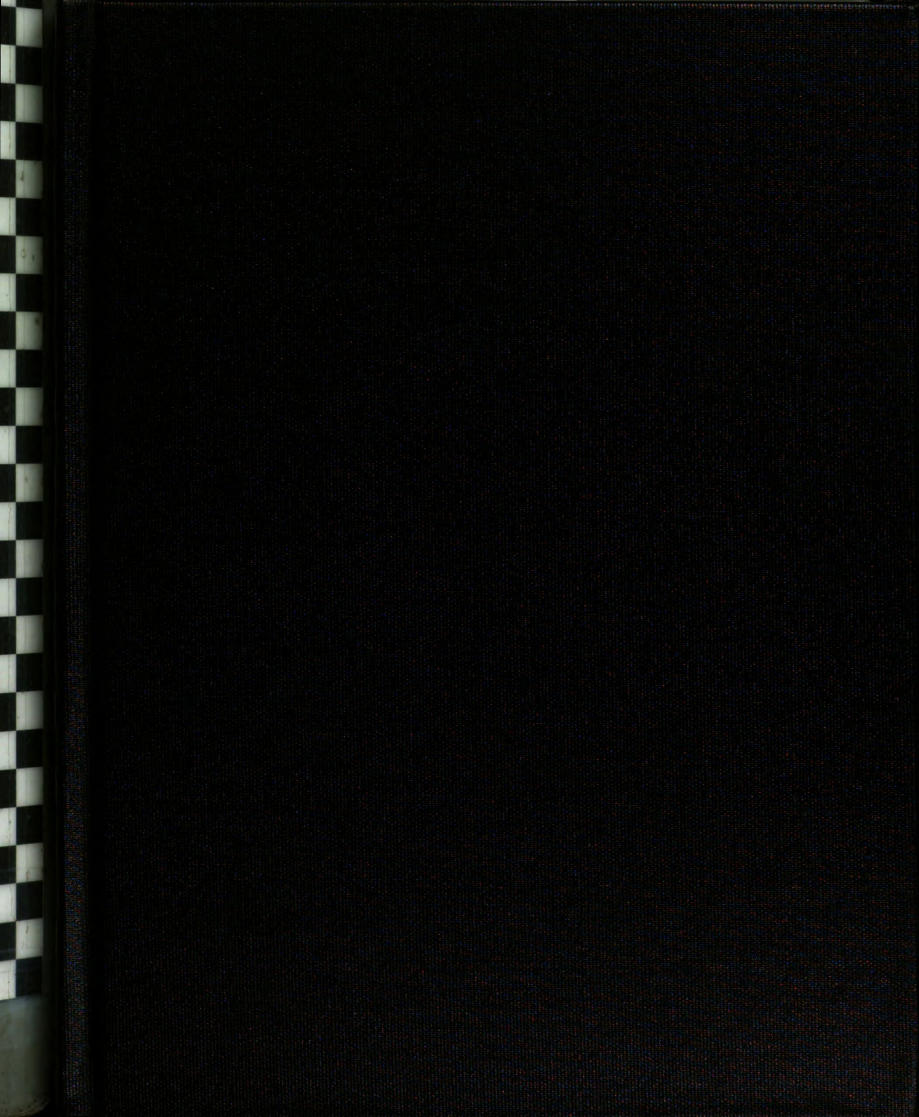




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IN AND ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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Empty Pedestals: Creating a National School System in an Era of Globalization

By

Nils Joseph Kauffman

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

EMPTY PEDESTALS: CREATING A NATIONAL SCHOOL SYSTEM IN AN ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

BY

Nils Joseph Kauffman

When the Republic of Moldova became independent after the fall of the Soviet Union, it faced the challenge, for the first time, of creating its own school system. A new Moldovan school system would replace the Soviet system that had been in existence in Moldova since World War II. The new Moldovan school system was to be democratic, independent, promote national values, teach in the maternal language, afford a great deal of autonomy to teachers, allow for local control, and teach children to be independent, creative citizens.

How Moldova proceeded to form a national education system in a globalizing world is the topic of this dissertation. Influences on the new school system came from many directions. School reform began with the dismantling of the Soviet schools, structures, and ideology. Yet the Soviet influence on the new curriculum is apparent. In addition, Moldovan scholars looked towards Romania and other countries for ideas. With the help of the World Bank, Moldova introduced a curriculum through a countrywide training program. Two issues have complicated the development of a national school system. The severe economic challenges facing Moldova have impeded implementation, and the understanding of Moldovan nationality continues to be under debate.

While the Ministry of Education (MET) designed a national curriculum, the Open Society Institute, sponsored by the Soros Foundation, introduced the Step by Step (*Pas cu Pas*, PCP) preschool program modeled after the American Head Start program. Despite economic difficulties, the program has since grown into a nationwide elementary school model in use in about one-fifth of schools.

I use Primavara (a pseudonym) school as a case study of how a school and its teachers adjusted to the changes. The school is semi-independent using the PCP philosophy and relying on parents for a significant source of funding. Teachers use this model because of the creativity allowed them and are convinced it is better for children. Parents choose the model for an alternative to the standard model they associate with the USSR.

Primavara is in many respects a national school. PCP may be international in origin, but it is consistent with the goals included in national policy. This is not surprising; much of the national policy took inspiration from foreign school models. This is the fate of national school systems in an era of globalization; their leaders look abroad for ideas, and set goals that most schools struggle to implement.

This study provides a historical analysis of the development of the Moldovan school system and a context for current events. This history relies on analysis of MET documents from 1988 to 2008, interviews with scholars involved with educational reform, and interviews with practicing and retired teachers.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the Soviet Union, images of Lenin were everywhere. Pictures, busts, and statues of Lenin adorned the classrooms, entryways, and courtyards of schools. Vladimir Ilych Lenin symbolized both the ideal student and the purpose of schooling. Inside the schools, students heard motivational stories of Lenin's brilliance and his educational success. He also symbolized the ideal Soviet citizen, the paternalistic founder caring for the masses. The curriculum, the youth organizations, the pedagogy reinforced this goal.

Now, no longer the benevolent father, Lenin, according to some, became a tyrant. After Moldova declared independence in 1991, the government ordered local school officials to remove these symbols of the communist past. Left standing in front of many schools are the empty pedestals, symbolic of the ideology administratively removed from school curriculum. As Lenin's statues fell so did the school system, which has struggled to design and implement a new philosophy and curriculum.

This is a study of school change, in a society that has undergone dramatic societal change. This school change is not the typical American idea of school change that may include the introduction of new textbooks, a new mathematics program, or a new assessment. In Moldova, school change encompassed all of this and the opportunity to reformulate a new educational philosophy and ideal. The society changed; social structures changed; economic structures changed. Just as the country has faced many problems and the complications of changing

a communist system to market capitalism, the school system has faced many problems as well. This study is an investigation into what happens to schools in such a society.

A Brief Geographical and Historical Overview of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova is a landlocked country located between Romania and Ukraine and between the Nistru and Prut Rivers just northwest of the Black Sea. The country, formerly a Soviet Republic, declared its sovereignty on 26 July 1990 and then independence on 27 August 1991. The country was a prime agricultural producer for the Soviet Union and still has a large agrarian sector. About four million people live in this small country of 33,700 square kilometers consisting of rolling steppe. Most of the population is Romanian speaking. Other ethnic groups include Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, Polish, and Roma; together these groups constitute just over 20% of the population.

The region has had a number of occupiers in its history. Most recently, the Soviet Union annexed this region, called Besarabia, in the early part of WWII. In the inter-war period, Romania ruled Besarabia. At the same time, the Russian Soviet Federation of Socialist Republics created the Moldova Autonomous Soviet Republic. This was on land carved out of Ukraine, with a high proportion of Romanian speaking people. The intention was to create a justification for a Slavic Moldova separate from Romania. The Soviets claimed that Moldovans were of

Slavic origin and created a Moldovan language. In fact the language was Romanian written with the Cyrillic alphabet.¹ In Moldovan there was also a strong emphasis on idioms that were different from the Romanian spoken in Romania. This was not a constant policy; the official alphabet changed several times between Cyrillic and Latin. There were also military skirmishes along the border between Romanian- and Soviet- controlled Moldova (King, 2000, p. 4).

What actually happened during this time of Romanian control is under debate. Those supporting an independent Moldova argue that the Romanians did little for the people in Besarabia, creating few schools and forcing people to speak Romanian (Prokofiev, 1967). Those promoting a closer relationship with Romania suggest that the Romanians did build a considerable number of schools (Axentii, 2004), and that people were allowed to speak their maternal language in public.

Just prior to union with Romania, Moldova had a brief period of autonomy and independence. During this time, Moldovan teachers and school officials called for the establishment of a national school system with instruction in Romanian. This period came to an end when, on 24 January 1918, representatives from Besarabia voted for union with Romania.

¹ When referring to Romanian written in Cyrillic, I will use the term Moldovan. When referring to the language commonly spoken in Besarabia or written with the Latin alphabet, I will use the term Romanian. The official language of present day Moldova is called Moldovan and is written with Latin letters. However, there is a great deal of confusion. The Declaration of Independence refers to Romanian. The Constitution only refers to the state language and the decree from 31 August 1989 declaring Moldovan the official language.

Before WWI Besarabia was part of Tsarist Russia. The Russians had gained control of it from the Turks at the end of the Russian-Turk war at the Peace of Bucharest in 1912 (Cibotaru, 1991). At this time Russia disbanded the Orthodox Church affiliated with Bucharest and installed an archbishop affiliated with the Moscow Patriarchy. Moldova now has a Metropolitan of Besarabia affiliated with Bucharest and a Metropolitan of Chisinau (the capital city) and all of Moldova affiliated with Moscow.

The region of Transnistria, on the left bank of the Nistru River, which had been the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Republic between the wars, broke away from the rest of the country in 1992; this conflict resulted in a short civil war. The region still contains a contingent of Russian soldiers and claims to be independent of the Republic, a claim that the Moldovan Parliament in Chisinau contests but about which it can do little. A second region, called Gagauzia, also attempted to form an independent country after the dissolution of the Soviet Union but is now a semiautonomous zone within Moldova (King, 2000). This region in southern Moldova is mostly populated by Gagauz who are Christians speaking a Turkic derived language.

Since independence, Moldova has had numerous challenges. The currency has been devalued twice. The GDP fell precipitously. There was a civil war with the break away region of Transnistria. Moldova is the only former Soviet Republic that elected an unreformed communist party. Despite these problems, the country has had five relatively peaceful national elections.

Schools, too, have had their challenges. In general they are underfunded and there is a shortage of teachers. However, reform efforts continue. There is a new curriculum developed in independent Moldova. The country has received the support of the World Bank in its school reform. The aim of this study is to analyze how schools and teachers have struggled during this time.

Literature Review

The period of change in the former Soviet Bloc has been characterized as transition and transformation. According to Mitter (2003), transition is the process in a society undergoing profound social change, while transformation is change associated with the volition of those in power or of the opposition. This understanding of transition draws on modernization theory as described in Rostow (1956). Rostow argues that economies progress towards liberal market capitalism in a series of stages. In fact, Rostow even compared his stages of economic development to Marx's (Martinussen, 1997). Others do not adhere to that interpretation of transition. Gans-Morse (2004) argues that the literature on transition seldom contains a perspective consistent with modernization. Carothers (Carothers, 2002) suggests that the term transition is too broad and contains assumptions about the process and the characteristics of the countries involved. Specifically, there is a presumption that these countries will progress towards democracy, that this progression will unfold in a sequence of events, that elections are of "determinative importance" (p. 7), that the history of the countries will not affect the outcomes, and that existing, functioning states are making the

transition. Despite the debate, transition does bring our attention to the origins of the new or reconstituted countries of Eastern Europe and the challenges they face.

Transition, mostly a political science field, is not a single unified field of study. Some authors (Bunce, 1995; Roeder, 1999; Schmitter & Karl, 1994) question the idea that the analysis of transition, based on the tradition developed in Southern Europe and Latin America, would be appropriate to understand Eastern Europe. This is due primarily to the different characteristics of the countries involved. In Eastern Europe change came quickly and in unconsolidated nation-states, and protests were against the Soviet state, not against regimes in already established nations (Bunce, 2003). Finally, Latin American countries, Bunce (1995) argues, went through a re-democratization, because these countries had democratic forms previously. Indeed, O'Donnell et al. (1986) analyzing transition in Southern Europe and Latin America, takes a much more tentative view to transition noting that the countries are very unstable and the idea of an inexorable "transition" to liberal democracy is unreliable. Furthermore, it does not help us examine the process of change, it only attributes an assumed understanding of events by placing them in a preconceived framework.

In an interesting juxtaposition, Martin Carnoy and Joel Samoff (1990) used the term 'transition' to describe a number of post-colonial countries moving from capitalism towards socialism. In these cases, it was not a process spurred by

social change but by specific policies of the state. This type of transition is perhaps different in form but similar in process to the transition taking place in Eastern Europe. There is still a change in ideology and economic relations that the state, and population, must navigate. The authors attribute much of the change in school policy in the respective countries to the actions of the state as it attempted to consolidate its regime and ideology and to gain legitimacy. For example, several of these countries promoted rural literacy campaigns. The important point is that the state had a primary role in the changes that took place in schools. The schools were not simply susceptible to the changes in the social and economic systems.

