market economy, the newly independent Republic of Moldova put in place the legislation needed to support the establishment of a decentralised fiscal system. Implementation has, however, been erratic, and problems remain.

The Constitution (July 29, 1994) assigned legal status and a considerable level of administrative autonomy to local governments. Likewise, the Law on the Budget System and Process (1996) formally made local governments into autonomous entities in the country's Consolidated Budgetary System. In 1997 and 1998 additional conventions and laws established the basic rules for the functioning of councils[62] as sub-national policy-making bodies. Mayor's offices and *judet* councils (through their financial divisions) had the power and autonomy to formulate, approve and execute their own budgets, with a resource basis that includes locally raised taxes, shared State taxes, and non-tax revenues, some flexibility in a transfer mechanism between budget lines as well as some authority to borrow money.

However, this legal framework was not supported by specific regulations – for example, there still are no clear statements on the functions of, and relations between, the *judets* and the municipalities. Nor was there any consistent implementation of the fiscal decentralisation policy, or capacity building at local level. During and after the 2000/01 election campaign, these weaknesses became a major political focus for public discontent. As a result, the new Government – instead of persevering towards fiscal decentralisation as

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62 "*Primarias*"/municipalities (local level of government) and *Judets* (county or intermediate level of government) with elected representatives.

envisaged in the framework laws – reversed the policy of fiscal decentralisation. The "Amendment Law", passed at the end of June 2001, shifted the General Financial Division from the locally elected *judet* councils to the centrally appointed Prefect's Office,[63] thereby depriving the councils of their legal fiscal autonomy.[64]

As a further move, a Parliamentary Commission is now reviewing the present territorial division of the country (10 *judets*, the municipality of Chişinău, and Gagauzia), and is likely to revert to the Soviet-period *raion* structure, albeit with fewer *raions* (about 28 instead of 38). It is expected that these *raions* will in essence be local branches of central government, rather than autonomous units as intended by the 1997/98 legislation. Interviews with government officials during the review team's visit confirmed a clear intention to reassert vertical control in the social sectors, and to re-centralise payment mechanisms.

The review team noted several other "straws in the wind" indicating a general tendency to revert to earlier, pre-1991 policies, values and structures. For example, the team noted an intention to re-introduce Russian as a compulsory subject from grade 2, and a reluctance to sustain the present policy of textbook provision by a variety of publishers on the basis of open competitive bidding. Mention was also made several times of a revival of "Olympiads" for high-ability pupils, and of a plan to establish a "National Programme for Gifted Students". Of course, the pursuit of excellence is essential in any education system, and "Olympiads" do foster national and school pride. But given Moldovan students' below-average results in recent international comparison studies,[65] it would be more important to focus on improving learning across the *whole* ability range, and to ensure that Moldova honours its commitment to Education for All.[66]

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63 A phrase introduced in the "Amendment Law" which greatly extends the executive powers of the Prefect's Office while eliminating financial authority of elected *judet* Councils.

64 Unpublished paper on Sub-National Governments Finance, The World Bank, July 2001.

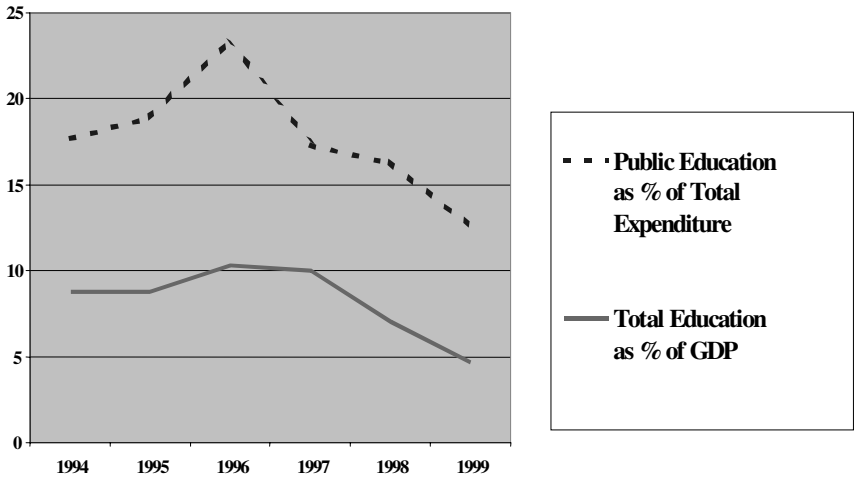
65 On the 1999 TIMSS (mathematics and science for 8th graders) study Moldovan students' scores in both subjects were statistically significantly *below* the average scores for their counterparts in all participating OECD countries AND in other participating transition countries, with science performance being worse than maths. See section on learning achievement in this review.

66 See UNDP, Republic of Moldova, National Human Development Report 2000.

Finance

Public financing for education as a percentage of GDP has declined steeply since 1996; by 1999, it was about 50% of its 1996 level.[67]

Figure 2. **From 1994-1999: Education expenditures declined sharply as share of GDP and total public expenditures**



Source: Tibi, Claude, Berryman, Sue E., and Peleah, Moldova's Education Sector: A Financing Strategy to Leverage System-wide Improvement." (August 2001.) The World Bank: Washington DC.

Attempts at reducing costs have achieved some savings, but these have not been part of a coherent strategy that would seek to preserve quality and equity. For example, the reduction of instructional days from 210 to 175 per year may save on heating costs, but seriously affects students' opportunity to learn. Similarly, arrears in the payment of salaries, overdue heating, utilities and maintenance bills, and chronic lack of investment in books, teaching materials and teacher training are taking a heavy toll on the quality of school life. An

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67 Claude Tibi, Sue E Berryman, and Michael Peleah, *Moldova's Education Sector: A Financing Strategy to Leverage System-wide Improvement.* The World Bank: Washington DC, August 2001, page 6.

important World Bank study[68] states that they "represent deferred expenses, and a *de facto* decision to borrow against the future at high rates of interest."

The same study concludes that in relation to OECD standards, Moldova *over*-spends at pre-school level, *under*-spends at basic and (general) secondary level, and *over*-spends on 'polyvalent' secondary schools (3-4 times higher than for general secondary), and college/university education.

Moreover, within these overall allocations, the distribution of resources by *type* of expenditure shows an unusual ranking of priorities. A high percentage goes to energy and water costs (21.6% in 1999); a very low share goes to textbooks, materials and staff training (0.6%); and a low share to teacher salaries (30.1%) especially when compared with the share that goes to *non*-teaching staff (25.1%).

Table 9. **Total resource allocation by level of education and type of institution (percent)**

Level of Education/Type of Institution	1997	1998	1999
Pre-school	20.2	18.4	14.5
Primary	1.3	1.1	1.2
Secondary general	40.3	38.8	37.7
Secondary boarding	2.5	2.3	3.4
Boarding handicapped	2.1	1.9	2.6
Polyvalent schools	6.3	5.9	5.9
Professional schools	0.2	1.1	1.3
Colleges	5.9	5.7	6.0
Universities	11.1	15.9	18.0
Extra-curricular institutions	2.9	3.3	3.2
Others	5.2	3.3	4.2
Central Administration	0.5	0.6	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Tibi *et al.,* pages 32 and 34.

[68] *Ibid.,* page 7.

Table 10. **Structure of total public expenditure by item of expenditure (percent)**

Expenditure Item	1997	1998	1999
Teacher salaries	23.9	26.9	30.1
Non-teaching staff salaries	24.5	25.1	25.1
Heating	23.7	13.4	12.4
Electricity	3.4	4.6	5.2
Water	4.3	6.0	4.0
Food	7.0	9.6	9.6
Scholarships	3.4	3.8	4.5
Textbooks, teaching materials & staff training	0.8	0.9	0.6
Repairs	3.0	4.0	4.1
Equipment	1.9	2.1	0.7
Others	4.0	3.7	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Tibi *et al.,* pages 32 and 34.

Arrears have been increasing significantly since 1997, for both state and local budgets and in absolute value as well as relative to total actual expenditure. In 1999, arrears were 70% of total education expenditures. Salaries accounted for nearly half of total arrears, by far the bigger share (151.4 million MDL) (EUR 12 million) for staff funded by *local* budgets, with a much lower (but still increasing) share at state level (19.2 million MDL) (EUR 1.5 million). In some localities, teachers can remain unpaid for as long as 6 or 7 months; according to the Teachers' Union of Moldova, which represents more than 98% of teachers, "some mayoralties have not paid salaries for 28 months"; as a consequence, thousands of teachers have been forced to leave the profession or have had to resort to asking parents to pay for so-called "additional hours".[69]

The system's internal efficiency, it must be said, is improving. Staff/student ratios (especially non-teaching staff/student ratios) have increased; savings are being achieved in heating and utilities; pre-schools are starting to be integrated into primary schools; and the number of pre-schools and secondary VET schools is shrinking, though not yet fast enough, considering the decline in enrolment.

The overall view, however, is of an educational system that is fiscally unsustainable, of deteriorating quality, and increasingly inequitable because access depends more and more on family income and urban/rural disparities. Clearly, continuing on the same basis is not an option. The World Bank has set

[69] Interview, 21 September 2001.

out a number of scenarios aimed at rationalising education financing, and is in discussion with the Ministries of Education and Finance about alternative strategies for improvement. All will require fundamental (and probably unpopular) changes. All will require a great deal of political courage and a steady nerve on the part of the national and local leadership; but there is no alternative.

Finance flows

The State (central) budget, as approved by Parliament, covers boarding schools for orphans and for children with disabilities; colleges and universities; various national institutions under MoE's jurisdiction; and those professional and tertiary institutions that are under other ministries (Justice, Health, Agriculture etc.). The State (through the Ministry of Finance) also makes transfers to *judets* to complement local taxes and to equalise public expenditure among jurisdictions. These transfers are based on national norms, and are earmarked (*e.g.*, for salaries).

Judet budgets are approved by *judet* Councils. *judet* budgets are responsible for *lyceu*, boarding secondary schools, vocational and arts schools within their jurisdiction.

*Primaria*s (municipalities) are responsible by law for pre-schools, primary and secondary schools (grades 1-12), gymnasia, sports and cultural activities.

Roughly 65% of expenditures in education, health, housing and public utilities are financed from local government budgets. Education absorbs about 40% of local budget resources; health care about 20%; social protection, housing, and public utilities between 5 and 6%.

Schools do not have control over their own budgets, except such extra resources as they are able to generate themselves, *e.g.* by renting out space or selling products or services.

Curriculum

Introduction

The transition process in Moldova is proving more difficult than first thought. Despite a series of clear-cut reform plans developed between 1994 and 1997 and some encouraging steps undertaken in that period, the economical reform and stabilisation strategies of the 1990s have not lived up to expectations.

Similarly, public policy over the last 10 years has placed great emphasis on education to energise the economy by producing a modern, skilled and educated workforce for Moldova – but these expectations, too, have been slow to materialise.

Educational policy documents in Moldova

In 1994/95, the Moldovan Parliament and Government developed an overall education reform policy, reflected in three basic documents:

- The Conception concerning the "Development of Education in the Republic of Moldova" (adopted by Parliament on 15 September 1994).
- The Education Law (adopted by the Parliament in July 1995).
- The National Programme for Education Development (1995-2000).[70]
- According to these, the core components of the education reform (as defined at that time) were:
- Reform of the education structure towards a system comprising a mandatory one-year pre-school, four-year primary school, and five-year gymnasium, plus an optional upper secondary level offering a general lycea track and a flexible 1.5-5 years vocational educational track with three completion levels or exit points.
- Reform of the education programme, *i.e.* curricula, teaching materials, textbooks and teaching methodology at all levels.
- Reform of teacher training and retraining.
- Introduction of new education standards and assessment of student learning.

[70] In the Romanian version of the document the year mentioned here is 2005. Meanwhile in May 1996 a draft revised version of this document was issued, incorporating the proposals made in the Consultants' earlier Reports on Curriculum Development and Textbooks and Teaching Materials Production (see para 3.4.2, Actions 3, 5, 7.3 and 7.5 of the draft revised National Programme).

As a consequence, a *Government of Moldova/World Bank* (GoM/WB) *Education Project* started in 1997 with a range of ambitious objectives, some of them – perhaps unexpectedly – attained, against all odds. The deep economic and fiscal crisis, however, has badly affected education in the last few years.

Description of the curriculum[71] *system: facts and figures*

Moldova's Ministry of Education (MoE, 2001) states[72] that the "National Curriculum Framework" – as an educational policy and strategy document – takes into account the country's general objectives in education. It "aims at assuring the development of human personality in accordance with the personal needs and interests of the students as well as the expectations of a democratic society".

Usually, however – and Moldova is not an exception – curriculum is just one factor in an overall set of conditions that determine quality education; the important role curriculum has to play must be taken in conjunction with other aspects of the educational system such as central, local and school governance; all should be viewed from an *integrative* perspective aimed at producing high-quality education in Moldova's classrooms.

Current Status of Curriculum Design and Implementation in Moldova[73]

According to the *Education Law* and current regulations in the framework of the Government of Moldova/World Bank (GoM/WB) Project, curriculum issues (policy and implementation procedures) are addressed and resolved at the level of MoE and its underlying structures. The MoE – through its Collegium or "Managing Council" – generally has a policy-making role, determining

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[71] "Curriculum" – as used in this chapter – includes the principles, underlying educational philosophy, goals, content and concrete functioning of the "instructional programme" in the classroom, as well as the written and other materials needed in support of instruction. It also includes the testing and evaluation regimen used for assessment and evaluation of the success in attaining curriculum objectives.

[72] Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei, *Curriculum National. Planurile de Invatamint pentru Invataminatul Primar, Gimnazial, Mediu Genral si Liceal. 2001-2002 ('National Curriculum. Framework Curricula for Primary, Lower and Upper-Secondary Education'),* Lycem, Chişinău, 2001. Page 6.

[73] Mostly qualitative assessment may be given in this chapter in the absence of sound quantitative data (see *Statistical data for background purposes of OECD review. Country: Moldova,* Centre For Educational Policy Studies, Ljubljiana, August, 2001).

educational philosophy as well as the main directions of education for the nation.

The MoE periodically issues a general educational policy document entitled *"Conception (Philosophy) of Education in the Republic of Moldova"*.[74] In its 2000 version, the "Conception" contains an important chapter on the National Curriculum. First, this chapter identifies the values and attitudes promoted by the national curriculum; second, it defines the main strands underlying this educational reality: the "cultures" of appropriate healthy life, private and family relations, gender, ecology, moral, aesthetic, national, and civic domains and their related educational indicators.

In terms of professional analysis, irrespective of the possible agreement or disagreement with the ideas it promotes, the review team considers that *this is one of the best educational policy documents in the SEE region* as it aims at assuring a complex and coherent vision of the whole system. In terms of a national curriculum, the tremendous role such a document can have in an education system that is in continuous change. What is less clear is to what extent the Communist Government, appointed after elections on the 25 February 2001 does or does not support this document or at least some of its basic prerequisites.