According to at least one definition, Moldova has experienced an educational transition. Cowen (2000, p. 84) defines educational transition as the

more or less simultaneous collapse and reconstruction of (i) state apparatuses (ii) economic and social stratification systems and (iii) the central value system, especially the political value system, to offer a new definition of the future, occurring over a short span of time and the deliberate incorporation of the education system, as an active agency and as a message system, into this social transition. In the context of such a social drama, the educational system itself is redefined, fully or partially. The educational system is both changed by the broader transition and (after rapid redefinition) contributes to the social transition.

This definition implies that schools are under the influence of both societal changes and the decisions of political actors.

Lacking in this definition of transition is a description of what happens during this process. There is no discussion of what must change in order to accomplish this process. What pieces of the old system are kept? What pieces

are discarded? How do new ideas enter the school system? How are they accepted? Cowen's definition does not clarify this and oversimplifies the process.

In the case of the former Soviet Bloc (FSB), which had a strong school system, perhaps the distinctive characteristic of a country in transition is its origin, not some future form.² Instead, the focus should be more appropriately placed on the previous school structure. Namely, the FSB countries had established, modern, mass educational systems. It is the past structures that will determine the starting point of change and the perspective of many teachers, parents, and administrators who attended those schools.

Educational change in Moldova involves an educational system in the midst of a societal transition; this suggests a change of ideology and philosophy and the relationship between society and school not just teaching methods and content.³ In addition, Moldovan teachers have new freedom; the MET no longer dictates lessons. Teachers' status in society is changing. The content once taught in schools has not simply changed but is now receives widespread criticism. Describing how the Moldovan education system has changed will provide one explanation of the term educational transition.

² However, Moldova could be going through a period of 'de-development' (Meurs & Ranasinghe, 2003). Because of the poor economy many adults have emigrated seeking work and there is relatively little funding available for maintenance of infrastructure. The loss of educated working adults to work overseas and the deteriorating infrastructure reduces the capacity for Moldova. When teachers leave, fewer teachers remain to work with students decreasing the capacity of the education system. When the infrastructure declines, the physical resources needed to manufacture or transport goods decreases capacity. Although Moldova is considered to be a transition country, the process of de-development highlights the possibility that the challenges may one day become more like a developing country.

³ Some may view reforms as threats to the moral order or dramatic changes in worldview (Pearson, 2004; Rosen, 2001; Schoenfeld, 2004). However, at least in the U. S., these reforms do not coincide with sudden changes in a way of life such as the nationalization of private property, or secession.

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The Study

The aim of the study is to describe and analyze the process of change in Moldovan schools and how teachers act and react to that change. The original conception of the study originated in a comparison of school change in a developing country such as Afghanistan that has never had a functioning mass education system, with school change in a transition country such as an independent republic of the former USSR. The latter had, just prior to independence, a working school system from preschool to post university studies. Both countries face daunting challenges, but the nature of the challenges would likely be different. It is to understand the unique challenges in a transition country that I undertook this study.

My interest and work in Moldova extends over a decade. My first experience in Moldova was as a Peace Corps Volunteer serving from 1996 to 1998. During this time I became familiar with the educational system. I taught English and mathematics classes in schools and lyceums, assisted school administrators in school improvement projects, and conducted in-service workshops for teachers. I also became familiar with the country teaching for a year in a Russian/Romanian mixed school in the north, and in a Russian school in an ethnic Bulgarian village in the south. Over the course of two years I became fluent, in the school context, in both Romanian and Russian.

The process of transition in Moldova has been going on for over 20 years. To capture both the unfolding of events over this time period and the current

situation, I have used historical research to provide background for a qualitative and ethnographic inquiry in schools.

I originally intended to focus on how teachers have acted and reacted to the changes in school policy and changes in society and what they are doing in the classroom. I posed the following questions.

- a) How do teachers negotiate between the Soviet past (practices, traditions, roles, organizational structures) and the current demands (social change, reform practices, limited resources) on their work?
- b) What factors influence how teachers enact the new national curriculum?
 - i. How do teachers understand the new conceptions of teaching and learning embedded in policy?
 - ii. How do teachers portray Soviet era practices and goals?
 - iii. How do teachers enact the new curriculum?
 - iv. How do social changes (change in funding, job market, economy, politics, roles of individuals) influence teachers and their work?
 - v. How do policy makers and parents understand reform and Soviet era practices?

These questions suggest a great deal of work in the classroom. After pre-dissertation work in the summer of 2005, I returned the following year in the fall as a Fulbright Fellow to begin data collection. In the fall of 2006, I spent most of my time in the village of Zaim; there is only one school in the village. I selected Zaim to represent a typical, ethnic Moldovan village. In addition, a university professor recommended I work there. I did not realize when I began my work in Zaim that the school uses the Step by Step program. I interviewed five teachers and the school director and assistant director. I also observed faculty meetings and open lessons. In addition I interviewed school directors and teachers at three

nearby schools and participated in the professional development open lessons scheduled by the regional authorities.

During the fall of 2006 I also worked in Chisinau. I visited school 70, which has both PCP and regular classes. I observed third and fourth grade teachers and interviewed both a PCP teacher and a teacher of the regular classes. I also had extensive discussions with three administrators at the school. I visited *scoala/gradinita* (school/kindergarten) Primavara and interviewed two senior teachers, observed classes, and participated in a seminar for teachers learning the program.

I left Moldova in December of 2006 to return home for the birth of my son. The Department of Education granted me a deferment for my fellowship.

Reflection on this first phase of the research revealed several challenges for further research. Teachers do not earn a living wage and are very busy. In villages they have work at home; they milk cows or work in the garden. In the cities they have second jobs or tutoring sessions. In some cases teachers have a double teaching load to earn more money. This makes it difficult to schedule interviews with teachers and difficult to build rapport with them.

Second, I needed a sharper focus to my research. After reviewing the data I had collected in the fall of 2006, I concluded that a general survey of schools as originally planned would not provide a sufficiently rich set of data to describe education in Moldova. I decided to expand my research to include a greater historical perspective and to focus on one explicit elementary school model. This

would allow an analysis of the policy field as well as investigate in more detail how a single school and its teachers managed during the first 17 years of Moldovan independence.

At this point I decided to focus my research on the Step by Step program (PCP). I chose to study the PCP program for several reasons. The PCP program was established by the Soros foundation and represents one case of educational change in the country: adopting a foreign model. This model has become the most widespread elementary school model in the country, other than the regular national school. This is an elementary school model, which is also significant. School reform in Moldova started from the elementary grades and there has been longer time for change to take place at this level. Studying the PCP would allow greater contrast with the “regular” classes taught at schools that did not use the PCP. Finally, Primavara agreed to allow me to focus on their school. Teachers at the school have assistant teachers, the parent association subsidizes the teachers’ salaries, and, according to the parent association contract, are prohibited from taking on students after school. This would allow me more time to work with teachers and learn of their perspectives.

The PCP program represents a unique case in Moldova. It is a program established by the Open Society Institute of Moldova, which receives funding from the Soros foundation. The original trainers for the program were Americans. PCP promotes active teaching methods, giving children some say in class decisions, and the involvement of parents. In many respects it embodies reform

efforts dating back to *perestroika*. Furthermore, one of its goals is to influence the school system of Moldova; it provides training to teachers across the country. That being noted, Primavara does face many of the same challenges all schools face: search for funds, collaboration with the parent community, national tests, and working in a changing society.

In October of 2007, I returned to Moldova and stayed in the country until the end of the school year on 31 May 2008. My focus at this time was on a single school, Primavara, to study the PCP as a case of school reform. I observed every teacher for at least one full day. I received free access to every classroom nearly every time I asked. Most often I would simply knock on the door of the classroom during a break or before lessons started and asked for permission to observe. I was never turned down. The school often has visitors including foreign visitors making my presence less intrusive. After lessons, I conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers. The interviews had two parts. First I asked teachers about the day, what they did, and why they did it. The second part was a more wide-ranging interview about the philosophy of PCP, their personal reflections on the school, and their experience teaching.

After visiting every classroom once, I continued my observations looking for classes that met less often. Science and history classes met just once a week. Again, my access to classes was unimpeded. Only once did a teacher resist and said that I would not see anything new during the specific lesson I requested. She consented when I suggested an alternate date. I looked for

special events such as the beginning and ending of a unit in *studiu tematica*, a student guided activity. Teachers often stayed in the school after lessons allowing time for more informal conversations. During this time, I routinely discussed with teachers what I saw in the school, what I saw in other schools, and often sat in on teacher meetings and informal discussions.

I also interviewed the school director, and had many informal conversations with her. I interviewed the national director of Step by Step Moldova as well.

There were many other events at the school, which I was able to observe. On three occasions I participated in teacher observations with the director. This involved both watching the teacher for one or more lessons and then observing the discussions between the teacher and director later in the day. I observed a series of open lessons in the early spring and attended the analysis of those lessons. I observed parent meetings at the class level and the school level. I observed faculty meetings. I observed student disciplinary proceedings.

Through the year, as teachers got to know me better, they became more candid in our conversations, and I became bolder in my questions.

During the spring semester I interviewed 20 parents. I searched for parents who were active as well as inactive in the school. Sometimes this took considerable effort to arrange the meetings at my apartment, at various places of work, or at the school

Even though I focused on a single school, I did continue to study other aspects of the school system. The Primavara School is located in the Botanica sector of the capital and has its own sector school administration. I attended two meetings of school directors in the Botanica sector conducted by the superintendent and interviewed him on two occasions.

For several days I shadowed the inspector of national elementary schools for the Municipality of Chisinau. We visited a private school, one of the more prestigious public schools, and a series of six lessons taught as part of the competition for teacher of the year for the Municipality of Chisinau. I also interviewed her and discussed what we saw as well as her perspective on school reform in Moldova. This experience allows me to provide some contrast and comparison to the regular national model.

I also received access to the Ministry of Education archives and searched through Ministry documents from the late 1980's to 2005. I collected numerous documents that directed changes in the school system, documents that represent the challenges of the Moldovan school system, and documents that show the workings of the school system. I did not receive access to more recent archives, but I did get copies of some of the more recent documents that the MET published in quarterly pamphlets. I interviewed the director of preuniversity education at the MET.

I worked in the library of the Pedagogical Museum in Chisinau. The former director of the museum was also a vice-minister of education and was a student

during the period of union with Romania. I interviewed him and spoke with him informally on several occasions. The library has only a small office-sized room for its archives, but I found a number of textbooks, history books, and other documents dating to Soviet times. With the help of the museum staff, I contacted the “Teachers’ House” located in the Central Committee offices of the Communist Party. This organization supports retired teachers, several of whom I interviewed to gain a perspective on what took place in Soviet era classrooms. These retired teachers generously gave me some of their old textbooks and teacher supplies.

I interviewed several professors at the pedagogical university “Ion Creanga” and the Institute of Educational Sciences. These professors were involved in the development of the new curriculum and in teacher training.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized historically. As I worked in the schools I realized that what I saw was the result of a long process of events. I could not understand the current situation in Moldova without some reference to its antecedents. Chapter 2 therefore begins with a brief history of education in Moldova beginning with the Russian annexation of the territory in 1812. I highlight the expansion of the school system through the nineteenth century, the efforts to create a national school during a brief period of autonomy and independence between 1917 and 1918, and two perspectives on the time of union with Romania between the World Wars. An analysis of Soviet era laws governing

education follows. The chapter ends with a description of the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, during which school reforms began.

Before establishing a new national school, Moldova first needed to dismantle the Soviet system and then build something new. This was a deliberate process undertaken by the Ministry of Education often following directives from the government. I describe this process in chapter three using Ministry of Education and Youth (MET)⁴ directives and position papers. This included the removal of statues and images, youth organizations, and ideology. It continues with the efforts to rebuild the system. I discuss the early calls for a national school and how these ideas later became official policy. The influence of the Soviet era remains clear, but other ideas based on the research of Moldovan scholars and based on foreign schools systems also influenced their development. The Romanian system plays an important role in this process due to historical and linguistic ties between Moldova and Romania. By 1997 Moldova had created its first indigenous school curriculum, an accomplishment that exemplified school reform in Moldova. In contrast to what it replaced, the curriculum included objectives, without specific material or methodology. This gave teachers the flexibility and the responsibility of designing lessons.

In a project co-financed by the World Bank, the MET published new textbooks, and teachers received training in the new educational practices. Just

⁴ The ministry of education of Moldova has changed its name numerous times since independence. I do not try to track those changes in this dissertation. When referring to specific documents that mention the name of the Ministry, I use the name of the time. Otherwise I will refer to the ministry of education using the abbreviation MET for *Miniserul Educatiei is Tineretului* (Ministry of Education and Youth). This is the name of the ministry at the time of the research.

as the curriculum defined a new relationship between teacher and content, the MET proposed a new relationship between teacher and student. The teacher was now to have a more open relationship with students and work with them to create a class community.

Chapter four returns to a discussion of more pragmatic concerns. The Moldovan economy suffered a precipitous decline after independence and Moldovan society underwent dramatic and traumatic change. To understand what is taking place in schools and in classrooms it is important to understand the social and economic conditions of schools. Funding is low, teacher salaries are low, money is available neither for teacher supplies nor for school maintenance. Few young teachers are entering the profession; many teachers of retirement age continue to teach to earn a salary. Schools are now more dependent on parents for funding. While schools are supposed to involve parents more directly in the school management, many working adults, including teachers, have emigrated leaving children alone or with aunts, uncles, or grandparents.