In 1997 the MoE established the *National Council for Curriculum and Evaluation (NCCE).* It is made up of a number of educational policy makers and professionals. The role of the NCCE – as planned in the framework of the GoM/World Bank Project – is to design curriculum policy and documents, to decide on implementation and to permanently check on the quality of the curriculum process as a whole. Initially the NCCE was seen as a purely *technical body*, but during the last 3-4 years its functions have shifted towards *educational policy-making*. According to the discussions and observation made during the OECD mission, this shift is perceived very positively by Moldovan educational stakeholders, as they felt the need of a *professional education policy-making body* while the MoE as a whole is mostly seen as a *managerial and monitoring body*.

The NCCE has a series of *"commissions"* or working groups by curriculum areas, domains, subjects etc. The members (5 to 7) are mostly teachers or subject specialists, sometimes university staff who gradually have become professional "curriculum developers". Co-operation and cross-

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[74] Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei, *Conceptia Educatiei in Republica Moldova ('Conception of Education in the Republic of Moldova'),* Lycem, Chişinău, 2000.

disciplinary co-ordination have thus far been good. The process has involved (to some extent) class teachers and principals throughout Moldova, which has helped to prevent frustration among school staff.

These commissions design the draft subject curricula and implementation guidelines, conduct national debates about them, carry out implementation plans, pilot implementation, and finalise and review curricula according to feedback from schools, teachers, students, parents etc. Draft curricula produced by the commissions are submitted for approval to the NCCE and the Collegium.

These institutional structures and mechanisms have functioned well up to 2001, contributing to the impressive results of the curriculum reform in Moldova. Indeed, according to all parties met during the OECD mission (representatives of the MoE, teachers, students, parents, other stakeholders), *the curriculum reform has been considered as the most successful sectoral reform in the framework of the educational changes in Moldova.* It also had a positive effect in reforming the evaluation and assessment, teacher training, and management of the education system.

The OECD mission is therefore concerned that the new Ministry leadership has changed the membership of the NCCE, reducing the members to 6 people only rather than expanding the membership to include community representatives, as intended under the project. A World Bank mission (October 2001) also raised this concern, noting for example that the NCCE membership no longer includes practising teachers. Assurances were given at that time that this would be rectified, and that the NCCE (which had met only sporadically since the change in Government) would resume its regular meetings.

The Curriculum Structure

A *National Curriculum for primary* was issued in 1996, adopted and implemented in 1997/98. It replaces the curriculum that had been in place for the previous 10 years. The primary curriculum reflects the philosophy of the *National Curriculum Framework* and its associated components. Indeed, the development of a new national curriculum had already begun during *the preparation* of the Moldova GoM/World Bank Education Project – and was to a large extent in place by the time the Project came on-stream.

The best examples are the core "regulatory documents" published in 1997 that ensured the frame of reference for all further evolutions in curriculum: (a) *Core Curriculum: Guidelines for Curriculum Developers; (b) Core Curriculum: Regulatory Documents.* Based on these, the following set of

curriculum documents have been prepared, issued and gradually implemented between 1997-2000:

- *National Curriculum Framework* (educational philosophy, list of subjects and time schedules for the whole education system) (1998-2001).

- *New Subject Curricula for Lower Secondary* (1999/2000), adopted and implemented under the GoM/World Bank Project.

- *Implementation Guidelines* for all subjects taught in lower secondary education (1999/2000).

- *New Subject Curricula for Upper Secondary* (1997-2000), developed and implemented with Moldova Open Society Foundation financing and co-ordination through Pro-Didactica (the most important OSF education spin-off in Moldova); 1997/98 – curricula approved; 1998/99: grade 10 implemented; 1999/2000: grade 11 implemented.

- Guidelines, curriculum support materials etc.

The new national curriculum has two main components: the *core curriculum*, compulsory for all students, and – for the first time in Moldova – a clearly defined *school-based curriculum*. A 70% compulsory core is complemented by a 30% locally (generally school) determined component. This change is meant to allow for students' individual abilities or interests, to cater for more able students or to accommodate to local needs or interests.

At present, 'curriculum' is generally perceived not as a simple 'document' that regulates the system but as the real teaching and learning process that happens in or outside the school. As such, it is completely different from the previous "programmes of study" that encouraged rote learning and content-based education. The new national curriculum is open and flexible, and promotes student-centred approaches, active learning and higher order learning skills, critical thinking, and questioning attitude of students.

In terms of educational policy analysis, the Moldovan curriculum is one of the best realisations of the reform processes in the SEE region. The formal institutional structures and mechanisms that have been created in order to develop and review curriculum, as well as the quality of the "written curriculum" documents themselves, the Moldovan curriculum meets all European standards in this specific domain. However, some of the subject curricula are still considered overcrowded, and some revisions concerning the

workload they impose on students should be carefully examined. The list of subjects can also be a matter for further discussion. Are *all* subjects of the curriculum really *necessary* for all students, especially in light of the reduced instructional time from 210 to 175 days per school year?

Implementation

In principle, the *judet (department)* inspectorates and schools are supposed to implement the national curriculum and the subject curricula. Even if there is a clear trend – extremely well sustained by central and local authorities – to bring and implement a coherent curriculum system for the country as a whole, this process has so far proved very slow and difficult. The MoE has a special directorate that works on managing and monitoring the implementation process. Interesting studies have been carried out in this respect. Indeed, the monitoring process carried out by the MoE has involved all *judets* of the country, even though it is still unclear to what extent the current Ministry is using the information collected.

Municipal and *judet* directorates and inspectorates have an important role in curriculum implementation. They have developed special monitoring instruments that are not only reliable but also very well received by teachers. Compared to other countries visited in the SEE region, Moldovan inspectors and local educational authorities seem to be not only the most supportive and reform-oriented but also the most competent in curriculum – related issues. Many of them are real promoters of the new curriculum. This is probably one of the explanations of a generally positive perception of the inspectors among teachers; an aspect difficult to find in other countries visited by OECD review teams. An estimation of the current stage of curriculum implementation is presented in the following table:

Table 11. **Implementation of national curriculum**

Implementation Issues	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary
Adoption of the ideas of the new curriculum	Grades 1-4	Grades 5-9	Grades 10-11/12
Coverage/dissemination of the new curriculum through new textbooks	Grades 1-4	Grades 5-6	Grades 10-11
Teachers trained in the new curriculum	100%	Approx. 70%	Approx. 20% (no reliable data)
Availability and use of new instructional materials	55%	Grades 5-6: 90% Grades 7-9: no data	Grades 10-11: no data

Source: OECD review team, 2001.

At the same time, there are serious problems and issues concerning implementation and functioning of the curriculum process (see the section on issues and recommendations). Some of them have been generated by the so-called "internal factors" (*i.e.* aspects due to the normal difficulties of any curriculum change process), but others can be explained by the key dilemma facing the current Government: whether or not to continue the reform process which is based on European practice? And if not, how to manage the shift, and what kind of philosophy and "reform content and values" should be put forward in order to replace the current ones?

Textbooks

Textbooks for all primary grades and all lower secondary education are being published in both Romanian and Russian, under the GoM/World Bank loan. As of November 2001, a total of 123 textbooks and teachers' guides have been published in 59 subjects for grades 2-9, with a further 37 titles under contract and 114 titles out to bid, covering grades 1-9 – a total of more than 5 million books. Books for Ukrainian, Gagauzian and Bulgarian-language students are also included. This is a remarkable achievement, especially since a "revolving" system has been devised to ensure that this initial investment is recovered through rental fees which in turn are used to replace the books in due course.

This system involves a competition among different publishing houses (state-owned and private); a single textbook is selected for a certain grade and subject. Textbooks are then produced and allocated to schools according to the number of students, and paid for by a textbook rental scheme whereby the books belong to the school but are "rented" to students annually at a percentage of the total cost of the book. The funds generated through this rental scheme accumulate in a revolving Textbook Rental Fund which will pay for replacement of the textbook at the end of its 3-5 year life-span. This system reduces the annual financial burden on parents while ensuring that money is available for replacements in due course. The scheme is considered successful, in that a high proportion (approximately 89%) of rental fees are in fact collected from parents, and most teachers and parents support the scheme because it offers a low-cost alternative to having to buy books at full price. The scheme also allows for provision of free textbooks to students from poor families, although this latter provision (to be administered locally) is not yet functioning satisfactorily since local authorities do not have the necessary funds.

Currently, the GoM/World Bank Project Management Unit (PMU) organises the competition; a Textbook Approval Committee decides on the winners, according to the quality of the manuscripts and the financial conditions

put forward by the publishing houses. There is a certain frustration among publishing houses who believe that sometimes factors *other* than quality and price decide on the winners. A certain worry has also been expressed about some new regulations issued by the present political leadership, which indicate a tendency to return to the previous monopoly of state-run publishing houses and thereby re-assert state control over textbook provision.

The textbooks for primary grades 1 and 2 were published before the start of the Project based on the new curriculum which had been elaborated for these grades. (In fact, the curricula reform began in Moldova in 1995). The rest of the textbooks remained based on the old curriculum. Beginning with September 1988 the first new textbooks for grade 3 were published under the project, and in 1999 the rest of the textbooks for grade 3 and new textbooks for grade 4 were published. In 2000 and 2001 new textbooks for grades 5 and 6 were published. By September 1, 2002 new textbooks for grades 1, 2 and 7 will be published and in 2003 for grades 8 and 9. All of these textbooks are included in the textbook rental scheme. Starting with 2002 two alternative textbooks have been approved for grades 1, 2 and 7. Despite many difficulties, Moldova is quite advanced in the aspect of curricular reform.

All schools will receive a free copy of each alternative textbook; the books themselves will not be included in the rental scheme. As for the upper secondary textbooks, they are also selected competitively. Students buy those books, so the market can be considered "free". New books for grades 10 and 11 were issued in September 2001.

Textbooks for minorities are published in a variety of languages (Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Gagauzian). In Moldova's precarious financial situation, it seems wasteful that some of these (relatively expensive) books are currently published in greater numbers than necessary, and warehoused for years instead of being distributed to students. One possible reason is that these books tend to be three to four times more expensive than majority-language ones, while at the same time the minority students for whom they are intended are among those least able to pay the rental fees.

Table 12. **Selected titles printed, left in warehouse, and value of unused books**

Grade	Subject	No. printed	Unit cost (MDL)	No. in storage[75]	Value of (stored) bks(MDL)
4	Ukrainian language	7 000	31.09	5 944	184 799
4	Gagauzian language	5 000	37.15	1 496	55 576
4	Bulgarian language	1 500	138.49	441	61 075
4	Romanian language	81 000	13.37	18 585	248 481
6	Ukrainian language	3 000	136.00	2 137	290 632
6	Gagauzian language	3 600	128.00	725	92 800
6	Bulgarian language	1 500	248.00	612	151 776
6	Romanian language	68 750	26.00	13 180	342 680

Source: MoE, "Textbooks Stored at Mold-Didactica", November 2001.

Table 13. **Cost of a full set of textbooks by grade and language**

Grade	Current rental fees by language (in MDL)					Harmonised rental fee (in MDL))
	Romanian	**Russian**	**Ukrainian**	**Gagauzian**	**Bulgarian**	**All Languages**
Grade 3	13.2	13.3	28.7	31.7	74.5	14.8
Grade 4	25.6	26.3	41.7	44.7	94.7	27.6
Grade 5	34.7	26.8	57.5	60.6	107.7	35.4

S*ource:* MoE rental scheme programme; World Bank calculations, 2001

Another possible reason is that parents do not want their children to be educated in a minority language and are therefore unwilling to rent the textbooks.[76]

[75] As of November 2001.

[76] Most ethnic Bulgarian students study in Russian, even in Gagauzia. A small Bulgarian pedagogical college and school were set up in Taraclia, the only town with a Bulgarian majority, and Taraclia has resisted absorption into the neighbouring Cahul *judet.* However, the overall demand for Bulgarian-language books is not strong.

Better local distribution of free textbooks to students from poor families would help; so would bringing the print-runs of minority-language books in line with the number of minority language students in the system.[77]

Several important inferences can be drawn. First, there is no real shortage in terms of *numbers* of textbooks printed. Second, the unit prices of textbooks vary enormously – in grade 3, for example, a mathematics book costs less than 2 MDL (EUR 0.2) while a Bulgarian language book costs 126 MDL (EUR 10). Third, many books remain unused in warehouse storage – and not only minority-language books, but mainstream textbooks as well. Many thousands of books for Romanian and Russian language, mathematics, biology and history remain un-distributed, representing a value of more than MDL 10 million (EUR 790 232).

Teachers, students and parents believe that in the future debate should shift from current disputes on the mechanism to issues like the quality and design of the textbooks, their authorship (still considered too 'academic' at the moment), and to the shortage of supplementary instructional materials.

Teaching and Quality Assurance

The lack of some textbooks and the shortage of others have a critical effect on teaching and learning. They affect the depth of understanding and the development of higher order skills, as well as the preparation of students for their future social insertion, in spite of the willingness of most of the teachers to do their best.

As mentioned before, monitoring – and sometimes supervision – of quality in 'delivering the curriculum' falls under the responsibility of central and local educational authorities. School principals and local specialists in the methodology of teaching ensure the supervision of quality in classrooms. However, quality control is deeply affected by serious financial constraints.

In the Moldovan system, there are a number of "pilot schools"; some of them created by the MoE and some others being mostly the result of work of a number of local or international NGOs. For example, the "Step by Step" curriculum or new methods promoted by Pro-Didactica in Cupertino with MoE – which encourage "interactive learning" and more parental involvement – are used in many schools. Teacher training for supporting the implementation of the

[77] For example, there are 16 000 Bulgarian-language textbooks in stock just for grades 3-6, although there are only 11 000 students registered as Bulgarian-language minorities in the entire grade 1-12 school system.

new curriculum has also started some years ago. As a result, in more and more classes the didactic approach in the classroom is student-centred and challenging; most schools now try to engage students as active participants in the learning process. But because teachers have little or no exposure to foreign experiences – except those offered in the framework of the GoM/World Bank Project – high-quality school-based in-service training should be encouraged, to sustain the current (unexpectedly positive) motivation of teachers and to develop an authentic 'questioning and reflective attitude' among them.

Learner Assessment and Examinations

Introduction

The Education Law and other policy documents make it clear that assessment should not be confined to "testing" of learner achievement alone, but should cover a whole range of evaluative activities designed to monitor the overall quality of education in Moldova. However, the mechanisms needed for efficient monitoring of educational quality are not yet in place, although some elements (quality assurance in higher education, national assessments in primary schools, examinations in secondary schools) do now exist.