Chapter five changes the focus again to begin a case study of the Step by Step program as it is implemented in a single school. This program is an international program introduced by the Open Society Institute. In many ways, the program promotes the ideas and practices associated with the national school. Chapter five describes the policy, philosophy, and practices associated with this program as well as a history of the PCP in Moldova.

Chapter six analyzes the operation of Primavara and its implementation of the PCP with an emphasis on the unique characteristics of the school and how it is combined with the national curriculum. Despite the argument that the school fulfills the national curriculum, Primavara does teach something quite unique from non-PCP schools. Teachers have a great deal of autonomy, parents are involved in the management of the school, children have opportunities to guide their own learning and voice their opinions. These characteristics distinguish the school from others in the country yet are consistent with the goals of the national school. Furthermore, the school is a training site conveying these ideas to other teachers. This creates an alternate authority to the MET.

Chapter seven examines the role of parents and the relationship between parents and teachers at Primavara. Involving parents in schools has been a much discussed goal since *perestroika*. Drawing on interviews from parents I show how there is commonality between the parents and the teachers' vision of the skills children should learn. However, there is a great deal of tension as parents try to get the school to support their priorities, and teachers try to implement a vision of parent-teacher collaboration. One consequence of allowing parents decision-making authority, is that they can use this authority to create structures so they do not need to be active in the school.

Chapter eight concludes the study with a discussion of what transition has been for Moldovan schools. I look at the problems, policies and politics that led to this period of change in Moldova. I discuss the national, international, and

historical influences on the construction of the new school system. I argue that Moldova has something of a hybrid school system. The development of the system started with the introduction of the PCP in Moldova as a preschool program. It has since entered the primary grades and provides professional development for teachers across the country. Teachers and parents have turned to the PCP as an alternative to the standard school. This international program provides a unique environment for children and provides some legitimacy in a school system that is trying to change.

CHAPTER TWO: UNIONS AND NATIONALISTS, A TEMPLATE FOR CHANGE

Compatriots! Civic harmony is the only road to the future! No to nationalism and separatism!
CPSU on the 73rd Anniversary of October Revolution

For most of the past two centuries Russians controlled the land between the Nistru and Prut Rivers called Besarbia. The mass education system began its development under Russian direction, continued under Romanian governance, and finally reached near universal status within the Soviet system. This was the foundation and the tradition that Moldovans could either dismantle to build a national system or on which they could build their own schools. In this chapter I briefly describe the development of the school system in Moldova beginning with the Russian annexation of Besarabia in 1812. I focus on the Soviet system and its governing laws, their implementation, and on issues that arose during *perestroika*. This will allow us to examine the continuity and discontinuity in the development of an independent Moldovan education system, in policy, and, to a lesser degree, in practice.

Tsarist Rule

Tsarist Russia gained control of Besarabia at the beginning of the 19th century after a war with Turkey. To consolidate the new government and support the new subjects, the tsarist government built elementary schools. In 1812, when Russia gained control of Besarabia, Gavril Banulescu Bodoni became the archbishop of Besarabia. He established the first public school in Besarabia in

1815, a seminary. Most of the first teachers and the first textbooks used in the school were Russian.

Other schools came into existence soon after. Around 1820 several representatives from Besarabia traveled to Saint Petersburg to study a Lancasterine school, a method that became known as “reciprocal teaching.” The first school using this method in Besarabia opened in 1824, in Chisinau, and was sponsored by a service organization. Churches and monasteries formed small schools without state intervention. Village schools also came into existence. About these two latter types of schools little is known because they were not under the supervision of the state. The upper class and the landowners attempted on several occasions to establish elite schools for their children, finally gaining permission in the 1820’s (Cibotaru, 1991).

Nicholae I, who reigned from 1825-1855, attempted to use schools to strengthen the feudal society. School policy during his reign limited the expansion of the school system, limited teaching to religion, and transformed schools into a means of Russification. In 1835 the Ministry of Religion and Education took over the supervision of the Lancasterine schools, which served few of the children of peasants and workers. In 1836 the Ministry of State Property took over the colonial schools (as many as 77 in number) created for the German and Bulgarian ethnic groups. These groups had special privileges; they did not pay taxes, and had some of the highest literacy rates.

After social unrest in Russia, the tsarist government disbanded the feudal system in 1861. Soon after came land reform as well as educational reform. More schools opened, governed by local councils, that were open to all children, at least according to policy (Cibotaru, 1991).

To counter the authority of the local councils, the tsarist government in 1884 promoted church schools and offered them monetary support. From 1889-1893 the church established 168 schools. Despite these efforts, in a census from 1897, Moldovans still had the lowest literacy rate among all the ethnic groups in Besarabia. The Germans had the highest rate with over 60% literate. The Moldovans were behind the Poles, Jews, Gagauz, Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, and Belorussians. Only 10.5% of Moldovan men and 1.7% of Moldovan women were literate (Cibotaru, 1991).

According to Cibotaru (1991) the Russian authorities allowed the use of Romanian in some churches and in some schools through the middle of the 19th century. Beginning in the 1860's such tolerance ended. Romanian was not permitted in churches or schools, ecclesiastical books printed in Romanian were burnt. Musat and Ardeleanu quote a Russian publicist who worked as a teacher in Besarabia in describing the Moldovans' situation.

The people of Besarabia, because of the forced Russification, is transformed into a hoard of slaves mute and ignorant. This people is [sic] prohibited from studying their maternal language in schools, it is prohibited to pray to God in their parents' tongue. Hundreds of thousand of *deseatine* (hectares) of their land have been distributed to Russian, Bulgarian and German colonists and [they have been] forced to abandon their country. In a single year 855 peasant families were forced to leave for Siberia to

colonize it. The poor people left their grain fields because they could no longer live in their country. (Cibotaru, 1991, p. 310)

With the growing pressure for equality and the 1905-1907 Russian Revolution came a growing effort to build schools. In 1890 there were 195 working schools at the elementary level. In 1897 there were 587 schools of all types. In 1906 there were 1007. The social changes also changed the quality of education. Schools began teaching science, geography, music, and sport (Cibotaru, 1991).

During this same time period, there was a growing nationalist movement that resisted Russian dominance. This pro-Romanian nationalism received inspiration from the formation of an independent Romania in 1878 (Cibotaru, 1991). In the 1900s a Society of Moldovan Culture called for a greater use of the Romanian language and for other rights for Besarabians. Budak describes a strike among seminarians in Chisinau that took place at this time that included the following demands: “1) Introduce Romanian as an obligatory discipline for the upper classes. 2) Offer divine services in Romanian. 3) Introduce the study of Romanian history in educational institutions in Besarabia” (Cibotaru, 1991, p. 313). The year of this strike is not noted. Even after nearly one hundred years of Russian rule, it is noteworthy that there was still a claim to be part of Greater Romania.

Independence and Union with Romania

After the Russian Revolution of February 1917, nationalist groups in Moldova intensified their efforts for an independent Moldova. In April 1917 a congress of teachers was held to discuss the establishment of a national school system. In general the new Moldovan school was to be democratic. Romanian was to be the language of instruction with Russian becoming a course of study. The national schools would also use the Latin alphabet to write Romanian. In the end the delegates proposed the continued use of the Russian school program at both the elementary and the liceum level. At the time Besarabia was still a territory of Russia, and an alternate history course was not possible. Other ethnic populations could have schools to teach in their maternal language. The new schools were to be free of political influence (Cibotaru, 1991).⁵

On 24 January 1918 representatives at the *Sfatul Tarii* (national congress) declared The Moldovan Democratic Republic independent of Russia. Two months later on 27 March 1918 (old style calendar) the representatives voted for Union with Romania (Cibotaru, 1991). Pro-Romanian Moldovans still celebrate this day.

⁵ A history book tells more about the author and his time period than about the time period of the book. According to a colleague of Cibotaru, he is a well respected scholar. However, this book tells a great deal about Moldova and Moldovans in the 1990's. This period, especially the *Sfatul Tarii*, has become part of the folklore of the modern state of Moldova. There is a street named *Sfatul Tarii* in Chisinau. Pro-Romanian nationalists celebrate the date of the first declaration of independence every year. Adding to the lore, this book was published in 1991, and research began a decade earlier. The author, according to the introduction, resisted efforts from the Central Committee, the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences, and the Committee of State Security (aka KGB) to prevent its publication.

From 1918 to 1940, Romania controlled Besarabia and the school system. From a Soviet perspective, the country was neglected and there was little educational progress at the time. Furthermore, the various ethnic groups were not allowed to study in their native language (Prokofiev, 1967). A doctoral thesis published in 2004 in Moldova describes a very different situation. From 1920 through 1940 the number of schools, students, and teachers in Besarabia increased significantly. In 1920 there were 1747 primary schools, 136,172 students, and 2746 teachers. By 1940 there were 2718 primary schools, 346,747 students, and 7582 teachers. Of these 1747 primary schools in existence in 1920, about 514 were for various ethnic groups including Ukrainian, Russian, Bulgarian, German, Jewish, and Polish. Data for the entire period of union with Romania is not provided, but in 1930, the author notes, there were over 58,000 students studying in these schools for the various ethnic groups (Axentii, 2004, pp. 14-15). The author makes the following conclusion regarding the results of Romanian rule, "The Besarabian school created a scholastic experience that was long term and valued, and developed on the principles of social pedagogy and humanism" (Axentii, 2004, p. 9).

The Formation of Soviet Schools

In 1940 the Soviet Union took over Besarabia, lost it to the Romanians allied with the Germans during the war, and then established its rule after World War II. The initial developments in education consisted of building schools and implementing laws passed by the Supreme Soviet in Moscow (Prokofiev, 1967).

In the Soviet Union, the public general school was considered a central institution in which to build the New Soviet Man and to perfect a communist society. Lenin doubted that communism would develop on its own as Marx predicted, through the failure of capitalism in an industrialized country, but needed to be instilled by providing certain experiences for children. On the centenary of the birth of Lenin, F. F. Korolev (1970), a professor in the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the USSR described Lenin's perspective on education.

The individual's principal source of social experience is the actual process of living. However, purpose-designed and specially organized forms and techniques for the transmission and acquisition of social experience also have an important part to play, and this is especially true of education. Thus, schools and other educational establishments fulfill a vital social function. General education acquaints the pupil with the basic principles of science and art, lays the foundations of a scientific world-outlook, inculcates the necessary moral traits and qualities, and imparts essential practical know-how and skills. Education develops the mental faculties, arouses the individual's social awareness and encourages independence and a creative approach to intellectual and physical work. It was precisely in this broad sense that Lenin understood educational questions. (p. 46)

Creating these experiences that would promote a communist world-view would allow Lenin to build a communist society in an agrarian country. These experiences included both cognitive activities to develop academic skills, and affective activities to develop social consciousness.

The Soviet Union was to be a worker's paradise, but everyone needed to learn how to work. Children participated in party youth organizations such as the Octobrists, Pioneers, and Komsomol starting from when they were 8 years old. These groups were integral to the school system. They provided many socializing

experiences for children through classroom and after school activities.

Upbringing, or child rearing, took on a specific intention in Soviet schools. "Upbringing [*vospitanie*] is a most important component of the social shaping of the individual; it encompasses the purposeful, systematic, and organized activities of the school, the family, Pioneer and Komsomol organizations, and labor collectives in preparing the new man for life and labor in particular concrete-historical conditions" (Monoszon, 1987, p. 10). Such activities included courses of "instruction through work" that focused on crafts or agricultural work, collective decision making and collective discipline (Bronfenbrenner & Condry, 1970), and community service activities. The Soviet school, along with the youth organizations, was committed to preparing children for life in a communist society.

Anton Makarenko played an essential role in developing and implementing the idea of the education in the collective. Makarenko worked with street children, many of whom were orphaned during the Revolution of 1917. He applied his ideas in juvenile colonies for these children. The entire structure of his colony relied on collective arrangements of children who were collectively responsible for the tasks assigned. Makarenko used competition among detachments to motivate them. He was against the idea of a natural development of children and strongly supported the use of education to create a communist mentality.

Makarenko eventually gained the support of the young Soviet regime (Gehring, Bowers, & Wright, 2005; Tudge, 1991). The influence of these ideas of collective

education is clearly seen in the structure of the youth organizations in schools. But it is at odds with the description of Soviet classes that contain very little collective activity.

Early reports on education in the Soviet Union, during its first decade of existence, were complimentary of the school system. Educational authorities supposedly promoted the ideas of Dewey and Montessori and others (L. E. Holmes, 1973; Tudge, 1991). This early period has been described as the brightest era of Soviet education with a great deal of discussion, experimentation and radical change. Dewey was further impressed with combination of “education with social life” (Biesta & Miedema, 1996, p. 15). After visiting the Soviet Union Dewey writes with praise about “the marvelous development of progressive educational ideas and practice under the fostering care of the Bolshevik government” (Biesta & Miedema, 1996, p. 14).

From a different perspective, the schooling was not progressive except to serve the interests of the communist party. The political aspect of schooling, calling for the development of the constructors of communism, has always been a priority of Soviet schools. Holmes (1973) is critical of the claim that the Soviet Union experimented with progressive schools in its early years. The complex method and project method were popular during the first years of the Russian Soviet Socialist Federation not because of the freedom they allowed to teachers, but because textbooks could not keep up with the changing Bolshevik policy. By ignoring traditional curriculum guides- tsarist era textbooks were prohibited-

teachers could discuss communism and Marxism in relation to any topic. The young communist government was not concerned with the methodology, but with the promotion of communist ideas. Quoting several Communist Party documents, Holmes (1973) argues that the party was interested in inculcating youth in communist ideology and writes, "Instruction must be permeated with the scientific Marxist world view" (p. 351). Only after the government gained some stability, and more teachers became members of the communist party did schools return to more traditional methods with traditional classes and textbooks. This took place around 1930 and corresponded with greater efforts to educate skilled workers for the growing industries (Tudge, 1991).