During the preparation phase (1994-96) of the GoM/World Bank Education Reform Project, it was decided that the strong features of the Moldovan tradition – specifically the tight, immediate relationship between teaching and learning through school-based (often oral) assessment – should be retained and built upon, rather than replaced by a strongly external system. At the same time, the Ministry agreed it had a responsibility to obtain reliable information about overall educational quality in relation to new national standards and curricula, and therefore needed to have ways to collect such information. A mixture of external and internal assessment was therefore proposed, and incorporated into the Project.

Until 1997, a welter of "control", promotion, and graduation tests were prescribed by an annual Ministerial Order. This was replaced (1997) with a simpler system requiring only end-of-cycle examinations at the end of grades 4, 9 and 11/12. Nevertheless, the format of these examinations, and the way in which they were designed and administered, had many serious flaws which prevented this simplified system from providing the kind of reliable information required, both for individual pupils and for the system as a whole. The key issues were:[78]

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[78] J Crighton, World Bank/Moldova General Education Project, Consultant Report

- Students were over-tested yet under-"assessed", in terms of formative or diagnostic information and the acquisition of higher level thinking skills;

- Examinations and classroom tests were heavily content- and knowledge-based;

- The Ministry-set written examinations were of low technical quality: they lacked validity (in particular face validity), reliability, and comparability in terms of difficulty levels and over time;

- There was a severe lack of expertise and examples of good practice;

- There was a vital need to synchronise the introduction of new-style assessment types with the introduction of new curricula and textbooks;

- There was no identifiable "cadre" of trained measurement specialists with adequate time and resources to develop such new style assessment types, and no clear lines of accountability for examination quality within the MoE.

The present system of examinations and assessment in Moldova.

Primary education (grades 1-4)

The assessment of student learning is entirely school- and classroom-based. Teachers assess their own students using a variety of methods, including oral questioning, short quizzes or end-of-chapter tests, work done in class, or homework. Marks are entered into each student's individual "diary" or notebook. Three times per year, an overall mark for each subject is given; these are aggregated into a final mark at the end of the school year. Some schools send end-of-year reports to parents, but often each student simply brings her/his "diary" home and parents are asked to sign it, to show that they have seen the child's marks. Normally, students in primary are promoted with their classmates, unless they are falling seriously behind in which case they either receive special help, are retained for a year in the same grade, or are assessed for possible placement in a special education programme.[79]

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on Assessment and Examinations. Cambridge: May 1996, page 6.

[79] A recent Ministerial decision (May 2001) specified that children are not to be

Grade 4 tests

The first semi-external exam comes at the end of grade 4, where children sit "control" tests in mother tongue language and in mathematics. These tests are based on the new national curriculum, and are set by subject specialists in the Department for Evaluation and Examinations (DEE). The question papers are pre-tested, and the final version(s) printed and distributed to the schools in sealed envelopes. On the day of the exam, every child receives his/her own copy of the question paper, as was intended in the Project objectives.

Teachers mark the tests according to instructions given by the Department for Evaluation and Examinations (DEE), and results are collected and announced to students very quickly (often within a week). The DEE collates and analyses all received results for the grade 4 examination, and prepares a summary report which is presented verbally to a meeting of the MoE Collegium. A written version of this report is also prepared, and sent back to the schools via the inspectorates for feedback to teachers.

Formal examinations: Grades 9 and 11/12

Within the existing system of "complete" (11-year) education, formal examinations occur at two points: at the end of compulsory education (end of grade 9), and at the end of grade 11 to mark the end of complete secondary education. Since 1994, there is also a Baccalaureate examination at the end of grade 12 in the new lyceum. The primary function of all these exams is certification, not selection. According to the Education Law, the final responsibility for examinations in pre-university education lies with the MoE. The present legislation on examinations is not expected to change in the near future.

Approximately 65 000 students take the examination at the end of compulsory education (grade 9). About 90% of them pass. In principle, the transition from grade 9 to full (11-year) secondary education is open to every student, but many secondary schools have their own entrance procedure – for example, an entrance exam, a competition, or an admission interview.

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held back even if they have failing marks. This decision was based on a finding that students who have to repeat a grade are often de-motivated and drop out of school altogether. The review team has, however, some concerns that children may simply be passed from grade to grade falling ever more behind. No systematic remedial help is available to students who are struggling, so that problems are just deferred from year to year, rather than resolved as soon as they arise.

A certificate of full secondary education (grade 11) gives the right to apply for higher education, but not automatic access because university faculties set their own entrance exams. In 2001, about 36.5% of the grade 9 cohort continued into 11-year general secondary or 12-year lyceum, and 16.7% into some form of vocational or technical education (see Table 7 above). The Baccalaureate after grade 12 of the lycea had 11 700 candidates in 2001; 98% of them passed. In 2001, of the 3 921 students who entered higher education on the state order (financed from the State budget), 60% came from lyceums, 30% from general secondary schools, and 10% from colleges. Students not paid for by the State have contracts with various state institutions, or they have private contracts (for example, with employers), or they pay for their studies themselves.

Until recently, one of the problems with the formal examinations at grade 9 and grade 11/12 was the low social value attached to them. This was due to the uncertain and uneven quality and level of the examinations. In addition, the high pass level obscured more specific information about the achievement of individual students. With the rapidly improving professional capacity of the DEE, the quality and therefore the value of the exams is increasing, and it is hoped that in particular the Baccalaureate (at the end of grade 12 in lyceum) will become a socially respected qualification that is valued by employers and universities as well as by students and parents.

But for now, the most socially important, "high stakes" examinations are the *entrance (receiving) examinations,* both for grade 10 (especially for lycea entrance) and for higher education. These entrance examinations still are *completely non-standard* in that every institution sets its own, creating obvious problems of quality control, access and equity as well as presenting a "double hurdle" for students.

Moreover, university entrance exams and procedures (such as special "preparation" classes by the same professors who set the exams) are notoriously subject to bribery and corruption (see section on Quality of Governance in this review). There was even a web site for students which displayed "price lists" for tests in a number of institutions.

The only way forward seems to be the development of a credible, external, independent examination service that is perceived to be fair and "clean" not only by the participating schools and universities but by the students and their parents. Unfortunately, the present DEE is too small and under-resourced to develop and deliver such a service.

Issues , Barriers and Recommendations in Curriculum, Textbooks and Assessment.

Issue: Re-establishing the Institutional Structures and Mechanisms for Curriculum Design and Implementation.

Currently the formal institutional structures and mechanisms created in the framework of the GoM/World Bank reform in order to develop, implement and gradually review curriculum have stopped functioning as intended. After the 2001 election, the *National Council for Curriculum and Evaluation* (NCCE) in essence ceased to function (in practice if not officially), so that it is difficult to understand how subject-based commissions could continue to work and how – generally speaking – the sustainability of the whole institutional structure would be assured after the GoM/World Bank project ends.

First, the biggest danger is to consider that the NCCE and its working groups have in essence "finished" their work with the implementation of the National Curriculum. But curriculum development is not a "product" but a *process* that does not finish once a certain curriculum is in use. Second, the current officials (or new political representatives) from MoE are not professionally experienced enough to perform the tasks assigned to them in curriculum reform, unless they are willing to co-operate with the experts trained during the GoM/World Bank Project. The review team fears that at present they "contribute" to a re-fragmentation of the curriculum by adopting again a heavily subject-based and "programmes of study" focused approach to curriculum development and implementation.

Recommendation

Take a clear-cut decision about the institutional structure and mechanism aimed at permanently developing and reviewing curriculum. This might be organised as a *permanent* department in the Ministry, an external agency, or a consultative body. It should include, first of all, professional experts in curriculum development, selected according to a set of professional criteria. Their task would be to continually develop and review the National Curriculum, as foreseen in the original framework. Only in this way will the *continuity* of the reform process be assured, and *"European standards"* met.

Issue: Reconciling the reduced number of school days per year with students' curriculum load

Evidence shows that the number of lessons/days that students in Moldova spend in school is far below OECD averages, especially for grades 1 to4. There

were compelling economic reasons for reducing the number of instructional days, for example reducing the budget for teacher salaries as well as heating costs. However, it has seriously affected the quality of education in the classroom. The number of subjects is the same, while the number of weekly lessons per subject is less than before. Maintaining such a large number of subjects means that learning is necessarily superficial with no time for teachers and students to reflect on concepts and practice skills. For example, one mathematics teacher told the team that she now had only *one* lesson period (45 minutes) to introduce the essential concept of x^2 and was then obliged to move on to the next chapter before her students had a chance to absorb and practice what they had learned.

Reports at the end of December 2001 stated[80] that 80 schools were working in unheated classrooms and 6 were closed from the beginning of December due to lack of fuel. In the previous school year, about 300 schools closed from mid-December 2000 until the end of January with another 100 institutions remaining closed until early February. It is said that (some of) these schools recovered lost time on Saturdays and during the autumn and spring vacations; nevertheless, schooling in winter can be an uncomfortable and often-disrupted experience for many children and teachers. The combination of an overloaded curriculum with sharply reduced instructional time inevitably affects the quality of learning.

Recommendation

Either the number of school days should be raised again urgently, or the curriculum should be adapted by reducing the number of subjects taught (not the number of hours per subject, as is now the case). The review team understands that the latter recommendation may mean that some teachers lose their jobs, but in times of tough decisions it is the quality of student learning – not the maintenance of teachers' jobs – that should be protected. Also, studies have shown that in practice there are only very limited savings in heating costs because many schools keep their heating systems going when hours (or days) are cut.[81] The new instructional plan, submitted to the Collegium in March 2002, gives each grade level an additional 2 hours per week. While this is a step in the right direction, such abrupt and arbitrary changes (up or down) without

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80 Chisinau, 27 December 2001 (BASA-general).

81 Claude Tibi *et al., Moldova's Education Sector: A Financing Strategy to Leverage System-wide Improvement."* (August 2001.) The World Bank: Washington DC.

clear adjustments of the curriculum or to textbooks create frustration and confusion among classroom teachers.

Issue: Synchronising curriculum development and the publication of textbooks

The new subject curricula were published between 1997-2000. Most teachers have adopted these curricula, and are well trained to implement them. However, they have to wait for new textbooks to be written to support the new curricula. The situation is more than critical as far as the lower secondary grades 7-9 are concerned. As mentioned before, even if the GoM/World Bank's *initial model* is strictly followed, then textbooks for grade 7 will enter classrooms in 2002, for grade 8 in 2003, and grade 9 in 2004.

Most teachers and educational authorities are dissatisfied with this situation. For grades 7-9, there is even a shortage of "old" Moldovan textbooks; and in any case these books are outdated. It is not clear to the review team how, and with what materials, students are expected to learn in grades 7-9. At best, they use "reform-based" *Romanian* textbooks (published after 1996 in Romania); at worst, they resort to pre-reform Romanian or Russian textbooks.

The new curricula assume that teachers will use separate teachers' guides and supplementary materials, and these are not covered by the rental scheme but must be bought at full price. For example, one teacher said that for grades 3 and 4 the rental fees were approximately 50 MDL (EUR 4), but teachers had to collect 100 MDL (EUR 7.9) to cover all didactic materials they needed. There are "test collections" available as well, but these too cost 12 MDL (EUR 10) for each grade. As a result, in some classes about one-third of the students may not have a book and many teachers have to work without guides or supplementary materials.

Recommendations

Resolve the textbook provision problem for grades 7-9 as quickly as possible. Textbooks should enter classrooms much earlier than first planned. The speeded-up mechanism by which textbooks for grades 10-11 were issued in the autumn of the 2000/01 school year could be a good example.

A second recommendation is to take a critical look at the sizes of print-runs compared to actual demand, especially (but not only!) with regard to books printed in minority languages. These books tend to be very expensive, and many remain undistributed despite the favourable terms of the rental scheme.

Finally, some thought should be given to making use of the many thousands of warehoused books (see Textbooks, above), for example by making them available free to children of poor families. In particular, it would seem important to ensure that teachers' guides and supplementary materials are put to use in classrooms, rather than be kept in storage.

Issue: History and Mother Tongue

With the arrival of the new Government, old discussions have started again about the teaching of history and mother tongue, two subjects that previously have had a clear status in the National Curriculum. Now, politicians claim that instead of "History of Romanians", "Moldovan History" should be studied, and the name of the mother tongue should be "Moldovan" and not "Romanian". The last statement is against all scientific evidence that shows there is not a Moldovan language nor a Moldovan dialect of Romanian language. Instead of being involved in a politicised debate that should be a matter for scholars and scientists, teachers and students should be left to focus on the quality of the teaching/learning activity in the classroom. The team is concerned about a general tendency to "politicise" the curriculum; for example, a State Commission appears to have been set up (April 2002) to resolve the controversy about the teaching of history, but it could not be discovered whether this State Commission has history teachers or curriculum specialists among its members, nor whether the decisions made by this State Commission bypass the regular curriculum development process set up under the NCCE.

Recommendations

Make clear decisions about the status and content of contentious subjects, according to scientific research and evidence. This is the only way to prevent political conflicts and antagonism. Political bias should not be reflected in classroom teaching and learning. For example, current-day professional literature and empirical evidence show that attainment targets and standards in learning mother tongue(s) (MT) and national literature(s) (NL) are relatively the same all over the world – irrespective of the *name* of that specific MT. Generally speaking, the teaching/learning process of any MT in the world aims at developing appropriate social communication skills, fostering a personal scale of values – *national and other values* – understood within a framework of tolerance. From a pedagogical point of view, things are more than clear: based on a conceptual outlook, it is clearly a scientific issue, and not a political one about the name of the national language.

As for the teaching of history, the International Commission on Education in the 21st Century singled out, as the first pillar on which education should be

founded, 'learning to live together by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values'.[82] Re-casting the history curriculum in Moldova in narrowly nationalistic terms seems counter to this aim, and counter to the need for a broader, more tolerant and more self-critical view of the country's historical context in the SEE region and in Europe.

Issue: The Quality of Learning, Access and Equity

The present educational systems in many FSU countries – Moldova included – often place excessive curricular emphasis on selectivity, the performance of the best students (see the renewed interest in Olympiads in Moldova) and on "excellence" of a small number of students. The learning needs of average and disadvantaged pupils (by social strata, gender, ethnicity, or location) are easily neglected. In Moldova a general lack of interest in education, dropout, the lack of hope in the future are characteristic for important segment of the populations at risk (rural and disadvantaged areas, children from poor families, orphans).

The result is that education, despite its substantial accomplishments in promoting learning achievement among "the best" students, can fail to fulfil its role as a source of equity among social groups. The danger is that education will be very good indeed for a few, and unsatisfactory for the majority. The relatively poor performance of Moldovan students in a recent international comparative study is one of the most serious issues of current-day Moldovan education.

Recommendations

The MoE and the whole pedagogical community should seriously address these issues. A change in the curricular capacity of teachers and administrators (including school inspectors), achieved through improved selection, assignment and training, is needed to emphasise the curricular considerations of access, retention, career development, pedagogy and classroom remedial treatment of the socially disadvantaged.

Quality training of teachers for special-needs education, inclusive and remedial education should be provided at all levels. Curriculum should be flexible enough to meet the needs of *all*, and to help students of all abilities to attain their full potential.

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82 UNESCO, *Learning: The Treasure Within.* Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century. Paris: 1996, page 22.

Issue: Curriculum Design and Implementation: the Participatory Model

One of the current dangers in Moldova is that the curriculum development process will be more and more centralised, and that curriculum decisions will be made without any real involvement of stakeholders and interested parties. Curriculum changes in many countries put great emphasis on offering participatory opportunities to all those concerned in education (teachers, school management, parents, students, and representatives of economic and civic institutions). Between 1996 and 2000, public debate and consultation on curriculum issues became more and more important in Moldova; these participatory processes should not be lost.

Recommendation

Preserve and foster the mechanism of public consultation already in place, raise public awareness of the need to reform the current education system, and motivate teachers in a process aimed at creating "ownership" among all parties concerned.

Issue: Shifting the emphasis from "teaching the curriculum" to monitoring student learning outcomes.

The main goals of learner assessment reform were to (1) place a good-quality question paper (or a well-constructed "ticket" for oral examinations)[83] before every candidate, on time and without relying on radio broadcasting or writing out examinations on the blackboard; (2) ensuring that those papers and "tickets" reflect a range of domains and skills *other than* re-call of factual material; (3) creating a stable, identifiable quality evaluation function within the MoE, supported by a small but expert and well resourced Department for Evaluation and Examinations (DEE); (4) disseminating good practice to the *raion* directorates, and (5) creating mechanisms to support teachers in their own classrooms in improving their assessment techniques.

A great deal of progress has been made towards achievement of these goals. The DEE has been established within the MoE, and – with the help of foreign technical assistance paid for from Project funds – a small cadre of trained specialists has been created. However, there is now a serious risk that these achievements will not be sustained and built-upon by MoE funding after the end of the project. The DEE is (perhaps fatally) under-staffed, and official

83 For oral and practical exams, a set of questions or so-called "tickets" *("bilete",* numbered cards with typically three questions) are devised by the MoE. These questions are derived from booklets published by the MoE, which are available in every school library.

support for the DEE is, at best, lukewarm. There is a strong lobby of higher education rectors and other HE officials against the introduction of external, national, impartial maturity examinations, because the university entrance tutoring "industry" is one of the main sources of additional income for universities and individual tutors.

Recommendation

Immediate, strong and sustained support must be given to the work of the DEE and to the entire notion of fair, transparent and technically competent assessment of student progress and achievement. In the first instance, the DEE should be fully and permanently staffed by specialists in assessment. Secondly, a commitment should be made by the MoE to include in its annual budget a special line for student assessment, both during schooling (formative – *e.g.*, the grade 4 assessments) and at key transition points in the system (summative), for example the grade 9 and grade 12 exams. Thirdly, in all its policy deliberations the MoE should focus on what improves the quality of *student learning*, rather than its usual preoccupations with organisational matters, "delivering the curriculum", and institutional control.

Early Childhood Education and Care

Introduction

Because the poverty rate increases sharply for families with more than two children under 14 – 42% of families with three children are poor – younger children in larger families are likely to be disadvantaged. Add to this the effect of transition-induced poverty on out-migration, particularly of women, and the high number of children left in the care of grandparents or other relatives, many young children in Moldova are at considerable risk.

In young children, the linkages between poor health and poor learning are known. But in Moldova there is little understanding on the part of the general public of the stages of child development and the consequences of poor socialisation and diet in the early years. Nutritional support for children is poor, with 46% of children under five suffering from anaemia (UNICEF; Ministry of Health). Although there are no signs of acute malnutrition, this survey found 8-10% of children under five with stunted growth, an indication of chronic malnutrition.[84] In addition, the collapse of community institutions and changes

[84] Selection for the army shows that 60% of the age group is unfit for military duty due to "physical and moral dysfunctionalities". Interview, MoE, 17 Sept. 2001.

in family structure mean that young children may lose normal socialisation opportunities, making systematic attention to their mental and physical development crucial. Increases in violence against women, and marital break-up fostered by such situations, increase the dangers for small children.

The government has done considerable work with UNICEF, Soros, the World Bank and other agencies on the diagnosis of poverty-related issues, and education issues, including early childhood and financing for the education system. This work forms a good foundation for further analysis of the situation for early childhood education and care, and the options open to the government for ensuring that this age group is not without services in a time of social and economic difficulty.

Status

The present government programme hopes to maintain the structure of the previous system, including the use of institutional care for a range of children needing attention because of social deprivation or disability. It is placing emphasis on the training of social workers, new regulations on the relationship between parents and children, and support programmes for socially vulnerable children, together with support for new approaches to teaching. It has enacted much new legislation on the rights of the child and social protection for vulnerable groups. However, a framework for rationalising the service provision system and maximising expenditures is still developing, and the recommendations have in many cases not been acted upon.

Provision and access of pre-school care and education

The education system under the former Soviet Union system provided comprehensive coverage for young children, although this was "old fashioned" in concept and expensive to provide. Comprehensive services were available for children aged 0-6 through government run crèches, nurseries and pre-school institutions. Technically, this system still exists but has almost entirely ceased to function for the 0-5 year old group; and quality and access to services for 5-7 year olds are variable. Children are grouped according to age: 1-3 years, 3-4 years, 4-5 years – and preparatory groups for 5-6 and 6-7 year olds.

At present, only about 35% of the total number of children aged between 3 and 7 (267 000) are enrolled. Enrolments vary enormously among *judets* and municipalities. For example, according to recent MoE data, only 25% of children between the ages of 1-7 are covered by the system in Lapusna *judet*, whereas 69% of children from this age range are covered in the municipality of Chişinău.

As attendance below age 5 is not compulsory, it is therefore sporadic, often depending on weather or the availability of the parent. The service is therefore far more of a drop-in day care facility for the under fives. According to recent World Bank data, the gross enrolment rate of 67.6% for pre-school ages 1-5 in 1990/91 (including Transdnistria) had dropped to 24.8% in 2000/01. For 6-year olds, the gross enrolment rate dropped from 97.4% in 1990/91 to 77% in 1999/2000.[85]

The MoE runs 1 094 pre-schools, and there are some 41 private ones. A provisional regulation, issued jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance in June 1999, regulates the provision of private pre-school services and contains a sample contract.

The final pre-school (preparatory) year, sometimes called '0' year, is compulsory as children are meant to be able to read and write on admission to the first grade of primary school. The preparatory system is set apart from the general education system, and has its own norms and facilities.

Facilities

Pre-school facilities are often not open during the winter months because of lack of heating. In addition, in some communities the parents are not convinced of the value of education, and child labour (among older children) is said to be on the increase. In theory, children who are chronically ill or hospitalised receive teaching in their homes or in hospital, but in recent years this service has become only sporadically available. All told some 300 pre-schools have been closed across the country. However such decisions have been much more random in the countryside. In theory, children are also able to benefit from programmes in clubs and holiday centres. Due to the shortage of funds most of these activities have closed down and only in some cases have private donors come forwards to subsidise activities.

Pre-school facilities themselves have become a burden on the education service, and constitute a disproportionate drain on the education budget. Built for larger enrolments and expectations of full day care from 0-5, they once were flourishing establishments often supported by local industries. Now they are large and decaying, often without connections to water and sporadic or non-existent electricity supplies. Most have no heating, and many resort to illegal and dangerous use of wood burning stoves placed in each classroom. At the

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85 National Consultations on "Education for All". Preschool and Basic Education: Status, Issues and Options for a National Plan of Action. Chişinău, 3/5 December 2001.

local level municipalities have been able to rationalise some of these facilities, but in others fiscal need has forced the sale of the land and buildings and the provision of pre-school activities is not seen as a major need for the community. It is suggested that perhaps 50% of classes are overcrowded, but there are also cases where the enrolments have fallen and the facilities are inappropriate. The economic crisis has meant that buildings have deteriorated, equipment is in short supply, and there is insufficient budget to rectify these shortcomings. In addition, the design of some pre-school buildings does not lend itself to modern approaches to pre-school education.

Finance

Funding allocations are made from central government, on the basis of per-capita funding for children. Municipalities create a budget based on these principles, which bears little relation to the actual money available for the system. In one municipality visited, the official pre-school budget was MDL 967 (EUR 73.4) per child, compared to MDL 875 (EUR 69.1) per child for primary school.

There are considerable disparities in access to early childhood services between rural and urban areas due to population and income differences. Because of the drop in enrolments, and the need to consolidate schools, some schools have been allowed to integrate the pre-school (0) year into the primary school facilities. A decision on such rationalisation was taken by Chişinău municipality in 19 schools, and has assisted in the maintenance of the basic early childhood development system in the city.

Education from 0-6 is still is technically free, but as with many aspects of the government-run service, increased cost recovery has become a fact of life, due to the inability of the education budget to cover even basic costs. For the preparatory (0) school year parents are required to pay 50% of the food costs. These vary according to the school menu and are set locally. Average costs are between 15 and 35 MDL (between USD 1.20 and 3) per month.[86] There is no doubt that the institution of these fees has led to a decrease in enrolment, although municipalities are in many cases subsidising children whose parents cannot afford the fees. It is also clear that the deplorable state of schools is not just a recent phenomenon. One regional office stated that it had spent no money on furniture for 15 years.

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86 Considering that the average monthly salary is about USD 25 (EUR 25.3) or 320 leu, a family with several young children would find it difficult to meet these costs.

The review team accepts that countries struggling to maintain state provision of compulsory education are unlikely to divert large amounts of resources to children of pre-school age. But many programmes for early childhood development and care are inexpensive, making the most of careful planning, plenty of ingenuity and maximum community involvement. Governments can and must help to mobilise local communities to take on this work, with or without state backing. Locally developed schemes have been the most successful, some of them including home-based initiatives. UNICEF has initiated some innovative approaches, *e.g.* in FYR of Macedonia working with local women's organisations in rural areas to help set up schemes for children without access to public-sector pre-schools.[87]

Curriculum

Aspects of pre-school teaching and education pertaining to establishing and carrying out the functions of pre-school institutions are regulated by a series of legislative norms. Municipal authorities are responsible for verifying compliance with these requirements before an institution can open. Pre-school education is provided in Romanian, Russian, Polish, Ukrainian and Hebrew. Some schools are Romanian or Russian language only, or have special classes for linguistic minorities. There are no data available on the number of Roma children of pre-school age in Moldova or their enrolment in pre-school.

Issues and Recommendations on Early Childhood Care and Development

Issue: Social breakdown and poverty now existing in Moldova

An effective system of support for families with small children is of immediate importance to ensure that the next generation does not suffer unduly through the transition period. Although it is clear that the government cannot provide the same comprehensive range of services as was previously the case, care must be taken to ensure that the most vulnerable children receive adequate socialisation and early childhood care. With regard to access, the 0-5 group is more at risk than the 5-7 group, and provision in rural areas is more uncertain than in urban ones. In some areas (*e.g.*, Gagauzia) it appears that some 30% of school-age children live with relatives or neighbours because their parents are obliged to look for work outside Moldova. Clearly such arrangements can be detrimental to the healthy and secure social development of children.

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87 *After the Fall: The human impact of 10 years of transition,* UNICEF/MONEE Project, Nov. 1999, page13.

Decentralisation of the responsibility for maintenance and funding of pre-school from the state budget to cities and municipalities is said to have increased regional and local differences, with pressure in some areas while buildings may be empty in others, *e.g.* where the distance between the pre-school's location and where families now live is too great. However it is at the local level that administrations can take difficult decisions to rationalise services and provide creative alternatives. The regulation of an activity (central government responsibility) and its implementation (local government) should not be confused here. At present there are few incentives for improving services, as standards tie funding and salaries to the existence of facilities.

Recommendations

As the agency charged with setting national standards, the central ministry should review the standards for the provision of services for children below the age of seven. Foremost in this consideration should be provision for a range of services provided at local level, with parental contributions or subsidised services as relevant and feasible. Where space is available, the preparatory year should be merged into the primary school, or in a more radical reform, the compulsory pre-school years could be amalgamated with primary school to form an extra year of formal schooling.

Villages could consider formalising transportation for older children, or creating small local playgroups rather than larger school centres. Parental involvement in the establishment of local programmes should be encouraged. Such schools can be linked to a larger parent school, or even take the form of mobile centres. However the formation of such alternative forms of early childhood experience should be undertaken with due care to the maintenance of standards, as there is little experience of running these groups outside the formal system, and in a situation of poverty and low income, the inspection system for such groups would need to be designed with care. At the present time there are few inspectors for the pre-school years and their access to transport and supervisory capacity is limited.

Issue: Quality in the Curriculum and Teaching Practice

The "Outlines of the Basic Programme for Pre-school Institutions" for children up to three years of age were introduced in 1994, while similar "Outlines" for children from 3-7 years of age and those for children in ethnic minorities came in to being in 1996. The aim of these regulations is to define the goal and tasks of teaching, create an adequate atmosphere for child development in general, social and emotional relations between the children and those who take care of them, and establish the potential activities designed for

children and the terms of co-operation with the family in the process of children's development. Legal regulation, including defining the "Outlines", does not guarantee, however, an automatic change in the actual practice of pre-school institutions.

A new curriculum for pre-school was developed in 1999. The essential feature of the curriculum for children from 3-7 years of age is the provision of conditions for the positive physical, intellectual, social, emotional and moral development of children who are viewed as active, interactive and creative beings. However not all educators have received training in the use of this curriculum, and the outline of the school day has not changed and remains standardised across all pre-school institutions. This limits the ability of teachers to adapt their schedules at the local level to take account of special projects or simply the needs of their own community and children.

Almost all those caring for pre-school children are appropriately trained with a child-educator ratio of 14. The teacher training system has recently been rationalised and there are now four pedagogical universities providing training for new teachers and five colleges which train "educators" for the pre-school years. Those training as educators for the pre-school level can return to university to get additional qualifications for teaching at primary level. However early childhood development courses do not figure highly in the curriculum for pre-school educators nor is the level of practical experience adequate. There is no association active in maintaining professional standards for the pre-school years. Educators are sometimes assisted by nursery nurses for the younger years who have only basic training. Each kindergarten also still has a music teacher, and staff of pedagogue and psychologist. Although the ratio of children per educator seems high, most pre-schools visited did not have their full complement of children in the 3-5 year old classes.

School Heads must have a diploma or higher education qualification and at least 5 years of pedagogical experience – in-service training is only compulsory every five years and there was never a sustained effort to provide in-service training. In recent years, international NGOs have played a leading role in not only analysing the needs of the early childhood education system but in providing intensive learning experiences at the school level for education professionals. These reinforce child centred approaches in teaching, promote community and parental involvement, enhance the creativity of the teacher in making and utilising materials, and focus on the needs of the individual student. The programmes have been run for several years, but do not reach all schools and all teachers. Part of their attraction is also the provision of equipment and materials that comes with each project and which act as incentives for the teaching staff. UNICEF is also running new programmes aimed at integrating

these ideas of good teaching practice into pre-service training and the creation of teacher resource centres.