The Soviet Union did create a mass education system with schools, professional schools, colleges, and universities. In addition, these institutions offered courses in the evenings and through correspondence. Table 1 includes data regarding the number of schools, students, and teachers in Moldova at the end of the Soviet Union.

Table 1: Number of schools, students and teachers in 1990-1991, Moldova

	<i>Schools, grades 1-11, non vocational</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Teachers and administrators</i>
<i>1990-1991</i>	1635	732,400	53,900
	<i>Professional schools and colleges</i>	<i>Students (day)</i>	<i>Teachers (day and evening)</i>
<i>1990-1991</i>	164	133,500	9,000

("Anuarul Statistic Al Republicii Moldova," 2002, p. 151). I have included day students only considering that many of the students attending school in the evening would be working and not of the typical student age.

In addition there were students in professional schools and colleges that extended beyond the 11 year school program. During the 1990-1991 school year for every 10,000 people of population there were 1703 students in schools, 145 students in professional schools, 143 students in colleges, and 126 in universities ("Anuarul Statistic Al Republicii Moldova," 2002, p. 152).

Nearly every one attended schools of some sort. As Table 2 indicates, there was significantly lower academic attainment in rural areas compared to cities.

Table 2: Educational attainment in Moldova 1989

Per 1000 persons in 1989	Number of persons with university, college or general school education		University		General school complete		General school incomplete (9 years)	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Over the age of fifteen	884	635	141	37	563	371	180	227
All workers	950	817	176	52	649	518	125	247

("Anuarul Statistic Al Republicii Moldova," 1991, p. 103)

Law of Education for the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic.

Given the role of the communist party and the efforts to create a communist society, it follows that the Soviet Law of Education focused predominately on promoting the Communist Party and communism. Each republic of the Union had its respective law, but they all closely resembled the Soviet law. The version I use for comparison is from the Republic of Moldova, was written in Moldovan, and dates from 1976. It was not revised even through the period of *glasnost*. The communist rhetoric and ideology in the law, began in the preamble and extended throughout the document with regular references to Marxist-Leninist philosophy and the Moral Code of Constructors of Communism. These were, officially, the guiding points of Soviet life.

"The great Socialist Revolution of October," the law began, has created the political, economic, and social conditions for the

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development of public education, science, and culture in our country.

In a short period of history in all spheres of spiritual life of Soviet society, socialist ideology became established. Under the direction of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union it was successfully resolved the task of forming a new man- constructor of communism. For the first time in the history of mankind a truly democratic system of education [*invatamint*]⁶ was created. (Ministry of Justice of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, 1976, p. 4).

This introduction continued with the statement that Moldova voluntarily joined the USSR, and that the Communist Party has brought many wonderful possibilities, in terms of cultural and intellectual growth, to Moldova and Moldovans.

The law called on teachers to educate children to defend the Soviet Union. The Communist Party celebrated those who died in defense of the country in World War II, called the Great Patriotic War for the Fatherland. The motto of the Pioneers was “Always ready” and was a response to the command from the leader, "Pioneer, be prepared to fight for the cause of the communist party!" (Riordan, 1987) Some of the Soviet images in schools included pictures of youth, complete with red scarves, with stories about their heroism and death in World War II.

The Statute of the General School (Sovietul Ministrilor al RSS Moldovenesti, 2007), which contained regulations pertaining specifically to grades 1-11, included more details of school goals. Here there was a greater focus on individual development, but within the confines of communist upbringing. The statute outlined the “principal tasks” of the school:

⁶ Two words in Romanian translate as education in English. *Educatie* and *invatamint* have different nuances, even though they are used at times interchangeably. *Educatie* is more concerned with discipline and affective issues. *Invatamint* is more related to academic concerns.

- to give students a general education, which corresponds with the contemporary demands of social and technical-scientific progress, obtaining the acquisition by students of lasting knowledge of scientific knowledge and the ability to study⁷ it independently;
- to form the younger generation in the Marxist-Leninist conception of the world, to teach [*educa*] students a high sentiment of Soviet patriotism, love of fatherland, for their people, for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the will to defend the socialist Fatherland;
- to assure the harmonious and multilateral development of students, their esthetic and physical education [*educarea*], strengthening of their health, the just organization of instruction through work, to prepare students for life, for consciously choosing a profession, for work and activities in the public realm;
- The school combines instructive-educative [*educatie*] practices of the communist construction, it puts into practice upbringing of students in the spirit of the demands of the Moral code of constructors of communism. (Sovietul Ministrilor al RSS Moldovenesti, 1970, pp. 5-6)

Except for the references to communism, these principles would be welcome in most any modern, western school. There was even reference to life-long learning, multilateral development, and civic obligation, physical education, and art education. In this case the harmonious development of children referred to harmonizing with a Marxist-Leninist world view. Furthermore, the emphasis throughout the educational system, that was left unwritten, was the emphasis on the collective, and the subordination of the individual to the collective (Bronfenbrenner & Condry, 1970; Monoszoohn & Szarka, 1970; Tudge, 1991).

The Moral Code of Builders of Communism layed out the morals and ethics that the new Soviet man should display.

- Devotion to the cause of communism, love of the socialist Motherland and of the socialist countries.
- Conscientious labor for the good of society: he who does not work,

⁷ The term in the law, written in Cyrillic, is комплекта, a word not found in modern Romanian dictionaries. As happens several times in this text a Russian word is used but put into Romanian form. I use a Russian interpretation of the word.

neither shall he eat.

- Concern on the part of everyone for the preservation and growth of public property.
- High sense of public duty; intolerance of actions harmful to the public interest.
- Collectivism and comradely mutual assistance: one for all and all for one.
- Humane relations and mutual respect between individuals: man is to man a friend, a comrade, and a brother.
- Honesty and truthfulness, moral purity, unpretentiousness and modesty in social and private life.
- Mutual respect in the family, concern for the upbringing of children.
- Irreconcilability towards injustice, parasitism, dishonesty, careerism, and profiteering.
- Friendship and brotherhood among all peoples of the USSR, intolerance of national and racial hatred.
- Intolerance towards the enemies of communism, peace, and freedom of nations.
- Fraternal solidarity with the working people of all countries, and with all peoples.

Again these are ideas, except those mentioning communism, that would be welcome, for the most part, in other western schools. This would later create difficulty for Moldova as it attempted to create on paper a modern, national school system, consistent with global standards, but somehow different from the Soviet system and unique to Moldova.

Rights and Obligations

The Soviet law gave the right to education to all citizens. The state explicitly took on the obligation of establishing schools, polytechnics, colleges and universities so that all may benefit from this right. The state also took on the responsibility of maintaining a network of facilities for after school activities. Many of these were affiliated with the youth organizations.

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An important point for Moldova and minority groups, all students were granted the right to study in the language of their choice, as long as it was spoken by one of the peoples of the USSR. Every student has “the liberty of choosing the language of study—in the maternal language or in the language of another people of the Union SSR” (Ministry of Justice of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, 1976, p. 9). The language of another people typically referred to Russian. Below and in the chapters that follow, I will discuss how school officials implemented language policy in both the USSR and in independent Moldova.

The Law of Education included rights and obligations for both teachers and students with their families. Article 75 described the rights of parents; it contains only three: 1) to send their children to school, 2) to discuss the issues of instruction and education (*educarea*) at the school and 3) to vote for and be voted for a position on the parent committee (Ministry of Justice of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, 1976, p. 57).

Building a communist society took priority in the law and there was little mention of the family and its dominant role in child rearing. "In the Union SSR, education [*invatamint*] is a cause, truly, of the entire people [*norod*]⁸. The state, the family, and public organizations assure through common effort the education [*educarea*] and instruction of the young generation" (Ministry of Justice of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, 1976, p. 6).

⁸ The term in the text is *народ*. This is a Russian word meaning people or populace. This is not a Romanian word.

Parents also had obligations, which were listed in the law. The first of the list of four obligations referred to ideas found in the Moral Code. “Parents or guardians have the obligation to educate [*educa*] children in the spirit of high communist morals, of the attitude of care for socialist property, to cultivate customs of work and preparation for socially useful activities, to care for the physical development and the strengthening of the health of their children” (Ministry of Justice of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, 1976, p. 57). Also included was the obligation to register the children for school, to support the child at home in fulfilling his or her studies, and an admonition that upbringing in family should “organically” be combined with upbringing at school (p. 57).

The rhetoric surrounding teaching, excluding the references to communism, are difficult to critique: multilateral development, love of country and one’s people, continued learning. The rights afforded appear to represent a benevolent government. The question remains of how well these policy intentions were realized in practice.

In 1984 the Communist Party Central Committee approved a number of educational reforms. Russian language study was one issue addressed in the “Basic Guidelines for the School Reform.” The text of the new policy included a brief discussion of the teaching of Russian across the Union. With the intention of maintaining continuity throughout the school system, schools should “improve conditions for the study, along with one’s native language, of the Russian language, which has been voluntarily adopted by the Soviet people as the means

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for communication between nationalities. Fluency in the Russian language should become the norm for young people who are completing secondary educational institutions” (CPSU Central Committee, 1984, p. 14). The rhetoric of the document relegated national languages to an aside, as they were in the lives of Soviet citizens, and set a high standard for Russian instruction and learning.

A number of teaches described the overwhelming bias and privilege afforded the Russian language. At school meetings for example, because of the presence of a single Russian speaker, the entire meeting would take place in Russian. There was also the unwritten rule that career advancement meant learning Russian. The senior officials of the Moldovan Communist Party even tended to marry Russian women. Not all of this Russification was imposed. With the dominant role of Russia in the USSR, many parents voluntarily encouraged their children to study Russian in order to gain advantage in the system in which they lived (B. Holmes, Read, & Voskresenskaya, 1995).

According to the letter of the law, the family enjoyed reasonable rights. The rhetoric included in the “Basic Guidelines for the School Reform” provides more insight into how to implement the law (CPSU Central Committee, 1984). In this document it is clear that family was of secondary importance. Section five the “Guidelines” was entitled “*THE SOCIAL AND FAMILY* UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS” and began this way, “The Communist Party and the Soviet state show constant concern for the development of the social

*The italics indicate that the word or phrase was not included in the draft guidelines published several months earlier and was added later.

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upbringing of children and teenagers . . . and they provide all-round assistance to families in upbringing” (p. 17). Only after four more paragraphs was there reference to parents and families. “Matters should be organized in such a way that the school becomes the *center of active* (organizer of) upbringing work with pupils in the micro-borough. Parents, and the public and labor collectives—production collectives, first of all—should be enlisted in this work” (p. 18). And later, “Increasing the effectiveness of upbringing depends to a great extent on the coordination of efforts of the family, the school, the public and labor collectives and the uniformity of their demands on pupils” (p. 18). It is clear that the demands on pupils come from the state and the school, not from the family.

This section also discussed the importance of moral upbringing, extramural activities, and the need to include youth areas in new housing projects.

Parent participation in school was minimal. Even the right to participate on parent boards with the school was severely limited in its scope. Parent associations were confined to their respective schools; there was no republic or union umbrella organization. They had no authority to raise money (Archer, 1979). At parent meetings there was often a lot of criticism of students and little effort to build collaborative relationships. Several informants told me of the typical procedure: the home room teacher stood in front of the gathered parents and went through the class roll and praised or criticized each student. Teachers even

read out the grades given to each student. Public shaming was commonplace in the USSR and took place even in high-level speeches (Yeltsin, 1989).

Soviet Schools

Equality was emphasized throughout the Soviet school system. All children, with few exceptions attended the 'middle school' (A primary school referred to just the primary grades, 1-4. A middle school included a primary school and upper grades to grade 11.) with an identical curriculum across the Union. This did not ensure the equality of outcomes; there were no national tests to assess this, but educational provision was putatively equal (Alexander, 2001). That being said, one informant indicated that some schools were considered better than others. He had attended a more prestigious school that, because of his parents' reputation, was outside of his prescribed attendance area. In addition, in Chisinau, the more spacious apartments for high ranking officials were concentrated in the downtown area, resulting in a high concentration of their children in a few schools. Rural schools, and those in central Asia fared less well. In an interview, Gennedy Iagodin, a minister of education of the USSR, refers to a test to evaluate the skills of first year university students. Seventeen percent of Moscow educated students, 19% of students from Leningrad, and 85% of the students from central Asia failed the exam (Maximova & Prelovskaya, 1988). Clearly, the outcomes of the educational system were not equal. In addition, depending on the fortunes of the collective farm or factory that often supported schools in their areas, some schools were able to offer more elaborate activities

(Grant, 1979).

This tsarist curriculum served as a model for the Soviet curriculum, which came under the influence of the philosopher Comenius (Alexander, 2001; B. Holmes, et al., 1995). This was an encyclopedic curriculum and a student would study a large number of different courses in the course of his or her schooling. Even at the elementary level, no class, other than language arts, met each day. Some classes met only for one lesson during the week. During the school day, there were no elective classes.

Soviet pedagogy guided what took place in schools. Again showing the influence of Comenius, pedagogy was described in terms of natural laws.

The principles of upbringing and their systematic implementation help the educator to resolve successfully all the tasks involved in upbringing. These principles are not man's invention nor the fruit of his fantasies; they have an objective basis in the regular connections and relations that arise in the actual upbringing process. The principles of upbringing are formed on the basis of the appropriate (corresponding) reflection of the objective laws of upbringing. (Monoszon, 1987, p. 25)

Suddaby (1989) refers to lesson design in the USSR as the “correct scientific approach.” Psychologists worked with teachers to discuss the details of lessons, including the questions to be asked and the answers expected. The teacher would then teach the lessons, the psychologists would make some refinements, and then make a model lesson. This would become the recommended lesson for use in all schools in the form of teacher guides. This gives little latitude to the teacher to interact with students in personal or novel ways.

Whatever is written about harmonious and multi-lateral development, the following quote makes it clear that child development was to take place within the confines of a world-view prescribed by the Communist Party.

The shaping of the schoolchildren's worldview goes hand in hand with their *ideological-political upbringing* [italics included in original]. The task of this endeavor is to lead schoolchildren to assimilate the political ideology of communism and the humane character and scientific validity of the domestic and foreign policies of the CPSU and the Soviet state, to stimulate the students' socio-political involvement and readiness to fight for communist ideals. Communist morality incorporates the basic norms common to humanity, which have been worked out by the masses of people in the course of thousands of years in the struggle against social oppression and moral vices. Of especially vital importance in the moral development of society is the revolutionary morality of the working class, which forms the basis of communist morality. Common norms of morality and elementary rules of human community living, interwoven into the fabric of communist morality, acquire new social meaning. In the course of the building of human communism and socialism, communist morality has been enriched with new content, as reflected in the new edition of the CPSU Program. (Monoszon, 1987, p. 22)

It is this idea of leading, or forcing, children to agree with the communist party that has led many Moldovans to criticize the Soviet school system for being inhuman and undemocratic. In fact, the Communist Party criticized the school system during the period of *perestroika*.

Soviet Curricular Documents

If the USSR had a specific collection of goals for the educational system, it also had a specific curriculum⁹ that teachers would use to achieve those goals. There was a single curriculum for the entire Soviet Union with only minor variations to allow for the study of national language and literature. For each

⁹ The word curriculum takes on special meaning in independent Moldova, something I will discuss later.

subject at each grade level there was a detailed curriculum, or *program*, a teacher's guide as well as a textbook approved by the Ministry of Education in Moscow. At the republic level, the ministries of education translated the texts into the respective languages, and included some local literature and geography.

Looking at these teaching documents provides insight into how pervasive the communist party influenced the school. A former vice-minister complained of this influence when he told me, "One day a political officer came into my office and said that we do not have enough communism in the program." Given the authority of the Communist Party, there was little he could do to respond except listen to what the officer said. Irina Gantea noted the following about communist party influence in schools, "[I]t was said, not without fear, in the 60's that, studying the *History of the Communist Party* from the grade four textbook, one could easily pass admission in post-secondary education" (Gantea, 2007, p. 53).

The 1989 third grade *programa* for Romanian language study includes a section entitled "Reading and the development of speech." This topic had three lessons per week. A list of topics includes:

The Pioneers (8 hours) Stories and poems about the life and activities of the Pioneers in our time and in the first years after the foundation of the Pioneer organization.

Fall (8 hours). Pictures of nature in the time of fall and the attitude of people regarding nature in the works of writers, poems from the time of the Great Socialist Revolution of October and in the soviet period.

The life of workers and peasants before the Great Socialist Revolution of October, their struggle against the oppressors (7 hours). Stories, poems, skits about the hard life of working people in tzarist times, and capitalist; about their struggle against the oppressors.

The Great Socialist Revolution of October (8 hours) Stories and poems about the struggles of workers and peasants under the direction of the

Bolshevik party with V. I. Lenin in the lead in the time of the Great Socialist Revolution of October, about the establishment of Soviet Power in Moldova, about the defense of the victors of the Great October in the years of the civil war. (Ministerul Invatamintului Public al RSS Moldovanesti, 1989, p. 19)

Each hour refers to a 45 minute lesson. The program continues through the year's lessons with the seasons mixed in with communist themes. Other parts of the Romanian program did focus on grammar and punctuation, but the core texts remained focused on Soviet ideology. Other subjects were not so full of ideology, but Soviet achievements were always emphasized. "In practice, Soviet ideology determined selection of all curriculum content. In the humanities each item of knowledge had to be interpreted from the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism. Even in the natural sciences political commitment from time to time influenced the presentation of scientific material" (B. Holmes, et al., 1995, p. 173). A school director mentioned that every lesson had to contain some reference to Lenin no matter how obscure the reference. A Moldovan scholar, who worked for the research center that became the Institute for the Sciences of Education, did admit that mathematics and natural sciences, because of their importance to the military, did have a privileged place at school and did not include the same communist emphasis.

At the beginning of the mathematics section of the curriculum of 1989, there is a discussion of the goals of the course. This included the encouragement of learning generalized concepts and theory as well as general suggestions for methods.

According special attention to the formation in students of careful and long lasting calculating skills in many cases brought to automaticity, the program proposes at the same time the generalization, accessible to students, of material, of the understanding of general principles and laws, which form the foundation of the mathematics data studied, the discernment of connections that exist between the considered phenomena. (Ministerul Invatamintului Public al RSS Moldovanesti, 1989, p. 82)

There is a great deal of rhetoric in the curriculum about connecting mathematics to daily life, both as teaching strategy as well as in application. This begins with encouraging teachers to connect elementary number concepts with the children's experience working with "sets of objects" (Ministerul Invatamintului Public al RSS Moldovanesti, 1989, p. 83). Later, students could make mathematics problems that take "number material . . . from the surrounding reality" (Ministerul Invatamintului Public al RSS Moldovanesti, 1989, p. 89). Mathematics concepts were to be connected to the "concrete, from life" to show that the concepts taught in the lessons stem from "practical necessity" (Ministerul Invatamintului Public al RSS Moldovanesti, 1989, p. 92).

There are specific instructions regarding teaching and correct protocol. For example, there is an explicit explanation of reading exercises. The expression $6+(6-2)$ should be read:

To the number six is added the difference of the numbers six and two. (Ministerul Invatamintului Public al RSS Moldovanesti, 1989, p. 84)

Later they should read

The sum of two terms: the first term is six, the second- the difference of the numbers six and two. (Ministerul Invatamintului Public al RSS Moldovanesti, 1989, p. 84)

To save time, the curriculum recommends that complete explanations for a problem type be used only for a lesson or two. Specific approaches to problem solving included, for example, the use of drawing or tables. After which, a shorter reference to the method should be used with a return to the full explanation only to explain mistakes.

A mathematics guide for teachers includes directions for each lesson like the following. Based on this lesson and the commentary from the curriculum, there was a strong emphasis on oral calculation, and students were expected to explain the process of problem solving. The lesson included the corresponding page number of the lesson in the textbook:

Writing exercises on the blackboard of the type: $20 \cdot 4$, $30 \cdot 3$, $10 \cdot 6$, the teacher encourages students to read the first factors in the exercises and to say how they resemble each other. (20, 30, 10 are numbers with two digits, which end in zero.) "What does the zero indicate in each of these numbers? (The number contains only tens and no ones.) This is the basis for the method of multiplying and dividing numbers of this kind," says the teacher and encourages students to examine themselves the drawing in the textbook and the notes below it, and explains the solution of each exercise. (Moro, Bantova, Beltukova, & Vapniar, 1989, p. 75)

The lesson continues with more, specific guidelines:

The problems (numbers 3 and 5) are resolved under the direction of the teacher (problems 3- oral, problem 5 to be analyzed in detail and written on the blackboard and in notebooks). (Moro, Bantova, Beltukova, & Vapniar, 1989, p. 75)

The lesson ends with the homework assignment including specific problems in specific rows of the page.

As a basis of the mathematics curriculum, educating a child for communism takes precedence. "The lessons of mathematics must use in the goal of forming in children the elementary bases . . . of the preparation for work and education [*educatie*] of the various valued characteristics and qualities of the personality of the Soviet student" (Ministerul Invatamintului Public al RSS Moldovanesti, 1989, p. 92). There is no clarification of these ideas.

A guide for fourth grade science teachers includes similarly detailed lesson plans:

Goal: the familiarization of students with the types of surface water, their use and protection;

Materials: Poster "water in nature", a map of Moldovan SSR and a physical map of the Soviet Union.

Flow of lesson: Questioning [every lesson in this guide starts this way.] The teacher listens and evaluates the students' responses. In the process of questioning there is a small review of the studied material regarding mineral wealth. Continuing, the teacher asks students several questions: Where do we find water in nature? What role does it play in our life? Where do we need it? Read the poem in the textbook "spring" Using the poster "Water in Nature" the teacher will explain to the students how a spring is formed, why water from a spring is pure, how a stream can transform into a large river, which carries to the sea or ocean, why people dig wells, how cities are furnished with water. For a real example, you can talk about the protections of springs and in general of water. Here relate also about the negative causes of pollution of water in general and in specific of your locality. The teacher will make an appeal to the students to participate in the care maintenance of springs, to plant trees around them.

Read the text from the text book, at the end of the lesson 1 or two students generalize the material covered in the lesson.

Homework. Read and tell of the lesson. On a map of Moldova show the Nistru and Prut rivers, while on a map of the Soviet Union show a few rivers, lakes, seas, oceans. Give answers to the questions and fulfill the lessons for the textbook. (Morei, 1991, p. 99)

Only material that conformed to Soviet ideology was included for use in Soviet schools. According to Paslaru (2003), “Not a single modification of the content of the programs and the literature textbooks were allowed to be made without the prior approval of the C[entral] C[ommittee] of the Communist Party” (p. 61). The Communist Party carefully reviewed all school material. For example, the Central Committee of the Communist Party excluded an entire sixth grade literature textbook because a single story incorrectly referred to the unification of Besarabia with Russia on 28 June 1940. The textbooks authors wrote, “[T]he liberation of Besarabia from under the yoke of the Romanian bourgeois occupiers and the unification with the fatherland-mama [*patria-mama*], the Soviet Union” (pp. 61-62). Whereas the official party line was that in 1940 Besarabia was “reunited” with Russia. The first union took place in 1812 when Paslaru claims Russia “annexed” Besarabia (Paslaru, 2003).

A teacher’s guide issued by the MET accompanied each text. This guide outlined each lesson and provided goals (usually one content and one affective goal), methods, and even questions to be asked and directions on how to work with students. The mathematics guides contained specific pages and problem sets corresponding to the mathematics textbook. Teachers were to use these guides to create their own yearlong plans, which had to correspond to the specifics in the guides. One teacher interviewed expressed exasperation at the requirement to simply copy what was already written in the books. After each lesson, teachers entered the topic of the lesson in the class register. Like the

yearlong plans, the director or the adjunct director inspected and approved them. In addition, inspectors from the regional center could come to the school, observe lessons, and inspect plans and registers. All teachers acknowledged the need to follow the program and enter the topic in the register. There is some question as to whether or not the topics in the register reflected what actually took place in the lesson. Teachers could easily write the required topic in the register and do something else. Without any formal assessments, the deception could go undetected.

School inspections were a regular part of the school experience for teachers and students. A Georgian teacher described the inspections this way:

Of course, my methodology was monitored! It was quite centralized. The supervisor from the Methodological Institute would go to schools and see what you were teaching and how you presented information to the students. Inspectors came from the republic, the regions, and the city. The inspection from the republic lasted two days. Parents were asked to bring cake, juice, and wine for the teachers, other parents and the inspectors. (Dundua, 2003, pp. 347-348)

This is similar to what teachers described taking place in Moldova.

One teacher recalled this anecdote from her primary school years about a visiting observer, "I remember when someone was coming to observe in the back, and I remember that for that lesson we practiced it about ten times. Repeatedly we rehearsed, there was a winter poem, and you say the first verse, and you say the second, [it was all organized] like that. Even now I remember the scene of the lesson, because we practiced so that when the guest came it would

look very good.”¹⁰ This is the only event she remembers of her primary schooling (Elvira).

With the strict guidelines provided and the regular inspections, the activities taking place in classrooms were tightly controlled. However, it was impossible to monitor all teachers all the time. Like teachers in most classrooms, Soviet teachers spent most of their time unobserved behind closed doors.

Descriptions of Soviet Schools

Most parents and teachers describe Soviet schools as a very controlled environment with limited freedom in ideas, methods, or action. Irina, who started teaching in 1986 and now is a teacher and trainer for PCP, described her experience this way:

When I studied at the university and when I started to work there was the Soviet Union, because it still existed, there was a pattern, a standard, a model. For example, everyone had to draw the apple like this, everyone had to do it, the teacher showed them how. That is how they taught us and that is what we did for many years, but now, if I was pushed to work that way, I don't know if I could . . . we, unfortunately, when we studied no one taught us how to cooperate. We must stand nicely and wait in line until we were asked, and children who had poorer results were neglected in general, in the back row they sat . . . there were frames from which you did not leave. In the case when you did not do something you were told, you were considered a bad student, if you did not listen to the letter of what the teacher said, or if you did not do it exactly how the teacher showed, you were considered a bad student. If you tried to say that you had a different opinion. 'What does it mean you have a different opinion?' How the teacher said it, that is how it must be. If you tried to say "I don't see it that way," or, "I don't want to draw the mug [gestures to tea cup] red, I want to draw it blue," you were considered a bad student. (Irina)

¹⁰ I conducted all interviews in Russian or Romanian. I have translated all of the interviews from the original language into English. I have also translated the excerpts from all references not written in English. I have kept the original language in the reference section with a translation of the title.