Recommendation

There is considerable need to upgrade pre-service teacher training courses, to include options on special needs and early childhood development and to introduce social work as a professional skill. The Ministry of Education has already taken some steps in these regards. Given the lack of incentives for good teacher performance, a review of the human resource management strategies for the teaching profession should be undertaken, with the aim of providing increased opportunities for staff development as an incentive for remaining in the system. Staff, in particular in institutions, need further training in the new pre-school curriculum and in ways to better prepare children socially as well as intellectually to transition to school or regular life. Initial teacher training should also focus more on how to identify and address specific learning needs which may delay development but which do not require children to be institutionalised. The inclusion of mobile or where necessary on staff, special needs teachers in regular pre-schools should be seen as acceptable and would prevent unnecessary institutionalisation.

Issue: Equity and Access

Issues of equity emerge in the ways a system addresses the needs of children with regard to their ability, gender, income level, ability or social characteristics. In Moldova gender equity at pre-school is more of an issue for boys than for girls, for unknown reasons. Girls enrol at pre-school at the same rate as boys. Enrolment in pre-school is heavily defined by the educational status of the mother, and by socio-economic status (Govt. of Moldova). There may well be a gender equity issue with regard to pre-school staff all of whom are women and who have less pay and less opportunity for promotion than men.

With regard to income levels, it has been noted that there is inequitable distribution of quality education between urban and rural areas and this correlates with the poverty of the population. Extra lessons, such as language lessons in the pre-school year are fee for service and cannot be taken advantage of by all. Pre-school students are also required to purchase books and workbooks and this may discourage poor parents from sending children. With regard to health, medical treatment for children and women which are technically free, sometimes require a fee for service. One example, the medical check up for entrance to primary school, requires fees for different specialists and may be discouraging parents from entering children in primary school.

Issues and Recommendations related to Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

There were some 12 400 children with disabilities in 1998, rising to 14 000 in 1999. There is considerable resistance to the integration of children with either physical or mental disabilities into any level of schooling in Moldova, or to the integration of children from general boarding schools into the general school system. A general attitude prevails towards the preservation of the existing institutional system as a form of social protection agency for those considered "vulnerable groups". Although every country has a blend of institutional and non-institutional care, it would seem that the present decisions might not always be based on the best interests of the child.

Children with disabilities and children in need of social care are disadvantaged by the type of education they receive, not by their access to it, as the system of institutional care and exclusive classroom arrangements for these groups is still officially in place in Moldova. A new order was issued by the MoE in June 1999 on the circumstances in which children could be considered to be from vulnerable families and therefore either exempt from payment for pre-school or eligible for care in boarding schools. Thus there are a series of institutions both educational and medically based which provide either permanent or transitional care for a wide range of children. These are run by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science and the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry of Education runs two institutions for children in need of protection and orphans, and one for deaf children. These are mainly for children over seven, but some institutions do include pre-school groups and 10% of pre-school children (10% of children included in a recent UNICEF survey on institutionalised children were of pre-school age).

Issue: Better diagnosis and more appropriate, more "porous" placement of SEN children.

Once in an institution, the majority of children do not return home, even when there is an existing family. This poses long term problems when children reach 18 and are required to leave the institution they have known for many years. Institutionalisation at an early age thus can contribute to children being poorly prepared for life and, in a situation of high unemployment, very poor prospects in later life. Institutions receive inadequate funding and conditions can be worse than those in the general schools, with decaying infrastructure, poor materials and with poorly trained staff. Only about 30% of institutional needs are actually met by existing budgets, and non payment of staff, few teaching or educational aids, isolation from families and caring caregivers and

the lack of personnel qualified to work with children with special needs can lead to poor conditions.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and those of Social Protection and Health acknowledge the need for more options in service provision, better training in early diagnosis and treatment of special needs children, and smaller, more family based institutions. Some issues may take time to address, but there are a range of options which are not costly and which would benefit children at risk.

The central ministries should discuss possible options for foster care with local government and NGOs and promote legislation that would ensure high standards for such service programmes. Previous studies have recommended improved data on children in institutions and their families and an improved case management system, so that this information is readily available to all agencies dealing with child care. The inflexibility of the present diagnostic system does not allow for easy reassignment of children to different kinds of options for education and care.

The review team suggests that the system for allocating children to different kinds of educational institution be re-examined. Members of the special medical psycho pedagogical screening committees, which sit both at local and central level and have responsibility for admitting children to institutions, should urgently receive further training in the diagnoses of special needs, and the options available for caring and educating children. All the Ministries are aware of possible options for child care, and need to work together to devise optimal care and funding options for the range of social and developmental needs. Some consideration should be given to the development of formal inter-agency co-ordination committees or other mechanisms to ensure that services for vulnerable children are co-ordinated and resources well used.

Teachers

Legal and policy framework

Training and retraining of teachers are considered a priority. The legal framework is laid down in the *Conception Concerning the Development of Education* (adopted by Parliament on 15 September 1994) and the Law of Education (1995) (Art 54). The main provisions are:

- The State provides training and retraining opportunities and sets didactic levels (grade didactice).

- Teacher and school manager training takes place in higher education institutions or other institutions accredited by law, as accredited and co-ordinated by MoE.

- Higher education staff can receive in-service training through professional development programmes and scientific research at post-university level.

- Teacher 'upgrade' training is compulsory for all teachers at least once every five years. This is done according to the education system's needs and the individual choices of teachers.

- Teachers have the right to be assessed in order to reach a higher didactic level (grade didactice) according to regulations established by the MoE.

The *National Plan for Education Development, 1996-2005* (revised version May 1996),[88] sets out a more detailed regulatory framework for a national system for pre- and in-service teacher training.

Current State of Teacher Education: Facts and Figures

Table14. **Basic education**[89]

Status	Number
Qualified	40 739
Under-qualified	1 357
Unqualified	0
Total	**42 096**

88 *Programul National de Dezvoltare a Invatamintului in Republica Moldova 1996-2005*, Ministerul Invatamintului, Institutul de Stiinte Pedagogice si Psichologice, May 1996.

89 These numbers include schools for general education, which also provide upper secondary education. Laboratory assistants are also included in total number

Table 15. **Upper secondary education**

Status	General Education	VET
Qualified	4 241	1 255
Under-qualified	135	1 075
Unqualified	21	0
Total	**4 397**	**2 330**

The normal teaching load of a full-time teacher is 18 class periods per week, although the average is 30 class periods per week and some work as many as 60 (and are paid for 60).

Teacher salaries (for a regular 18-hour, full-time teaching post) are now about USD 25 (EUR 26.7) per month. Primary teachers received a substantial salary increase in 2000 (about 50%), and secondary teachers an increase of 20% starting September 2001. Nevertheless, with the basic "basket" of living necessities costing about MDL 1 200 (EUR 106.7) per month (approximately USD 100, it is impossible to survive on a single teacher's salary, and nearly all teachers have second or third jobs or teach many additional hours for extra pay.

Pre-service teacher training system

According to the *Law of Education* (1995, Art 54, par. 2), teacher training is offered at a single level in universities. Moldova has several types of higher education institutions that train teachers:

- Pedagogical University ("Ion Creanga" in Chişinău)*;*
- State universities (Chişinău, Bălți, Tiraspol – situated in Chişinău, Comrat);
- National Institute for Physical Education and Sport;
- Polytechnical University.

These are the main routes for lower and upper secondary teachers, although the Pedagogical University and some of the State universities also have faculties that train primary school teachers. In fact, the Law allows any graduates of HEIs *other* than the Pedagogical University to work as teachers, provided that their curricula included elements of pedagogy, psychology and subject methodology.

The former “normal schools” that used to train primary teachers up to 1995 have apparently been closed.

Entrance mechanism and duration of courses

Students can enter university to follow a teacher training course after obtaining the Baccalaureate at grade 12 from a lyceum. If they obtain a high enough grade, they do not have to pass the entrance examination for the university. Alternatively, they can enter university after grade 12 without the Baccalaureate qualification or with a low grade, provided they pass the entrance examination. In both cases the teacher training course lasts for four years. Another option is to enter university following grade 11, after passing an entrance examination. In this case the course lasts five years.

Structure of the courses

At the Pedagogical University, pre-service courses comprise four main strands:

- academic subject study (40-45%);
- general subjects (philosophy, logic, economics, etc. ~20%);
- pedagogy (psycho-pedagogy and didactics ~20%);
- school practice (theoretically 15-20%, but see the following paragraph).

School practice starts in the second year of the course, with one day in every two weeks spent in a school, following the same class throughout the student’s training course. The students participate not just in lessons but in all aspects of everyday school life. At first they just assist in lessons given by the usual class teacher, then, starting with the second semester of the third year, they become responsible for giving lessons themselves (at least six lessons per year).

During the fourth and fifth year, because in some areas or subjects there is a shortage of teachers, an MoE order allows students to choose to teach full-time in schools. The university ensures organisational facilities that allow the students to continue their studies in their spare time, with only occasional visits to the university. This need for teachers varies across the country, and is particularly acute in Chişinău.

State universities and other higher educational institutions generally follow the same pattern of training, although the emphasis on academic studies is much greater.

Qualifications

Successful students are awarded a diploma. The Pedagogical University diploma is a teaching qualification, generally in two subjects. Other higher institutions provide a general diploma in the major subject studied; this general qualification can also be used as a teaching qualification.

In-Service Teacher Training

Compulsory in-service training

According to the *Law of Education* (Art 54, par. 8), serving teachers are required to undergo a period of compulsory retraining every five years. These courses usually last for 1-2 weeks, although there are a variety of 1-2 day courses. Currently they are co-ordinated and carried out by the "Institute of Educational Sciences" (IES), the former "National Institute for Teacher Retraining" *(Institutul National de Perfectionare a Cadrelor Didactice – INPCD*).[90] At present the IES is the only institution which carries out this compulsory retraining. However, it has capacity for re-training only 5 000 teachers per year, and therefore the Law cannot be fully implemented.

Continuous monitoring and assessment of teachers is compulsory at all levels of the education system. Mechanisms and procedures are generally established by special orders issued by the MoE. The Inspection Service carries out this assessment at *judet* level.

The review team was told, however, that participation in in-service training activities is low: according to the MoE, on one occasion planned for 100 teachers, only seven participants turned up. Ministry officials believe that motivation among teachers is very low, and there are no incentives for them to attend.

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[90] The Institute of Educational Sciences was created in1999 and is structured into a research department (the former Institute of Pedagogical Sciences) and a training department (the former INPCD).

Non-compulsory in-service training, central level

In addition to the compulsory retraining, the IES organises special one- or two-week training courses focused on current issues concerning the new curriculum and new teaching methods. The main strands are: courses for trainers of trainers in primary education; training for deputy directors of the *judets*; training for subject inspectors from the *judet*; training for primary teachers and subject teachers in secondary schools. Other courses include distance learning course for technology teachers and courses for unqualified teachers.

One further type of centralised retraining takes place at the Ion Creanga Pedagogical University. The university has a Faculty of Training and Retraining School Managers. Courses are aimed at school directors, deputy directors, inspectors, methodologists and staff of the *judet* directorates. On completion of the course, the successful participants receive a Certificate in School Management.

Non-compulsory in-service training, local level.

Inspectors and methodologists at *judet* level carry out a continuous programme of local retraining. There are compulsory meetings at least twice per year (in August before the school year starts and during the winter vacation) for all teachers, and there is a subject-based activity for each subject at least once every 6 months. Other workshops are organised according to local needs.

The methodologists also work individually with teachers, especially younger ones, in order to support and improve their teaching skills. Another aspect of local retraining is that in any school where there are three or more teachers teaching the same subject, these teachers operate as a special methodological body (*intruniri metodologice*) in order to improve their everyday teaching practices through informal internal in-service activities. This system also operates at *judet* level, enabling teachers to visit other schools and so improve their teaching methodology.

Didactic degrees (grade didactice)

After three years, any serving teacher, whether university or Normal-school trained, may apply to be assessed for the award of a didactic grade or step on the career ladder. There are three levels: (a) Second; (b) First; (c) Superior.

Teachers may choose for which level they wish to be assessed, although there are certain criteria that they must meet in order to be assessed for First and Superior levels. For example, to be assessed for a Superior level the candidate must already be a textbook author or have written at least one methodological research paper. In terms of salary, teachers are awarded two minimum salaries for a Second level degree, three for a First level degree (that is, if they move from the Second to the First level, they are awarded one extra minimum salary) and four for a Superior level degree. Teachers who do not wish to be awarded a didactic degree are generally assessed every five years according to a methodology developed by the MoE.

Teacher In-service Training related to the new Curricula, Textbooks and Assessment

To ensure a rational and coherent teacher in-service programme related to the new curricula, textbooks and assessment procedures, the teacher training component of the GoM/WB Project has used the existing institutional structures, adapting their functions according to the challenges of the education reform in Moldova. The in-service training carried out in order to prepare teachers for the implementation of the new curricula, textbooks and assessment procedures has operated in parallel, but in close relationship with the existing in-service training activities. Key features of this new strand of in-service training were:

- "Cascade" training, whereby training started centrally, and spread out progressively into local training at *judet* level and finally at school level.

- Two types of trainers were used. Staff at the seven central in-service institutions (the current universities plus the (IES) – Institute of Educational Sciences) trained the first (central) level of trainers. They in turn were responsible for training the *judet* inspectors, methodologists and other specialists designated by the *judet* directorates, who then constituted the second level of trainers.

- The training activities also took place at two levels – centrally in the institutions already listed (especially IES), and locally.

- The content of the training sessions focused on general methodology of managing and monitoring teacher training activities, and secondly on subject-specific curriculum, textbooks and assessment issues.

Teachers' Status: Career and Professional Structure, Financial Issues

Status and Salaries

The status of teachers is low. This is due first to the low income teachers earn, and secondly to the very poor school facilities which discourage young people from entering the teaching profession. Teachers' salaries are among the lowest in the country; improvement will be difficult to achieve in Moldova's current economic situation, although from September 2001 primary teachers apparently received a 20% increase in salary. The team heard some ideas about offering four year grants to students who come from the countryside and commit themselves to return to teach in their villages after graduation, but a much more long-term and strategic approach is needed.

Another important issue (and deterrent for young people to become teachers) is that teacher salaries are paid irregularly. Salaries accounted for nearly half of total arrears in financing of education; by far the bigger share (151.4 million MDL) (EUR 12 million) for staff funded by *local* budgets, with a much lower (but still increasing) share at state level (19.2 million MDL) (EUR 15.3 million). In some localities, teachers can remain unpaid for as long as 6 or 7 months; according to the Teachers' Union of Moldova, which represents more than 98% of teachers, some mayoralties did not pay salaries for as long as two years. As a result, many teachers have been forced to leave the profession, seek additional employment, or ask parents to pay (see section on Finance, above).