Klugman (1986) confirms this emphasis on conformity when he notes, “Art is copied from models, identically rendered, and must be realistically colored” (p. 69). This is symbolic of the expectation for adherence to a standard with punishment for any deviance.

A colleague at Primavara described it this way:

The [Soviet] school did not prepare people who could manage in society, in life. They prepared only robots who had a great deal of knowledge, but in fact they are, if they found themselves in a complicated situation, it is difficult for them to manage because school is one thing, life is another. (Christina)

Repeatedly parents and teachers described how Soviet era teachers used “chalk, the blackboard, the textbook, and that was all.” Students had to sit or stand like “soldiers” and wait for directions or questions. Any responses had to be directly from the textbook or from what the teacher said. There was always a single correct answer. This may be the result of the strong influence of Jan Comenius combined with the Soviet focus on central control. As Alexander (2001) notes, there is a “clear resonance in Russian classrooms of principles first enunciated in Comenius’s *Didactica Magna* 1638” (p. 310).

Time should be carefully divided, so that each day and each hour may have its appointed task . . . all subjects should be taught by the same methods . . . Everything should be taught thoroughly, briefly, and pithily, that the understanding may be, as it were, unlocked with one key . . . Every subject should be taught indefinitely graded steps, that the work of one day may thus expand that of the previous day, and lead up to that of the morrow. (From Comenius, *Didactica Magna* in (Alexander, 2001, p. 310)

In addition, the answers had to be in a specific form (B. Holmes, et al., 1995). In mathematics for example, student had to follow a strict pattern of stating the principal question(s), stating what information was needed, then writing the resolution (Serafima). In many classes teachers expected children to answer in complete sentences, often in a structure preconceived by the teacher. The way it was implemented often interrupted students mid-thought or mid-sentence to enforce the rule. At times teachers prompted students to the specific words they should use. Some of these habits continued in independent Moldova. In one case, a teacher I observed did not allow a student to complete a single word but interrupted first by stating the beginning sound of her desired word, then the first syllable until the student began his sentence with that word.

There were of course exceptions. Reflecting on the past always carries the risk of being influenced by nostalgia, or simply pride. Nearly all of the parents and teachers interviewed spent a significant amount of their time in Soviet schools. Some teachers claimed that they taught differently than most, such as Lora, a veteran teacher of over thirty years, who taught in a Step-by-Step program in Chisinau.

[H]ey, I know how I taught in Soviet times, and I want to say that I, even then, did things as I do now, only so that it was not seen. I, even then, worked creatively and listened to children. But when observers came to the lesson, I knew I had to follow certain rules and not to make any transgressions. I, never, not even in Soviet times, limited myself to just chalk and the black board. I did good things even then. (Ludmilla)

A difficulty in attempting to portray the Soviet school is the presence of many after school activities. The Soviet Law of education included many camps,

young scientist houses, young tourist houses, houses of creation, and other activities to engage youth after school hours and during the summer. Some of these activities took place at school or under the direction of teachers. The memory of some adults conflated the experiences of school and these other activities. "One teacher . . . I understand now used the methods that we use today: games, he had a lot of illustrative material, he knew how to reach the mind of a child. . . [he taught] through games, excursions (if he was a geography teacher) . . . he always had a good word for students." In our discussion, Irina continued to vary from discussing school lessons and then other activities. Because the extracurricular activities were often associated with the school, it is hard to discern which is which. Other teachers, who criticized school, also tell of positive experiences in extra-curricular activities. Despite the critical rhetoric about schools, there were other activities that provided more relaxed venues for youth to associate with teachers or other youth leaders.

In Soviet schools, there were also experimental programs that promoted more creativity. Serafima retired from teaching in 1985 after almost forty years of teaching in Chisinau. She moved to Chisinau after World War II from Eastern Russia. During her final working years she taught the Zankov program, written by a professor at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in Moscow, a fact for which she is very proud. Zankov was among the experimental scholars who developed a demanding curriculum yet encouraged creativity on the part of the teacher and individuality of the student. However, he did believe that the

student's individuality could be fully realized only in the collective (Szekely, 1977).

Serafima described two moments on her teaching, based on written notes, that portray teaching that is more active and creative than what most teachers describe of this time period. One took place in Russian class:

Almost every day, the last five minutes, I would hold up a picture, maybe from a story, and ask, "what can this be?" . . . [I did this] even in the first grade. What did you do on your holiday? . . . At the end of the lesson I asked who wants to read their assignment? They all wanted to. If someone wrote poorly, I did not argue with them, I simply said that tomorrow it would be better. . . Today you have made progress.

Or in mathematics class, she promoted creative problem solving and rewards children for creative thinking. Referring to a boy who found a solution different from that covered in class, "You get a five today [the highest grade]. 'Why?' the other students asked. Because he found a new method and came to the correct answer He thought for himself and did not wait for the class." Serafima went on to say that it was better to solve a single problem ten times than solve ten problems the same way. This would be repeated as part of the creativity promoted in the new Moldova.

Perestroika Under Gorbachev

Workers in public **education!** Carry out the school reform, arm the younger generation with up-to-date knowledge, labor skills and ideological conviction!
CPSU slogan for 71st anniversary of the October Revolution

In 1985, after the death in quick succession of three General Secretaries of the Communist Party, Gorbachev came to power in Moscow and soon began the era of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring). Gorbachev wanted to change the way Soviets viewed the world: "The revolutionary changes

toward which restructuring is directed are impossible without a revolution in the public consciousness, in people's psychology and thinking" (Long, 1990, p. 410).

In an address to the Communist Party Plenum in February 1988, Gorbachev assigned teachers a major role in *perestroika* and compared the challenge of education in *perestroika* to the time after the Revolution of 1917. "After the Revolution, Vladimir Ilych Lenin regarded the erection of a Soviet school as urgent business for the party. . . . The teacher is a major protagonist of *perestroika*. Should he support us with conviction, sense, and passion, *perestroika* will gain many new sincere advocates and fighters, successors to the revolutionary socialist cause" (Gorbachev, 1988, p. 1).

Gorbachev continued the Soviet, and global tradition of placing schools in the center of societal reform. However, he was not clear about what should change.

Implicitly, however, he emphasized the need to prepare young people for an economy which had still to be created; but, apart from mentioning the need to combine education with productive work, he made no suggestion about the role schools play in the creation of new ways of thinking or in the development of a new psychology. (B. Holmes, et al., 1995, p. 22)

Notable in this time were the open debates among teachers, administrators, and educational researchers and policy makers that took place in the Soviet press (B. Holmes, et al., 1995). The promotion of change and the general relaxing of state control allowed for formal and informal groups to discuss methods and educational issues in public forums. Schools were to become more open, more connected with society, and to involve families more closely (B.

Holmes, et al., 1995; Long, 1990). Furthermore, there was open questioning of the role of the communist party in contemporary society. This is a far cry from the party centered teaching that had taken place previously (Muckle, 1990).

So-called “teacher innovators” played an important role in promoting and disseminating new ideas of teaching and learning. These were working teachers who experimented with new pedagogical methods in their classrooms and wrote about them. Part of the stimulation of this experimentation was the introduction of 6 year old children to schools (previously, schooling began at 7 years of age), an experiment that required new methods of teaching. The *Teachers’ Gazette*, a publication of the teachers’ union, invited the teacher innovators to a conference in Moscow to share ideas. The result was a series of manifestoes outlining their ideas. They included, among others, not giving grades to children, allowing children multiple chances to earn a satisfactory grade, and some free choice in their educational pursuits. Suddaby (1989) dates these ideas to the work of Leonid Zankov.

In Moscow, Gennadii Iagodin was the minister of the State Committee for Public Education during this time. He had been professor, dean and rector of the Moscow D. I. Mendeleyev Chemical Engineering Institute. He was the USSR Minister of Higher and Specialized Secondary education and served on the CPSU Central Committee and the USSR Supreme Soviet. The committee he led held authority over the other Soviet ministries of education. His promotion of new ideas came with criticism of the status quo. According to Iagodin, “Pedagogy has

abandoned the child.” Clarifying this idea in another commentary Iagodin continues, “The first order of business is to restructure the psychology of pedagogues . . . so that they will renounce authoritarian methods of teaching and upbringing and overcome disrespectful relations to students” (Long, 1990, p. 417).

According to Long (1990), Iagodin and other educational leaders promoted five points to improve education in USSR: 1) Teachers should be involved to a larger extent in policy and pedagogy decisions. Teachers should have greater authority to select methods appropriate to their students, selection of textbooks, and the staffing of administration positions. 2) Teacher education centers should teach teachers the skills necessary to earn the respect of their students, to work more closely with parents and community, to make the school and the teaching oriented towards the child and towards people. 3) All students should not take the same coursework; at the secondary level students should be allowed to select their own courses. They should have the right to select schools based on academic or vocational interests. 4) Committees of teachers, students, parents, other educational workers should be formed to provide some governance and oversight of the school. 5) Instruction in national languages, cultures and histories should be improved (Long, 1990, pp. 417-418). To a great extent, Moldova would attempt to implement these ideas after gaining its independence.

Creating a more democratic school, one goal during this period, can mean very different things. In a speech, Yagodin indicates how far he was willing to take the idea.

The school council must be the main body, a school council elected by the teachers by secret ballot. Perhaps one-fourth of the council should be elected this way and another one-fourth elected by the pupils, either from the senior classes or starting at age 14. A certain number of parents and representatives of enterprises and organizations closely connected with the school should be delegated to the council. This council should be given the rights and authority to remove the director or fire a teacher and also to prevent the removal of the director or the firing of a teacher, as well as the power to control the budget. (Yagodin, 1988)

Even the Communist Party issued statements and position papers promoting school reform. A Party Plenum met in February 1988 and came up with the following issues that needed addressing:

1. To confront the problems created by a uniform all-union centrally planned and centrally directed bureaucratic system of education and face up to the need for decentralization and diversity
2. To democratize the authoritarian system of state education by creating public education councils, and boards of education and giving more power to the Soviets.
3. To remove the fences between the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Education, and the Committee for Vocational-Technical Education by establishing a USSR State Committee for Public Education.
4. To drastically reorganize and grant autonomy to the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences (APS).
- 5 To explore the problems of the teaching of history and the social sciences and the need for a commitment to the truth.
6. To accommodate multinational interests through bilingualism and "parental choice."
7. To restore the prestige of vocational-technical education by stressing the post-secondary stage.
8. To recover quality education by extending the number and types of in-depth profiles in subject matter areas.
9. To meet the needs of students through greater diversity in curricula, methods, school types, methods of finance, and administration.
10. To enhance the professional qualifications of teachers by radical

changes in teacher education.

11. To cancel all past administrative orders and to issue the barest minimum in the future. (B. Holmes, et al., 1995, p. 36)

In an article published in 1990, Gennady lagodin clarified his perspectives on a number of the issues facing Soviet schools. Some teachers interpreted the new democracy as allowing students to choose for themselves whether or not they would attend schools. There were also complaints about a new policy that allowed students to pass to the next grade even if they had failed up to three classes. lagodin argued that education officials must consider the interests of the student as well as the interest of the society. It is not in the interest of society, he argues, for many children to be on the streets, associating with criminals as he suggests would happen. Nor would it be useful to retain children in the same grade only to have them drop out and cause other problems for society. He acknowledged that the curriculum was too large and notes that the ministry was working on the problems. The goal was to revise the curriculum to make it more accessible to students and to allow for a significant portion to be determined by the republic governments. He also lamented the poor conditions in schools and how unpleasant schools were for children. He encouraged teachers to take more interest in children and try to understand their perspectives (lagodin, 1991).

Despite the changes in the school and political systems, Communist Party officials did not give up on Marxist-Leninist principles. V. A. Nikitin, a director in the ideological department of the Communist Party, affirmed his belief in the continued relevance of communism while acknowledging the abuses of the past.

In my opinion, if communism is defined as movement along the path of formation, as K. Marx expressed it, of "practical humanism" toward society in which exploitation and oppression have been liquidated while the free development of each member is the condition of development of all, then communist upbringing is not in conflict with universal human values. Provided that the theory and practice of upbringing are cleansed of hyperideological [*sic*] and totalitarian trends, such an approach, I think is very fruitful. One thing is clear, however: the previous system of what was called communist upbringing needs to be radically renovated; a fundamental scientific refinement of all aspects is needed. (Kut'ev & Maliuk, 1991)

Similar criticism of the past was widespread in the Soviet Union at this time, but the official did not elaborate on what new form communist upbringing should have.

The Soviet Ministry of Education submitted a position paper for discussion at an all-union conference on education in 1987 foreshadowing the rhetoric of independent Moldova. "Restructuring is a radical change in attitudes toward students. It is essential to recognize, not in words but in deeds, that the student is not only the object but also the subject of pedagogical activity; harmonious development on the basis of differentiated instruction and optimal combination of individual and collective methods of instruction" (USSR Ministry of Education, 1989, p. 27). The sentiments were repeated in other articles written by senior officials in the Central Committee (CPSU Central Committee, 1989) and by a minister of education (Shcherbakov, 1989).