The World Bank study cited earlier in this review [Tibi, Berryman and Peleah, 2001] provides some carefully worked out scenarios for a financing strategy that would improve education efficiency as well as quality in Moldova. Among the recommendations is one that asks the MoE to:

- *"Get ready to raise teacher salaries and work loads.* Higher teacher salaries and teaching loads should only be introduced after two actions are taken – one technical and the other political. The Government of Moldova must conduct studies that identify *the salaries required if teachers are to live adequately on their income from teaching and if the sector is to attract and retain qualified individuals in the teaching force.* There are standard methodologies for conducting wage comparator studies that yield such estimates.

- Politically, the GoM has to *involve teacher unions* and other organisations of teachers in discussions about changing salaries and work loads. These groups should be privy to the wage comparator studies used to establish wage increases – both the methods and

results – and should understand the fiscal tradeoffs between salary levels and teaching loads."[91]

Reform scenarios for low, medium and high-salary increases (and corresponding increases in number of teaching hours) are given, for example:

- *Low salary*: the assumption is that teacher salaries increase 5% per year and the number of class periods increases from 18 to 24 by 2004.

- *Medium salary*: the assumption is that teacher salaries increase 7.5% per year and the number of periods increases from 18 to 24 by 2004.

- *High salary*: the assumption is that teacher salaries increase progressively to the averages for OECD countries at different levels of education. These averages range from 1.0 GDP per capita at pre-school to 2.0 GDP per capita. This assumption implies an annual increase of 11-12%. It is also assumed that the number of periods increases from 18 to 24 by 2004.

Career and Professional Development

The structure of, and criteria for, a teaching career are unclear, and to some extent illogical. Many university faculties and courses purport to train teachers; it is difficult to understand how two quite different types of HEIs ("Pedagogical" and "State" universities) can offer the same qualifications in terms of content, quality and classroom practice. The curricula are quite different, even though there is now a certain willingness to create a common "pedagogical module". Another problem is that teachers for secondary schools are trained only to teach one "single specialisation". It would be far more useful – especially to small rural schools – if teachers were qualified to teach more than one subject, as they frequently are in other countries.

Issues and Recommendations Related to Teachers

Issue: Teacher salaries and workload

It is a commonplace to say that teachers are poorly paid, work in difficult conditions, and have low social status in today's Moldova. Teachers in VET, for example, are paid the equivalent of USD 8 (EUR 8.5) per month for a beginning teacher, and up to USD 32 (EUR 34.1) per month for a very experienced

[91] ClaudeTibi et.al., *op.cit.,* page 99.

teacher. This is well below the average monthly income (all occupations) in Moldova, which in September 2001 stood at about USD 35 (EUR 37.3), and also well below the actual cost of living.

Recommendation

Act upon the detailed strategies and useful advice contained in the World Bank study (Tibi, Berryman *et al.*), and "*Get ready to raise teacher salaries and work loads.* Higher teacher salaries and teaching loads should only be introduced after two actions are taken – one technical and the other political. The Government of Moldova must conduct studies that identify *the salaries required if teachers are to live adequately on their income from teaching and if the sector is to attract and retain qualified individuals in the teaching force.* There are standard methodologies for conducting wage comparator studies that yield such estimates."

Issue: Insufficient exposure to classroom practice in Pre-service Training

Pre-service training in the universities does not offer a satisfactory foundation for future teachers. Curricula are not adapted to the challenges of the education reform, and students' practical work in schools is not sufficient. The practice whereby some students spend their final year as ordinary classroom teachers (because of a shortage of teachers) weakens their training and hence their competence as teachers.

The structure of the curriculum is at present content- and knowledge based and taught at a highly theoretical level. For example, in subjects such as pedagogy, psychology and psycho-pedagogy, the emphasis is on theoretical domains (theory of education, history of pedagogy, general pedagogy). This is at the expense of applied domains like classroom organisation and management, differential pedagogy (*i.e.* treatment of pupils of different abilities in the same classroom), group work, communication in the classroom, conflict resolution, etc.

The content of the academic subjects in which students are prepared (mathematics, history, etc.) centres on the subject itself, and is not sufficiently related to the *teaching and learning* of the subject. Alongside the methodological courses, in which students are taught how to teach, there should be a focus on the cognitive processes by which pupils learn and acquire competences and capacities characteristic of those subjects.

Recommendations

The content of pre-service courses needs to be continually reviewed, and amended as necessary in line with educational reforms, in particular as new school curricula, textbooks and types of assessment are introduced.

In spite of the often-quoted "autonomy of universities", the MoE should formulate its own "teaching profession standards". "Autonomous" universities and faculties are, of course, entitled to teach what and how they wish. But the MoE, as the main employer of teachers in Moldova, is perfectly entitled to require that graduates who apply for teaching positions in public schools must meet certain professional standards set down by the MoE. Once the MoE refuses to hire applicants who do not meet such standards, universities might be more inclined to switch to a more needs-based approach.

Issue: Teaching methods

The teacher-centred approach by which students are taught is predominant in Moldova. University teachers *citeste* (meaning 'read' in Moldovan) a course in front of the students. The lecture mode should be only one of many teaching strategies used by university professors, in order to prepare trainee teachers to deal with different learning styles and needs of students of varying interests and abilities.

Recommendation

University courses should encourage the use of interactive methods, practical work, critical thinking, group work, discussions, problem solving, project work, student portfolio work as well as students' reflective learning processes. Since much of the curriculum reform, textbook reform and assessment reform aims to place much more emphasis on higher-level thinking skills, it is essential that new teachers are familiar with methods that stimulate the development of these skills in students of all abilities.

Issue: Resources

Severe budget constraints in recent years have resulted in the institutions being unable to renew and upgrade essential resources: for example, expertise of staff, equipment, teaching/learning materials and supplies, current literature, international contacts.

Recommendation

- Facilities in universities must improve, or the quality of teacher training – in particular pre-service training – will remain unsatisfactory. For example, information technology and Internet facilities should be introduced in teacher training programmes. Students in universities should have much broader exposure to international literature and sources, so that they can gain an understanding of what is meant by the frequently cited "European and international standards". Moreover, teachers have to gain some basic knowledge of how their teaching (and students' learning) can be enhanced through the use of computers, not only in computer classes but in all school subjects including language, geography, science, arts, etc.

Issue: Maintaining a cadre of trained trainers

The mechanism of implementing a complex in-service training process has been developed and is now in place. However, there are serious problems concerning the continuous training of trainers, as well as their payment. Most of the trainers consider their payment to be too low, and this could precipitate a real crisis in the whole system of in-service training.

Recommendation

Establishing a sustainable mechanism for the continuous upgrading of trainers' knowledge, skills and training standards is urgent. Without such a mechanism, the chances for continuing the cascade process are small. Indeed, the entire question of adequate payment for trainers should be resolved as soon as possible.

Non-teaching staff

Norms for the number of non-teaching staff exist for pre-schools, secondary general, *lyceu*, professional and "polyvalent" schools, colleges and universities. They specify the authorised number of positions for each of more than 20 categories of non-teaching staff in general education institutions, and 33 categories of non-teaching staff in professional schools. The number of positions depends on the size of the institution (usually in terms of the number of classes). This has led to an excessive number of non-teaching personnel in the education system: for example, in professional and polyvalent schools,

colleges, and universities, the number of non-teaching staff exceeds the number of teachers, and their salary bill is higher.[92]

In 1999, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education sought to reduce the number of non-teaching positions by 15 000, and by the end of 1999 this goal was nearly achieved, reducing the number of non-teaching staff from more than 90 000 to 76 000, a reduction of 14 000 or 15.5%. However, there was little change in the ratio of students to non-teaching staff – from 9.7:1 to 11.2:1 overall.

Issue: Overly complex and inflexible norms for a very long list of non-teaching positions.

Even the new norms for non-teaching staff in general secondary schools (determined on 29 September 1999) regulate the number of staff in various-size schools for 12 different positions, from the director to the cloakroom attendant.

Recommendation

School heads should have more flexibility in deciding how to use their non-teaching positions to suit the needs of their school. A global ratio (*e.g.*, student/non-teaching staff) rather than strict specifications would be helpful. Controlling staff costs, and directing them to where they are most needed, is now more important than the full-employment policies of the past.

Vocational Education and Training

Introduction

The Law on Education of 1995 sets out the basic structure for the present system of vocational education and training (VET) in Moldova The implementation of the new structure of versatile (polyvalent) vocational schools (*scoala profesionala polivalenta*) and professional schools (*scoala de meserii*) started in 1997 (Government decision No. 795 of 20/08/97). In 1999 a new law on vocational education and training was drafted, and was in September 2001 under consideration in Parliament. However, it is likely that the Ministry of Education will withdraw this draft law.

The versatile vocational school has three steps. Step I lasts two years and provides graduates with a basic qualification in one profession. Step II takes two years as well and leads to the 'foreman' (*maistru*) level, with the right to

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92 Claude Tibi et al., *op.cit.,* page 48.

compete for higher education. Step III provides one year of post-secondary training leading to the level of 'technician' and aims at entering the labour market, but can also lead to access to higher education institutes. There are 52 public versatile vocational schools.

The professional school, also called the "school of trade", provides graduates from lower (post-grade 9) and upper general secondary education (post-grade 11) with training from 0.5 to 1.5 years for low-level skilled workers. There are 18 public professional schools in Moldova. The versatile vocational schools also provide this type of professional education. There are 6 private professional schools.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the co-ordination of the VET system. It is in charge of the strategic development, financing, licensing and accreditation, development of standards, quality assessment and teacher training and retraining. The Ministry of Economy defines the list of professions and the enrolment plan for secondary VET and higher education, on the basis of an assessment of the development of the labour market. The Ministry of Labour co-ordinates continuing vocational training and deals in particular with training for the unemployed.

After the administrative reform of 1999, which created the 14 *judets* (regions), the Government has decentralised the responsibilities for the VET schools on an experimental basis to the *judets* of Lapusna and Ungheni. These *judets* decided to close down two VET schools. The Minister of Education and Research (MoE) considers this experiment of decentralisation unsuccessful, and counter-productive to the socio-economic demands for increased skilled workers.

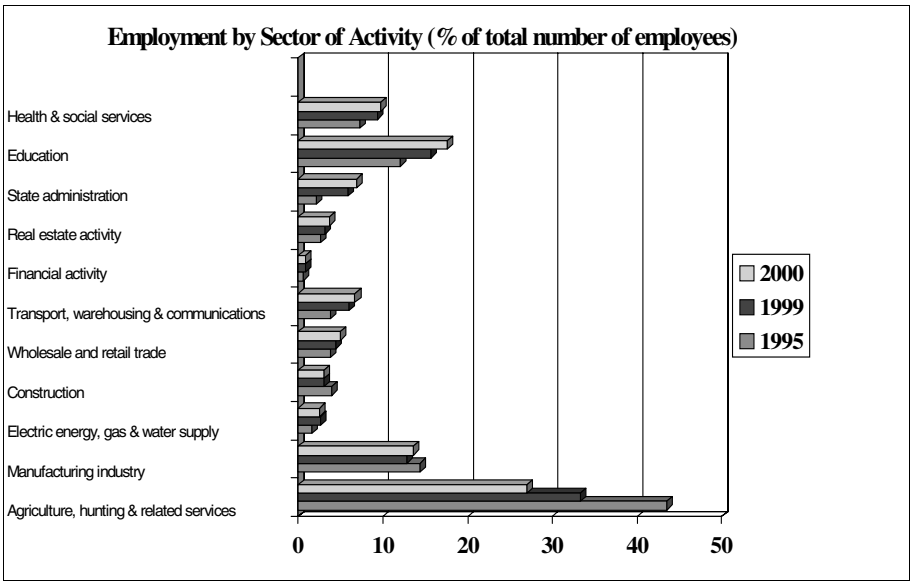
There are no recent documents available in which the MoE elaborates its policy on VET. The latest relevant policy document is the "State Programme for Educational Development", which was adopted by the Government in early 1999. It gives priority to linking VET with the labour market, development of standards, quality assessment and the development of adult education. Not much has been realised by the different governments so far.

International donors have not been very active in the field of VET. The most substantial contribution is delivered through the European Union TACIS project on "VET Reform in Moldova" (1998-2000), which, among other documents, has produced a Green Paper with policy recommendations. Sweden and Germany are the most active bilateral donors in VET.

Labour Market Trends and the Relevance of VET

Since 1995, official employment figures have declined by more than 45%, with particularly sharp declines in 1999 and 2000. Agriculture remains the most important economic sector, both in terms of contribution to GDP (24.5% in 2000) and in terms of employment (27%). In 1995 the agricultural sector was still employing 43.5% of the total work force, of which approximately one half were self-employed or involved in family farming. The employment share is stable or declining in the manufacturing industry (although food processing, which forms 42 % of industrial revenues, recently shows a remarkable growth in production) and in construction. Relative growth sectors are public administration, education, health, trade and transport and communication.

Figure 3. **Employment by Sector, 1995-2000**



Source: European Training Foundation, 2001.

The profiles of VET schools do not correspond to employment trends. According to 2001 data provided by the Institute for Public Policy, 28% of the profiles are related to the manufacturing industry, 16% to the food industry, 12% to construction, 10% to service and trade, 9% to transport and telecommunications and 8% to agriculture. At the same time, in some towns a concentration of VET schools offer similar training profiles, thereby restricting choice for students.

The unemployment rate according to ILO criteria was 6.8% in the second quarter of 2001.[93] In urban areas, unemployment is 13.5% and almost 60% of the unemployed are men. Youth unemployment (15-24 years) has slightly increased to 31.2% of the total number of unemployed. Almost 40% of the age cohort does not complete full secondary education. Only 1 out of 5 graduates finds a job in his or her speciality. There is no co-ordinated system of vocational guidance, and recently some private initiatives have been undertaken in this field.

With an increasing number of people without basic or relevant qualifications, and because of the sharply declining demographic trends from 2004 onwards, it is important to have a good functioning system of continuing vocational training (CVT). However, the retraining of skilled personnel is still largely based on the old traditions remaining from the Soviet system, while the training of the unemployed is not widely spread. In 1999, 7 300 unemployed were retrained. The Employment Service predominantly uses the VET schools for training of unemployed persons.

An agricultural VET school trains 350 students to become tractor mechanics, cooks, carpenters and tailors/dressmakers. Around 40% of the graduates after Step I find jobs. Almost no graduate in tractor mechanics finds a job. Nevertheless the school continues with this training. Obviously students are not well informed about labour market perspectives before or during the training.

Recommendations

Although the information provision on developments in the economy, labour market and VET is well developed, there is little evidence that the information is used for developing a co-ordinated analysis and strategy to improve the relevance of VET to Moldovan society and economy. *A Council for VET should be established, in which the ministries of Education, Labour and Social Protection and Economy and social partners would agree on a common strategy for:*

- Regular assessments of national, regional and local developments of the labour market and its translation into training needs;
- Continuing Vocational Training and its links with initial VET within the concept of life long learning;

[93] Data from Statistics and Sociology Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

- Providing vocational guidance and counselling to students and job seekers.

The MoE should, in co-operation with regional authorities, analyse the match between the existing VET infrastructure and the developments of the labour market in order to optimise the network of VET schools and its profiles to meet national, regional and local needs.

At school level, VET School Boards should be set up, with membership of local and regional stakeholders, including representatives of local employers and parents.

Access to VET

Demographic trends show that after 2003 the group of 16-19 years old will start to decrease rapidly. From 2004 to 2014 the group cohort is expected to decline from 214 000 to 125 000.

The average number of years of schooling in Moldova has declined by three years since 1990 and is estimated by the Institute for Public Policy to be 10.5 years, which means that, after lower secondary (grade 9), students on average receive only 1.5 years additional schooling. 17% of students do not continue education after lower secondary school. This group of early school leavers is a potential social risk for Moldovan society. In addition, Moldovan legislation does not allow for employment before the age of 18 years.

The number of students in VET decreased from 34 800 to 22 800 between 1994 and 2001, whereas the number of students in upper general secondary education increased from 47 200 to 65 500. The main reason is that the MoE funds only a limited number of places in VET. The number of contract students, who have to pay fees between 800 and 1 700 MDL (EUR 63.2 and 134.3), (USD 70 and 150), is growing and constituted 12% of the total number of VET students in 2000.

Table 16 shows that in 2000, 75% of the students who finish Step I of the VVET will not continue in Step II. This means that at best they only receive a basic qualification in one profession after two years of secondary schooling. More than 60 % of VET students receive the professional education of 0.5 to 1.5 years. Only some 6% of VET students receive more than two years of schooling. Within this context, the drop-out rate of students who did not complete the school year successfully was estimated at 10 %.

Table 16. **Enrolment in VET 1999-2001**

Type of school	Enrolment of students		
	1999	2000	Year 2001 (Plan)
VVET schools step 1	5 155	4 134	4 350
VVET schools step 2	1 600	1 037	900
VVET schools step 3	59	51	50
VVET schools, groups of professional education after grade 9	4 315	3 800	4 384
VVET schools, groups of professional education after grade 11	3 265	3 130	1 870
Additionally, enrolled on a contract basis in VVET schools	1 563	1 576	No data
Professional Schools after grade 9	1 510	1 580	1 886
Professional Schools after grade 11	1 381	1 530	1 060
Professional Schools (Contract basis)	411	603	No data

Source: The National Observatory of Moldova

Recommendation

The Moldovan economy risks losing its stock of skilled specialists. Although the team fully recognises the Government's financial constraints, its strong advice is to aim at providing as many people possible with a basic and relevant qualification to find jobs or arrange self-employment. The VET sector could or should absorb a major part of the high percentage of students who leave the education system after lower secondary school. In particular, funds should be mobilised from increased cost-effectiveness and external sources, as will be argued later on.

VET system, standards and curricula

An overdose of ambition and a lack of funding have seriously hampered the introduction of the versatile ("polyvalent") vocational school (VVET). The VVET school provides students with a full general secondary curriculum as well as training for a profession. VVET students need to pass the same national exam after Step II as their colleagues from general secondary education. If they pass this exam, they have the right of access to higher education or to Step III of VVET. Step III has only been implemented in one school, covering 51 students. The programmes of Step III are close to what colleges are providing, with usually better skilled teachers.

The combination of general academic and vocational curricula has overburdened the students and schools of VVET with little added value. The

general curricula could have been better acquired in upper general secondary schools, while the same professional qualification could be obtained by lower secondary school leavers after 1.5 years. In the first year of common examination, only one VVET student for every 30 upper general secondary students passed the national exam. Last year the examination criteria were changed by the MoE to allow larger groups of VVET students to pass. For the schools, the system means they must have a large teacher/instructor staff to teach the full curriculum.

In July 2000, legislative amendments were adopted to create in every region one vocational *lycea* comprising only Steps I and II of the VVET school. This would imply the abolition of Step III of the VVET. This amendment has not been implemented yet, due to lack of resources and it is doubtful whether it would solve the underlying problems. School heads tend to strive for achieving higher status, and therefore focus their attention to the highest-level school type. The VVET status might in some cases have led to neglect of regular professional education in the school.

Vocational standards have been developed for 25 out of around 100 professions. The Ministry of Economy and the MoE do not agree on how narrowly or broadly the standards should be defined. Approximately 50% of the vocational curricula are covered and disseminated, whereas 65% of VET teachers have been trained in the new curriculum. Last year new curricula for 8 professions were developed and implemented. For the remainder, the old Soviet curricula are still used. Functional skills and key competences (such as team work, problem solving) seem to get very little attention in the curricula. Also, the lack of equipment in many cases hampers the implementation of new curricula. In some schools computer classrooms have been set up, but most schools visited by the team mentioned that the last equipment deliveries date from the 1980s.

Recommendations

In theory, the introduction of the VVET school might have been justified, as it provides a solid base for students to enter the labour market or higher education. Moldova, however, cannot afford such a system under present circumstances. *It is recommended to create an affordable system, in which a clear choice for vocational education is offered for as many as possible*, leaving out large parts of the general curriculum and placing more stress on the development of the functional skills and key competences *demanded by the labour market*. Whether this should be an upgraded professional school or a slimmed-down VVET is a choice for the Moldovan government.

A further recommendation is to set up a system of VET standards that specify employment, learning and assessment requirements for the identified occupational profiles. This system needs to have a strong involvement of social partner representatives. Priority should be given to the standards for professions that are most in demand on the labour market. In the present economic situation it is important to define the relevant curriculum not only geared towards dependent employment, but also towards self employment.

Financing and Cost-effectiveness

The VET sector is relatively expensive. Partly it is the nature of VET, which in OECD countries is usually 1.5 to 2 times higher than general secondary education; partly it is due to inefficiencies. In Moldova the costs per VET student are estimated to be 3 to 4 times higher than those per general secondary student.

In 1990 the share of expenditure on education in GDP was 5.6%, whereas the share of VET was 0.75%. In 1998, these figures were 7% and 0.65%. In 1999 and 2000 the education share dropped to 4.7%. The VET share in current public expenditures on education was 7.2% in 1998 and 1999, and has increased compared to 1996 when it was 6.2%. The share for the versatile vocational schools (VVET) in 1999 was 5.9%, and for professional schools 1.3%. The total expenditure for education dropped in this period by 25%.

According to a study done in the framework of a TACIS project on VET Reform[94] the 1999 public expenditure could cover only 38% of the financial needs of the VET system. The same study estimates that extra-budgetary funds of VET schools generate an extra 14% of income. These extra funds are generated through student fees from contract students, adult training and other educational services, production and other services like renting of premises. The Ministry of Education is rightly stimulating schools to generate extra income, but there is a need to monitor carefully whether the income is spent on upgrading the quality of its education.

The Education Law of 1995 (Art. 21.7) introduced a system by which employers were to pay a payroll tax of 2% to support vocational education and training. However, such a system has never been implemented.

The budgetary difficulties of the State and the withdrawal by State enterprises from supporting the VET system have, since 1990, caused a sharp

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[94] "Methodological Recommendations for VET Reform in Moldova", TACIS/NEI, 1999.

decline in the number of VET students, but not an equal decline in costs. Several factors contribute to the relatively high costs of the VET system.

First, school buildings and student hostels are seriously under-used due to the decrease in student numbers. The number of schools has remained at a stable level over the last 5 years, although the average number of students per school declined from 520 in 1990 to 375 in 1999, with the sharpest decrease after 1997. Many classrooms are empty, and student hostels are increasingly used by poor families with no relation to VET.

The VVET schools visited by the team in Bălți mentioned that only 50% of the places in student hostels were actually used. The schools and student hostel premises are within a distance of a few hundred meters from each other.

A second factor is the low student/(non-)teacher ratio, which is estimated around 5:1 for VET schools. This is in particular due to the very large number of non-teaching staff of which most are instructors of practical training for VET. In 1999, their total was 4 327 compared with 907 teachers. Once again, the reduction in student numbers has only worsened the student/(non-)teacher ratio.

A third factor of inefficiency is the use of energy. A World Bank study[95] estimates that in 1999 21% of the education budget was spent on heating in spite of its high price level, its scarcity and the fact that many schools close down for several months during winter.

Recommendations

Until the economy improves substantially, the policy focus of the MoE should be on increasing efficiency. Keeping in mind the decline in the relevant age cohort after 2004, and not taking into account any major policy shifts that may occur, a cost reduction policy for VET should be developed, aimed at:

- Reducing the number of VET schools and increasing the students per school, in line with the recommendations made above;
- Increasing the student/teacher ratio, supported by a re-orientation of curricula;
- Reducing energy costs through serious cost-saving measures.

[95] *Moldova's Education Sector: A Financing Strategy to Leverage System-Wide Improvement*, Claude Tibi, Sue E. Berryman and Michael Peleah, August 2001

At the same time the MoE should continue to stimulate VET schools to look for external sources of income. Transparency and accountability need to be carefully secured through regular monitoring of the sources of income, and of how the money is allocated to the education process. Student fees should be aimed at increasing the access to VET, but there should be targeted State support to students from low-income families.

The system of payroll taxation of enterprises has not worked. It might be more effective to involve employers in the process of decision-making on education and training, to help support the links between education, schools and enterprises. If employers are aware of the benefits of investments in education and training, they are more likely to participate financial support.

The extra funds generated through cost savings and from additional sources could be invested in improving the material base of schools, the salaries of teachers, and financing innovative measures that will improve the VET system in the medium or long term.

VET Teachers and Teacher Training

Teachers in VET receive a monthly salary between 100 MDL (USD 8) (EUR 8.5) for new teachers to 400 MDL (USD 32) (EUR 34.1) for very experienced teachers. These salaries are well below the average monthly wage of 439 MDL (EUR 34.7) in 2001. Moreover, as in other levels of education, there are substantial wage arrears in education. These arrears are in particular caused by local authorities that are in some cases unable to pay teachers' salaries for five to six months or even longer.

It is therefore no surprise that the profession of teacher/instructor in VET is in low demand. The Institute for Public Policy estimates that more than 45% of the present VET teachers/instructors are under-qualified, *i.e.* without a higher education degree, pedagogical training or relevant work experience. There are no specialised teacher training institutes for VET teachers or instructors. There is no occupational profile of a VET teacher and/or an instructor. Most qualified teachers have taken a technical higher education course or come directly from enterprises. Very few have followed any kind of pedagogical course.

The infrastructure for in-service training for VET teachers and instructors is limited. According to the law, every teacher has to be retrained every five years, and this is a condition for career development and salary increases. The Technical University of Moldova is one of the few institutes that provides re-training courses for VET teachers and instructors. The University has unsuccessfully attempted to get support from the MoE to set up a pre-service

teacher training or to develop a post-graduate pedagogical course for university graduates.

High quality teacher training and retraining are important motivators for teachers, and a crucial instrument for innovation and dissemination in the teaching process. In particular it is essential for the quality of education that teachers be regularly updated with developments in the labour market, in their professions, in pedagogy, core skills etc.

An example is the lack of knowledge about, and teacher training for, the use of computers in education. Many informatics teachers spend a great deal of time on how a computer works and on programming languages. There is little evidence that computers are used for subjects other than informatics.

Recommendations

Although full pre-service training for VET teachers and instructors should be the long term target, it is probably more realistic to recommend setting up a scheme for in-service teacher training on the basis of existing higher education institutes. Key areas for in-service training courses are school management, new teaching methodologies, curriculum development, and core skills.

Reduction of teachers and an increase in teaching hours, possibly the remuneration of teachers could be improved. Salaries of young teachers should have priority in order to make the profession of teacher more attractive to university graduates.

Conclusions on VET

The Moldovan VET system is in a difficult situation. VET reform has been started, but implementation has been slow due to declining economic conditions. Conservation of old traditions still is a widespread objective. However, it becomes more and more urgent to develop a mid- and long-term strategy for VET, in particular because the number of VET students is due to decline sharply after 2004. Such strategies need to be realistic, and take into account the conditions and constraints for VET reform, and should be shielded, insofar as possible, from short-term political change.

Higher Education

Introduction

The first universities in Moldova were established during the first half of the twentieth century. The oldest institutions are the Moldova State University and Moldova Agrarian University. Currently, there are altogether 49 legally operating university-level higher education institutions (HEIs) and 61 tertiary education colleges. Among the university level institutions, 14 are State universities. There are also 35 institutions operating as private legal entities. In the college sector, there are 43 state and 18 private institutions. It should be emphasised that, with few exceptions, the so-called private universities are formally established organisations with a limited number of students that are usually housed on the premises of state universities. On the other hand, there are excellent examples of truly professional private universities, such as the International Independent University of Moldova, where favourable conditions for quality studies have been created.

The total number of tertiary level students in Moldova is 99 000:72 500 regular and 26 500 correspondence students. The number of students has been gradually increasing since the middle of the 1990s. In the 1993/94 academic year, the total number of registered students was 80 700.

A network of research institutes exists in the State-supported research sector of the country. Most of these institutes belong to the Moldovan Academy of Sciences. A considerable number of researchers from Academy institutes have changed employment, and now teach in private or state HEIs. Many researchers, still employed in the Academy of Sciences, are engaged in teaching activities at the tertiary level of education.

The available statistical data do not provide a sufficient basis for assessing the current state and the development trends of the Moldovan HE sector. The OECD team's visits to Government offices and HEIs showed that the sector functions under enormous financial pressures and constraints. Through the wider introduction of paid education, the HEIs are trying to preserve their capacity to educate and perform research, and eventually to satisfy the public demand for quality education.

In spite of the difficulties and problems, there are a number of positive developments in Moldova's higher education after the country gained independence in August 1991:

- The curricula of most academic programmes have been updated and relieved of the ideological dogmas typical of Soviet education;

- New academic programmes linked to the market economy and the development of civil society have been introduced;

- A flexible system of university level degrees has been adopted to widen personal choice and to reflect market demands;

- A non-university (college) level of higher education has been introduced;

- An accreditation system for HEIs has been established to ensure the quality of studies;

- The number of students has significantly increased, in line with the international trend towards mass higher education.

There are many factors, however, that have a negative effect on the development of the higher education sector. Reduced funding from the State budget, falling share of GDP for national education; a legal framework that does not guarantee stability for the HE sector; the quality of education – especially in the paid-education sector – is questionable; extensive brain drain, and much-reduced social status of university teachers and researchers.

Issues: Legal, policy and financial

The Law on Education adopted in 1995 defines the legal framework for the higher education sector. In general, the current legislation provides a satisfactory basis for the operation of HEIs. A new university degree system was introduced that corresponds to prevailing international standards. It includes the bachelor, master and doctoral levels of studies. The document also regulated the reforms in curricula and the development of new academic programmes.