In December 1988, an All-Union Congress of Educators adopted a resolution to guide educational reforms. This included six points. First, *continuity*, the creation of a system of education that supports life-long learning. Second,

decentralization, the republics will make decisions regarding schools with only guidelines coming from the USSR Committee on Public Education. Third, *democratization*, school councils will govern the schools including a strong involvement of students. Fourth, *humanization*, “offering cultural enrichment to youth while asserting the everlasting importance of spiritual values belonging to all mankind.” Fifth, *differentiation*, treating each student as a unique learner. Finally, *integration*, that is, integrating the many educational institutions into a single coherent system (Malkova, 1991, pp. 383-384).

These ideas did not appear from nowhere. According to Gantea (2007) there was scholarship in the USSR that supported these changes. As early as 1966 at an international psychology conference, there was a discussion of how Soviet scholars ignored the research of the West.¹¹ This prompted the study of more progressive ideas in education through the 1970's. Dissertation topics such as *The Formation of Written Language in Elementary Students*, *The Development of Self-Consciousness and Creativity in Preschool and Primary Aged Children*, and *The Formation in Primary Students of the Guide for Self-Instruction in the Process of Reading Lessons* and others were common among Moldovan scholars. These theses provided some scholarly basis to the proposed reforms and provided the beginnings of a new interpretation of pedagogy.

¹¹ Interestingly, Gantea cites a Belgian researcher, G. De Landsheere, for this information.

Summary

Much of Moldovan educational history is a part of Russian and Soviet history. Between 1812 and 1991, Moscow dictated educational policy except for a brief independence and then union with Romania between the World Wars. It was not Moldovans who created a mass education system for the country but Russians and Romanians.

Nationalist feelings in Moldova seem to run deep. In 1917 and 1918 Moldovan nationalists made demands for greater autonomy, use of Romanian, use of the Latin alphabet, and the study of Romanian history in schools. As we shall see, these were the same demands made by Moldovan nationalists 70 years later.

But Moldova was a small and poor country. The Soviet Union helped build its schools and created a system of education. The laws regulating schools in Soviet Moldova would not be out of line with modern western schools. Schools were to be consistent with the demands of the society, children should be given a basis in education to support further learning, schooling should be harmonious with society, and children should have opportunities for multi-lateral development. All of this was in the context of a Soviet state that allowed for a single, Marxist-Leninist world-view.

Descriptions of Soviet classrooms depict very regimented teaching styles with teachers following strict lesson plans, and students remaining passive recipients of knowledge. Teacher materials and policies promoted strict adherence to the mandated curriculum. There were exceptions to this; several

teachers interviewed who retired in Soviet times speak of their methods and their interaction with children in more friendly terms. But the criticism from both government officials in the late 1980's and from parents 20 years later, as we shall see, seem to support these general descriptions.

The period of *glasnost* and *perestroika* created the opportunity for debates to take place openly regarding the role of schools. The ideas raised at this time, democratic governance of schools, greater individualization, choice of classes, greater nationalist influence, and family involvement, constitute a true systemic reform from philosophy to practices, and would provide the themes of reform in Moldova going forward.

CHAPTER THREE: DISMANTLING, REBUILDING—NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM IN TRANSITION

Chapter two describes the Soviet school system and the period of change in the late 1980s. Part of this change involved the devolution of the school system to the republic level and the creation of national schools. In June 1990 the Moldovan MET was reorganized and renamed by August 1991 Moldova became an independent country and the Soviet Union with its communist philosophy was the target of much criticism. Moldova faced the challenge, one among many, of deciding what to do with its Soviet school system, a system intended to inculcate in children Marxist-Leninist thought (Zverev, 1987).

In this chapter, I begin to discuss the beginnings of change in Moldova and how Moldovan educational officials acted and reacted to address this issue. This early phase starts with policies that dismantled the school system, focusing on removing Soviet ideology and images from schools and changing the conditions for teachers. Specifically, I analyze MET directives to show how the MET attempted to gain authority and legitimacy for change by discrediting and distancing itself from the past and promoting a new future.

In a school system that was founded to inculcate this ideology, there was a large void to fill in its absence: an empty pedestal. The earliest calls for a new school model promoted a “national” school. This began before Moldovan independence and called for the use of the maternal language in instruction, the teaching of local and national history, school autonomy, and student

individualism. As written in a MET document just after independence, “We have a real chance to create a national school, which will educate [*a educa*] the descendents of our people in truth and respect, into a prosperous country” (annex to *Ordin* 344, 25.09.1991¹², p. 7).

But in an institution that has undergone international influence for centuries, defining a national school is no easy task. A national school is unique from a state education system, which, in its simplest definition, is an education system managed by the state. However, just as the victor writes history, the government that controls schools can define a legal interpretation of a national school system and define its structure and content.

Challenging this idea, in an era of globalization, were pressures from outside of Moldova pushing the Moldovans to make their schools consistent with international standards and trends. The characteristics of the Moldovan school, described below, are not inconsistent with characteristics of other national school systems. Secondly, opening Moldova’s economy to the global market devastated Moldova’s economy and limited the funds available for school reform.

Several aspects of the process to create a national school are clear. One was making it Moldovan with Moldovan content, usually referring to a history and language of instruction. Second was an attempt to make the school system different from the Soviet system it replaced. Third, the schools would be locally controlled; a Moldovan Ministry on the national level, an involved parent

¹² To be consistent with the original documents, I write the dates of the documents beginning with the day, then the month, and then the year.

community at the school level, and a capable, autonomous teacher in the classroom able to adapt to the students. Finally, the national school would educate students to think for themselves.

Developing a National Ideology of Education in the Context of Soviet and Western Practices

Throughout the early 1990's the MET worked to redefine Moldovan schools and rejected attributes and content inherited from the Soviet era. An order from 4 April 1991 explained the rationale as well as guidelines for removing Soviet ideology from schools. It begins with some criticism of the existing practices. According to this order,

Institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Science and Education [*invațăminte*] are called through their essence to educate [*a educa*] the young generation in the spirit of rights, truth, sincerity, purity of sentiment, passion of one's profession. These institutions also have the task to contribute to the formation of, and aspiring towards, values. But belief in notions of values and truth cannot be modeled on the position of a single ideology promoted by a single party with a totalitarian command system. Currently a whole series of parties and political formations, which have the intention of the goal of creating a new man, have appeared. (*Ordin* 128, 04.04.1991)

This is an attempt to justify a new school system, as well as to characterize what came before as less than pure or truthful.

There is an effort to create a new ideology of education, but in these early stages, it is mostly concerned with removing Soviet ideology from school.

"Given the fact that our school for all times must form a personality *dezinteresata* [not tied to a political ideology], capable to find one's own right path to uphold values. . . . in addition. . . schools have the mission to defend the child from an avalanche of political ideas (from the left and

from the right) to help him determine and define himself independently in society. (*Ordin* 128, 4.4.1991)

With this as a rationale, the MET ordered the ‘de-politization,’ the ‘de-ideolization,’ and the ‘de-partification’ of all schools, and

to exclude . . . from the content of the current textbooks texts with political orientation . . . to prohibit the use of all material, intuitive or illustrative, containing propaganda intended to form or crystallize in the minds of children a unilateral vision of the surrounding world . . . to liquidate all organizations of the party, comsomolist and Pioneer. (*Ordin* 128, 4.4.1991)

A few days later a similar position paper outlined guidelines for all teacher training institutions. This focused on removing ideology from teacher training.

“Taking into consideration the process of shifting from a single party to a multiparty system based on law, taking into consideration that education [*invatamint*] and upbringing [*educatie*] and social life was monopolized, ideologized, and politicized. The Ministry of Science and Public Education insists on fulfilling in all institutions of teacher preparation and training and other similar centers the following actions:”

1. To exclude from the program of study all forms of professional development, re-qualification, of teachers from all social-political disciplines, and to remove the respective departments. [This ended preparation of teachers in explicitly political fields.]
2. To de-ideologize the content of all programs and to connect them as much as possible to the interests of the listeners and the world level of the field of activity.
3. Not to admit in institutions of professional development or in institutions of pedagogical research, activities of all parties and social political organizations. [This prohibited political activities from taking place in schools including the work of the Communist Party and its youth organizations.] (*Dispozitie* 19, 27.08.90)

Considering that the school system was based on Communist Party ideology and promoted the Party, removing the Party ideology removed a great deal of what teachers did. For some teachers, those teaching politically charged fields or who worked with the youth organizations, their work was removed entirely and they were obligated to teach something else.

A projected law in 1991 continues its criticism of the communist school system in its unnatural attempt to “create a ‘scientific’ foundation for the so-called socialism.” The document criticizes the Soviet school system and creates a rationale for change.

The totalitarian regime had imposed on schools the formation of a “new man,” politically indoctrinated, with a specific amount of knowledge (*medie generala*). As a result, school no longer was involved with personality [of the individual] but with the command from the state regarding graduates. All of this led to the misrepresentation of the mission of schools of education [*educatie*] and instruction, it introduced a rigid control on the formation of the conscience of the child in development modeled after a common general pattern. This was the goal of the communist educational [*educatie*] system and of its components (political-ideological education [*educatie*], internationalist, patriotic, atheist etc.) promoted through intermediary organizations of octombrists, Pioneers, and comsomolists through their daily activities under the aegis of the communist party. (annex to *Ordin* 344, 25.09.1991, p. 1)

The communist system had created an “ideological monster”, referring to the student, taught to repeat what was heard without applying one’s own judgment, without will or initiative, and with a Marxist-Leninist belief. “[We] suffered the bankruptcy of the social system based on dogmatism of communist ideology” (annex to *Ordin* 344, 25.09.1991, p 2). This document goes on to call for the removal of all accoutrements of the communist party.

The new school system is to be based on human values, democracy, and personal respect. These ideas are included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. “[The school system] promotes understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and supports the actions of the United Nations in maintaining peace” (annex to Ordin 344, 25.09.1991, p. 3). For teachers of children, the “rights of the child” would also provide guidance. However, similar rhetoric, international brotherhood, peace, and understanding were also parts of the rhetoric of Soviet education as well as in the rhetoric of other school systems. Such statements reflect the optimism and the idealism, at least in the rhetoric, of the times.

The first formal calls for a national Moldovan school date to the *Conceptia invatamintului mediu de cultura generala RSS Moldoveneasca* or *Con*ception for General Education in the Moldovan SSR, first presented at an *Union* teachers’ congress in Moscow in 1988 that involved teachers and *edu*cational scholars from the entire USSR (Paslaru, 2003). Moldova was not *alone* in this nationalization process; Lithuanian scholars also presented a plan *for* a national education system (Godo, Juceviciene, & Kodelja, 2004, pp. 5-6), and *a* resolution of the congress called for greater freedom in educational matters at *the* republic level (Malkova, 1991).

The Moldovan framework appeared in the periodical *Invatamint Public* (“*P*ublic Education”), a newspaper published by the MET in Moldova, in May 1989 (Grupul provizoriu de creatie al ICSP <<Scoala moldoveneasca>>, 1989).

The Conception includes general goals, general structures, and primary tasks of a school system. Although this was not an official document from the government or MET, the authors of the Conception were all educational scholars and continue to be active in educational policy. They published the work anonymously under the name “Temporary Group for the Creations of the Moldovan School at the Institute of Research of Pedagogical Sciences.” The published article consisted of 14 columns of dense text on two full pages in large newspaper format. There are no pictures and few subtitles. This was typical of Soviet newspaper layout. After revisions, the Moldovan Parliament adopted the Conception in 1994. The Ministry has revised or rewritten the document two times since then.

The first draft appeared while Moldova was still a part of the Soviet Union, lacking independence and sovereignty. It is a lengthy, wandering, and repetitive essay about forming a Moldovan school within the Soviet Union. Importantly, this piece does not contain explicit criticism of the Soviet/communist ideology or policy but rather a criticism of the bureaucracy and forced internationalism associated with the USSR. As we saw in chapter two, this criticism was consistent with the rhetoric coming from the Communist Party. It argues for a reform using Marxist-Leninist philosophy. It is an argument coming from a minority, Moldovans, arguing for equal representation in a Russian dominated Soviet system. It is coming from an institution, education, that has long been a tool for the Communist Party. And it reflects a desire to open up the school

system to a wider international community, namely Western Europe. According to the one of the original authors, much inspiration for the document came from “European education systems.”

In the opening paragraph, the Moldovan group argues that “each republic of the union has the right to elaborate its own conception of national¹³ education, on the foundation of its national, spiritual, and material culture” (Grupul provizoriu de creare al ICSP <<Scoală moldovenească>>, 1989, p. 2). The authors justify this in terms of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy and quote Lenin.

Marxist-Leninist philosophy affirms that abstract truth does not exist; truth is concrete. That which is optimal in a given condition could be irrational in another. Referring to this, V. I. Lenin writes, “To conceive of a general recipe or a general rule . . . that is good for all cases is an absurdity. To be able to orient yourself in each case separately, you need to know how to judge with your own head. (Grupul provizoriu de creare al ICSP <<Scoală moldovenească>>, 1989, p. 2)

As the title indicates, the Conception is a call for a national school system.