The autonomy of HEIs is also clearly stipulated. The Law requires a final approval by the Ministry of Education of curricula and even syllabi. Both curricula and syllabi should conform to adopted State standards. Though such provisions are not always accepted in an international context, it can be argued that in a period of profound social change, more control over the activities of HEIs may be in the public interest. The legislation also provides for the establishment of colleges as a new type of HEIs for short-cycle studies (2-3 years). Thus, the new Law aided the process of diversifying the higher

education to better accommodate the personal preferences of students as well as the market demands.

The Law stipulates that the Ministry of Education shall plan every year the number of student places for the different academic programmes in State higher education institutions. This is the so-called "state order". International practice shows that such planning is rarely accurate because the economy and labour market usually change rapidly and in ways that are difficult to predict several years in advance. Moreover, with the admission of a considerable number of students on a paid education basis outside the state order, the planned proportions between different fields might be substantially altered.

The Law on Education introduced the present system of quality assurance in higher education through the mechanism of institutional accreditation. After several years of delay, the process of accrediting HEIs is now under way. The impression is that more details of the accreditation procedures need to be specified in the law to ensure greater positive effects.

The current legislation provides a relatively simple procedure for the establishment of new or private HEIs. The final decision is left to the MoE; the Government and the Parliament are not involved. Thus, such an important public act is considered to fall entirely within a closed administrative cycle, without sufficient opportunities for public scrutiny and debate. As a result, a considerable number of "phantom" HEIs have been set up (called universities, academies, institutes, etc.). Many of these legal bodies do not have their own academic staff, premises, libraries, or other essential facilities. Usually, such institutions operate within existing State universities. In many cases their function is to by-pass the limitations set for the number of fee-paying students in State HEIs imposed by the MoE. In the view of the OECD study team, speedy legislative and administrative actions are needed to normalise the situation with some of the private institutions.

The Law on Education stipulates that colleges and even lyceu (upper secondary schools) can become integral parts of universities. International practice shows that the association of institutions engaged in different levels of education is usually counterproductive. The existence of secondary schools (lyceu) in universities raises also the issue of equal access to higher education. The academic objectives in school level, college level and university education are quite different.

Policy development for the HE system is co-ordinated by the MoE. The Parliamentary Commission on Education considers important educational issues, and also has the capacity to implement, by legislation, important policy

measures in the sector. The current Law on Education provides sufficient leverage for the State to exercise public control over the activities of HEIs. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted in Moldova that the State HEIs function quite independently from the State bodies in some important aspects of their activities. These include the overall funding, the total number of accepted students in different fields, and many others. Some HEIs have facilitated the establishment (within the premises of State universities) of private institutions. In some cases these are registered as limited companies. Officially, the university rents space to these organisations. Private HEIs can be set up with authorisation from the Chamber of Licensing. Most private universities have no clear legal status and are registered in different ways. In many cases, these institutions do not have the legal status of non-profit organisations.

There are different explanations for the existing problems in the interaction between the Ministry of Education and HEIs. The funding from the State does not satisfy the basic needs of the institutions. In many cases, it covers only official salaries and student stipends. All other expenses including the greater portion of actual salaries come from the income generated by HEIs themselves. Typically, this represents about two-thirds of the budget of State universities, mostly from study fees. With such a budget structure it is not surprising that HEIs are more focused on activities that bring additional income than on the co-ordination and policy alignment with State bodies.

Nevertheless, it should be underlined that the Ministry of Education and HEIs have established mechanisms for policy discussions. The main discussion forums are the meetings of the Rectors' Council, attended usually by high-level Ministry officials.

Defects in the current legislation are another reason for the discord between governmental policies and the practices of HEIs. The Law on Education does not clearly stipulate a definition of a non-state university, or of establishment procedures that would safeguard public interests. Thus, any legally registered organisation – *e.g.* non-profit foundation or even a commercial company – can call itself a university (or academy) and start its activities. A large number of such institutions have appeared during the past several years. The Government has only limited control over the activities of these private universities. Curricula and syllabi are expected to conform to the adopted State standards and the institutions are also subject to accreditation. No accreditation has been granted so far to a private university.

As already mentioned, the insufficient budget funding of HEIs is a barrier to the successful implementation of state policies in the higher education sector. The level of funding for education is certainly closely linked to the overall

shape of the economy. Moldova experienced during the past decade several major political crises including the war in Transdnistria as well as separatist upheavals in other parts of the country. Progress towards a market economy and civil society was seriously impeded by internal political instability. The economic development of the country has been slowed down, leading to severe social problems. As a result, the funding for education has decreased, as has been shown earlier in this review: the share of public expenditures for education was 10% of the consolidated (national and local) budget in 1997, 7% in 1998, 7% in 1999, and only 4.7% in 2000. The problems are clearly understood in the MoE and the Ministry of Finance, as well as in the Parliamentary Commission on Education. The intentions are to raise the budgetary funding to the level of 7% of GDP (as required by law) over the next 2-3 years.

Various initiatives have been taken by HEIs to create additional sources of income. In many instances, the quite liberal (in some aspects) legislation has been used to its farthest possible limits. In other cases, practices go beyond the limits of the law. These are most often related to paid education services, and especially to the mixing of activities and funding of State and private HEIs. There is evidently a serious institutional problem that needs to be resolved through policies based on a strategy agreed between state governing bodies and HEIs.

Some of the outstanding current issues in the educational system of Moldova, as viewed by the Ministry of Education, are:

- Hampered access to education for some social groups;
- Low level of availability of information technologies;
- Low overall funding of education;
- Decreased social status of teachers.

While these problems apply to the entire educational system, it should perhaps be underlined that the HE sector experiences them, too. With the wide introduction of paid education in the sector, young people from socially and financially weak backgrounds have fewer chances to study at tertiary level. On the other hand, however, the total number of students entering tertiary level institutions *increased* considerably after paid education was introduced. The main problem is therefore one of *equity of access*, rather than availability of student places in HEIs.

The wider introduction of information technologies is a priority for all HEIs in Moldova. Some of the institutions visited – the A. Russo University in Bălți and the private ULIM (International Independent University of Moldova) in Chişinău – have built a quite good information technology (IT) infrastructure for studies and research. The library in A. Russo University is an excellent achievement, reached through institutional and personal initiatives under difficult financial conditions. IT is a priority for the university management in Comrat University, where well-equipped classes for foreign languages and computer science have been created, with good IT facilities.

The level of salaries for the university lecturers is very low in a comparative regional context, even though the HEIs usually pay salaries that are two to four times higher than the official state levels. The additional payments come from extra-budgetary income, mostly from student fees. In spite of this, many university lecturers are forced to take a second and even a third teaching job in other universities or in colleges and schools. As a result, they have considerably less time to devote to their main duties.

Governance and administration

Partly due to currently stringent budgetary constraints, the role of the State administration in defining strategies and policies in HE appears to be somewhat reduced. In practice, HEIs enjoy greater autonomy than is stipulated in the existing legislation. This is, however, hardly surprising taking into account the low proportion of state funding in the overall budgets of institutions. In Moldova State University, the oldest and biggest higher education institution in the country, about 80% of the yearly budget comes from own income.

By law, the Government has considerable powers of control in the HE sector:

- The MoE has the power to open and close HEIs.
- All universities are required to use curricula and syllabi that conform to standards adopted by the Government.
- The Council of Ministers approves every year the number of students to be admitted by State universities, by field of study (state order).
- The Ministry operates some limited programmes for funding research in HEIs.

- The MoE has the power to approve or disapprove the appointment of Rectors, after elections in the Senates of HEIs.

- The Accreditation Council grants institutional accreditation to State and private universities. In administrative terms, the Accreditation Council is a division in the MoE.

In spite of the considerable powers envisaged in the legislation, the overall impression is that the state organs, and in particular the MoE, do not exercise sufficient public control over the activities of HEIs. It appears that, in practice, HEIs decide the number of accepted students in different fields, either through accepting greater number of fee-paying students or through co-operation with private training institutions housed within the State universities. The share of State funding is between 20% and 50% of overall budget; and the State provides just 20% to 40% of the actual salaries of teachers.

In terms of administration and management, co-operation between State administration and the managements of universities appears to be quite good at both national and regional levels. The main consultative body is the Council of Rectors of Moldovan universities. Senior ministry officials take part in its meetings. At regional level, representatives of the university managements are usually appointed as members of committees in the administration.

At institutional level, internal management is the responsibility of the Rector and his/her deputies and the university Senate. The autonomy HEIs acquired after the political changes has resulted in a considerably increased role of university and faculty managements. As already mentioned the university administration oversees a budget mostly derived from the institution's own sources. These new responsibilities and opportunities have allowed university managements to maintain the quality of studies and the motivation of the lecturing staff, in spite of severe cuts in State funding. The OECD team saw excellent examples of determination and foresight by university management in achieving adequate conditions for studies and research for both students and teachers. For example, the A. Russo University in Bălți is completing a new university building with well-equipped lecture rooms and laboratories. Comrat University, established only 10 years ago, now has good facilities for training in a number of fields. These achievements are the result of great efforts to attract funding from different sources, including foreign aid. The private International Independent University of Moldova (ULIM) is a very good example of the determination and focussed policies of its management. The university provides excellent facilities for its students and staff, and also stimulates academic research.

Nevertheless, the processes of democratisation of higher education were accompanied by a number of negative developments, linked mostly to the policies and practice of university management:

- The inter-dependence between labour market and education has been distorted, especially in some fields. For example, in the year 2000 alone, the number of students who graduated in law from State and private HEIs reached 6 000. The figure is out of any proportion with market needs. At the same time, the number of students in technical fields has dropped. It is quite clear that the search for extra income has been the priority for many HEIs.

- The quality of education has suffered in a number of fields. It is quite clear that the country does not have the human and institutional resource to provide adequate training to 6 000 law students admitted every year. The same is true for a number of other fields of study.

- It appears that some universities help create "phantom" private universities within their own premises, in the pursuit of extra income. This, in effect, is being regarded as unofficial (and uncontrolled) privatisation of State HEIs.

- Research activities have diminished in a number of HEIs, in absence of adequate funding from the State budget; moreover, research thus far has not attracted private money, e.g. from enterprises.

The negative consequences of these developments are well appreciated by the university administrations, and there is a general understanding that measures need to be taken to stabilise the sector. The Government and Parliament are working on a new Law aimed at improving the legal basis for quality assurance and accreditation of HEIs.

Relationship with general pre-university education

Admission of students to Moldovan HEIs (see Table 8) is based on the academic results in schools and, with greater weight, on the results of entrance examinations. The introduction of national maturity examinations as an alternative has been also considered. HEIs are reluctant to accept students on the basis of tests or examinations organised outside their own university or faculties.

However, these faculty based examinations create considerable inequity with respect to access for prospective students coming from under-privileged

social backgrounds or from rural areas. It is well known that students in the bigger cities can attend special preparation courses for faculty entrance examinations, often given by the same professors who set the exam. A sizeable private lessons "industry" has also developed, often within the university centres themselves. This is clearly a conflict of interest, as well as an unfair advantage to students from urban and better-off families compared with their (equally talented and qualified) poorer or rural counterparts. The paid tutoring system in particular has grown in the past few years, as has the occurrence of corruption and bribery[96] in university entrance procedures (see section on Quality of Governance in this review). There was even a web site for students which displayed "price lists" for tests in a number of institutions – this now appears to have been closed down, but the message remains clear. The introduction of paid higher education has led to further inequalities. In some fields of study, the fees are so high that it has become impossible for school leavers from poorer families to apply for such studies.

Recommendations

Legislation and Policies:

- *Stricter procedures and requirements* for the establishment of new higher education institutions should be introduced.

- *A unified legal status* of private HEIs should be stipulated. All decrees for the foundation of current private universities need to be reviewed.

- *The role of accreditation and academic assessment* should be strengthened to ensure the quality of studies in HEIs.

- *The funding of the HE sector* needs to be increased in line with the projected overall rise in the share of GDP allocated to education.

- *Development of research activities* in HEIs should become a policy priority for Government and institutions.

- A special programme for wider introduction of information technology can be implemented with the aid of international donors.

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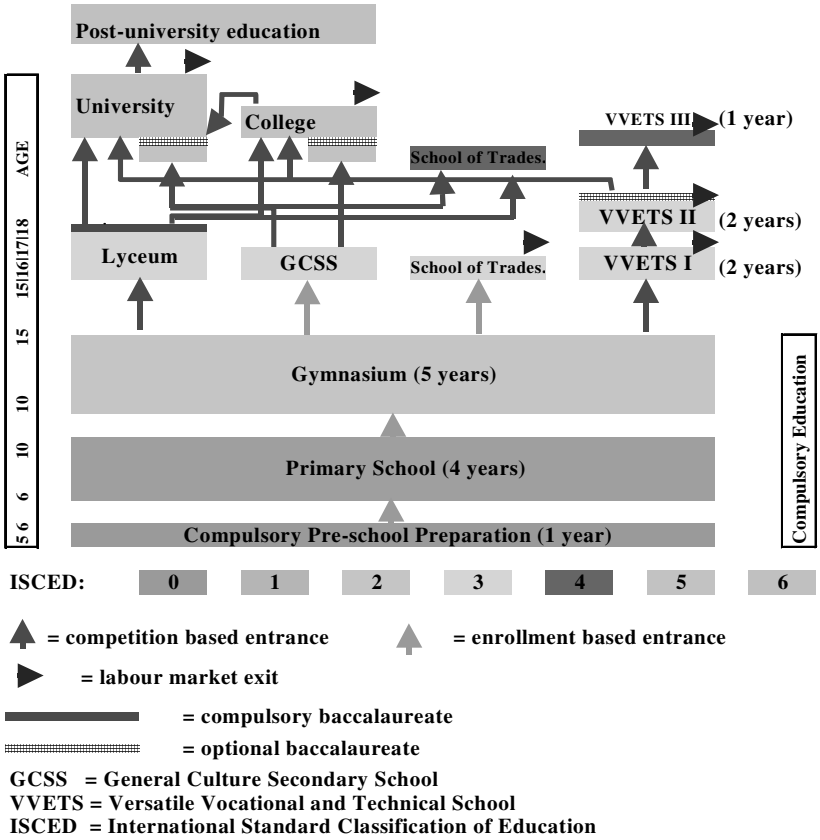
[96] See *Corruption and Quality of Governance.* January 2001. Dr Lilia Carasciuc, CISR.

- The results from external, national, technically competent maturity examinations should gradually become the main criterion for admittance to higher education studies.

Figure 4. Structure of the National Education System



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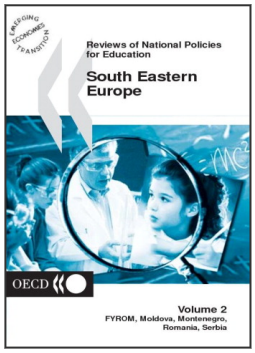

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