It proposes school system specific to the Republic of Moldova, a system based on the national culture and the culture of other inhabitants of the country. Yet, other than history, language of instruction, and local control, there is no description of what constitutes a national system. It promoted a “choice of institutions of education [*invatamint*], and of the form and language of teaching” for parents and students, but describes no options from which to choose. The provision of school choice is one aspect of the principle of democracy applied to schools. The Conception goes on to discuss a broad range of issues from the

¹³ I have translated *natiun* from Romanian as nation. This does not refer to the political unit, but to a people and culture.

evaluation of students to the relationship between the Ministry of Science and Enlightenment and the other government ministries.

The Conception does not define in detail what the schools would look like, in fact it is very repetitive especially with the general terms, but draws general outlines about the principles and tasks of these schools, and the basis for the curriculum. The Conception calls for independence and the connection between local culture and schools as core components of a Moldovan schools system.

The Independence of the republic in all spheres of education [*invatamint* and *educatie*], **the national culture** and **the mother language**, truly the first edifice of education [*invatamint* and *educatie*], constitute the three fundamental pillars on which to base the modern national Soviet school. . The national character of education [*invatamint*] consists not only in the right to teach the maternal language, history, literature, and geography of the people, but also in the real possibility assured of acquiring of all cultural, national values and of the familiarization of universal cultural values. (Grupul provizoriu de creatie al ICSP <<Scoala moldoveneasca>>, 1989, p. 2)

After independence, the authors revised the Conception and summarized their **ideas** of a national school system.

1. sovereignty of schools and education [*invatamint*] in the R. Moldova¹⁴;
2. basing the education [*invatamint*] on the national culture;
3. the priority of the maternal language in education [*invatamint*] of all levels. (Baltar, et al., 1992, pp. 7-8)

In a addition there was the emphasis on the self-realization and free development **of s**tudents and on democracy. The idea of a national school system based on **the** national culture is still not clarified, and would not be except in very vague **terms**.

¹⁴ **In** the USSR, the education system was subordinate to the Communist Party. Now, the authors **want** a school system that is independent and a ministry of education that is treated as an equal **among** other ministries.

As in the Conception of 1988, the revised Conception of 1992 contained few specifics regarding the characteristics of a Moldovan national school system. With the exception of language and history, there is not an explanation of what national values should be taught or how to convey the national spirit. But there is a general call for more variety in schools and a change of emphasis for young students. Class time for younger students would be reduced to make more time for artistic and physical activities. Either group or individual study is appropriate. In addition to a variety of types of schools, differentiation within the classroom is important. There is a call for research to investigate how to teach mixed-ability groups.

Despite the efforts of the Soviet Union, at independence, Moldova considered itself underdeveloped compared to Western Europe. Developing a nation, its economy, and fostering a democratic society became goals of the new schools.

The principal task of restructuring of education [*invatamint*] consists of its transformation into a factor of the development of personality and society. The formula 'from the development of education [*invatamint*] to the development of personality and society' reflects the essence of contemporary schools. (Baltar, et al., 1992, p. 11)

The formula noted in the above quote is something of a play on words. The point is that the education system should work to develop individuals and should be an integral part of societal development. The educational system should not exist in isolation.¹⁵

¹⁵ In the early 1990s, the regime located East of the Nistru resisted the changes coming from Chisinau. The MET accused them of "putting impediments in the study of the history of the

The two faces of internationalism in Moldova: past and present

The idea of internationalism takes on two unique ideas in the context of Moldovan nationalism. First is internationalism in the context of the Soviet Union. The development of an international socialist brotherhood was a goal for the USSR. After independence, internationalism took on the goal of integrating into Western Europe. In the former case nationalism was more a rhetorical priority in a school system that imposed a Russian/Soviet culture. In the latter case, nationalism was to take precedence.

In the Conception of 1988 (Grupul provizoriu de creatie al ICSP <<Scoala moldoveneasca>>, 1989), the authors argue that internationalism can develop **only** after the development of a national identity. "Every new generation of people **have** the need of a serious education [*educatie*] of the national sentiments and **culture**, ON WHICH TO DEVELOP THE INTERNATIONAL" (p. 2, emphasis in **original**). Later the authors note, "The international culture is not a-national," **writes** V. I. Lenin. Because of this, the school is not only an exponent of **national/ethnic** culture, but a strong regulating factor of relationships among **nationalities** [ethnic groups], because of this, it contributes to the active **interaction** of national cultures" (p. 2). This must be interpreted from the **Perspective** of the Moldovans under the control of Soviet Russia. **Russian language** and the Soviet history were the primary focus of the school. In this

Romanians and the depoliticizing and demilitarizing schools" (*Ordin* 316, 10.09.91). The conflict with this region escalated into a civil war in 1992. Russian troops came to the aid of the separatists and are still present in the region. The armed conflict was short-lived and there has been a stalemate since then. The region now calls itself the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic and is not recognized by any other country.

respect, the Moldovan language and Moldovan culture were relegated to second tier, as were the cultures of other minority groups in the USSR. Because students would begin studying Russian and integrating into the Russian culture at school, the school would have a strong influence regarding how different nationalities would interact.

The authors attribute the failures of the Soviet school system, in Moldova and other republics, to the lack of this national education foundation, a failure of implementing Lenin's ideas on education.

Today we can no longer hide the fact that school in Moldova does not fulfill the proper level of its function. The principal cause is made of the fact that the Leninist principles of national Soviet school construction were not translated into life. As an example of this situation the school of SSR Moldova has not become a national public organism of the state with the capacity to self-develop and self-integrate in all spheres of life, capable of perpetuating the spiritual culture of the people through the soul and mind of its disciples. (Grupul provizoriu de creatie al ICSP <<Scoala moldoveneasca>>, 1989, p. 2)

Even in the revision in 1992, the authors vacillate between nationalism and internationalism and find no solid grounding. There still is the idea that an international awareness begins with a national culture, "Education [*invatamint*] is the general human form of activity through which the individual gains and develops the national culture, and through it a universal culture" (Baltar, et al., 1992, p. 5). There is also a desire to be included in an international community of education. The new system should "respect . . . international standards as the basis of the synchronizing the content of education [*invatamint*] with that of the world" (Baltar, et al., 1992, p. 16). At the same time, internationalism is cited as

one of the sources of the problems for Soviet schools in Moldova. "The over-appreciation of international factors to the detriment of national factor has led to the ignoring of social-economic, national-cultural, and pedagogic conditions of school activities, it did not contribute to the formation of a lasting culture of interethnic relations" (Baltar, et al., 1992, pp. 5-6). In effect, the authors are searching for a more benevolent internationalism than what existed in Soviet times, one that allows the Moldovan culture and Moldovan nationalism to prosper (Paslaru, 2003).

In relationship with other countries, independent Moldova is in a very different position than it was as a Soviet Republic. Marxist theory considered communism the teleological end of societal development suggesting that other countries would follow the lead of the USSR. The Moldovans renounced this perspective and worked to adapt to international standards outside of the Former Soviet Bloc. This sentiment is included in all of the early versions of the Conception. The Conception of 1994, passed by the Moldovan parliament, includes Moldova in the international scene looking to "[harmonize] . . . with international forums concerning human rights, children's rights, freedom of education, [and] with modern education theories" (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 1994).

The documents described above were frameworks and ideas for the new Moldovan school. The next step was writing laws and policies to implement these ideas and transform the schools. But these early conceptions were inspired by

foreign ideas, even the idea of national schools was an international phenomenon in the late USSR. Foreign ideas will continue to play a large role in the development of the Moldovan education system.

The call for individualism in response to Soviet collectivism

In the rhetoric of the new national school, there was a great deal of emphasis on the individual as opposed to the collective of the Soviet era. By the time a student leaves school he should be able to “define himself (to be conscious of his own capacities) to find himself in the world (possessing diverse and sufficiently precise means of communication), to be able to exist autonomously, to be open to change (those transformations to take place around him)” (annex to Ordin 344, 25.09.1991, p. 4). The projected law drew on putative changes in European education from the 1980’s and suggested an international perspective to the new school system.

In a vein similar to the rhetoric coming from Moscow in the late 1980’s there was an emphasis in Moldovan documents on the individual and his or her personal development.

To realize the new objectives of education it follows that any action should keep in mind the individual characteristics of the children, to begin from the children’s universe and the environment from which they come, and of concrete life events and situations. . . . It is important to train students in different after-school activities to expand their horizons, to satisfy their own interests, to increase their responsibilities regarding their studies. . . . These activities, oriented towards a preparation for actions (the capacity to predict, the capacity to observe, analyze, and synthesize, the capacity to decide and to act, to foresee the development of activities) must be a permanent objective in the formation of the personality of students.) (annex to *Ordin* 344, 25.09.1991, p 6)

In the Conceptions there were also high expectations for students as individuals, rather, what the schools are to do for students.

In all schools of Moldova there are to be created the necessary conditions for the free development of the individual students, of the preparation of the young generation for the full participation in the creation of spiritual and material values, in conformity with the national and regional particularities. (Grupul provizoriu de creatie al ICSP <<Scoala moldoveneasca>>, 1989, p. 2)

Purging of Soviet symbols

In addition to the changes in philosophy, physical changes took place as well, but these took place after Moldova declared independence on 27 August 1991. Just days after independence the MET ordered:

all educational institutions in the Republic will assure by 16 September 1991:

Remove and store all sculptures, busts, bas-reliefs etc. that hold to communist ideology and propagate a pseudo-history of our people;

To change the names of educational institutions that reflect communist ideology . . . and adapt them to the autochthonous historical-cultural traditions;

Removal from use of pieces that hold to the old symbols, of visual-illustrative propaganda materials . . . with communist ideological characteristics and replace them with The Symbol of the State of the Republic of Moldova, with illustrative material meant to educate respect and love for nation and its history, the feeling of national respect, to promote general humanitarian values. (*Ordin* 312, 5.09.1991)

The order mandates schools to review permanent decorations and museum displays and to change them to reflect “the aspirations of the people toward sovereignty and independence.” The same was to be done regarding library collections.

Many Soviet schools in large cities simply had number designations. This changed with the change of schools into lyceums that took the names of authors and scholars, or other national heroes. Stefan Cel Mare who ruled over Moldova in the 15th Century and fought the Turks became a popular name for schools. Moldovan authors such as Ion Creanga, Mihai Eminescu, Alexander Mateevich also became popular names of schools in cities and in villages. The premier university of Moldova had the name, the State University, V. I. Lenin Decorated With The Order Of The Red Flag Of Work. Now it is simply called *Universitatea de Stat, Moldova*. The pedagogical university in Chisinau was named after Lenin's wife, Krupskaya. Now it is named after Ion Creanga.

The MET order removing images of the USSR carried out a parliamentary decision calling for the removal of Soviet symbols from public spaces. The latter decision referred to monuments that “propagated a pseudohistory of the people” or with “attributes of the communist ideology.” This included changing names of streets, institutions, businesses, and other public spaces. This was to take place by 5 September of the same year (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 1991).

Replacing the Organizational and Regulatory Framework of the Soviet Era

On 23 June of 1990 Moldova declared its sovereignty. This was not a **de**claration of independence, but a claim that Moldova would govern itself rather **than** subjugate itself to the Supreme Soviet in Moscow (Raic, 2002). In the

government declaration, the government stated that all laws and decrees issued by the Soviet Union would apply in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic only after approval by the Supreme Soviet of Moldova (Law 194, 26 July 1990).

The declaration of sovereignty actually took place after the reorganization of the MET. In fact, *Ordin 2* from 15 June 1990, dissolved the Soviet era Ministry of Public Education of Moldova. On 27 June 1990 the MET issued another order without a number designation as other orders have. It states in the introduction that the earlier order to reorganize the MET was premature.

Consistent with the declaration of sovereignty, the MET formed a commission in October 1990 to “review all decisions and other normative acts of state organizations of the USSR and of MSSR in the area of education by 23 June 1990.” The commission included representatives from the various sections of the MET overseeing different parts of the school system including preschools, professional schools, universities, and orphanages. The commission was to create “a list of legal acts of the union and the republic that, after their ratification by the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR of the laws of the USSR, will assure the optimal functioning of the Ministry of Science and Education [*invatamint*] of the MSSR.” No complete report of this committee’s work has been preserved in the archives; however, written in many ministry orders in the early 1990’s are **annulments** of Soviet era rules of similar content. The Moldovan government was **eager** to take control of their school system, and the language suggests that the

authorities considered those laws coming from the USSR were not in the best interests of Moldova (*Ordin* 57: 17 October 1990).

In September 1991, the MET circulated a new education bill to all schools of the Republic. This document was called a projected law (*legea proiecta*), but could not be considered a bill for serious consideration. It was late 1994 when the MET set up a committee to write the new law, and only in 1995 did parliament pass a comprehensive law of education. The projected law rejected the Soviet school system, referred to how “the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Moldova opens new and broad possibilities for a rebirth of national education [*invatamint*],” and called for a ‘restructuring’ of the school system along broad and idealistic lines. The authors of the law created very high standards for this new school system, “the formation of an independent, free and creative personality with high civic and moral qualities” (annex to *Ordin* 344, 25.09.1991).

The constitution of Moldova, passed in 1994, mentions a number of educational issues that are elaborated in the Law of Education enacted the subsequent year. Article 35 refers to education. Notable in the constitution are several rights that attempt to accommodate the various language and cultural groups found in the country. Each student has the right to choose his language of instruction at all levels of schooling. However, the official language¹⁶ will also be taught in all schools. It permits children to attend private schools. All are free to

¹⁶ It is common to refer to a state language or *limba de stat* instead of using the name Moldovan and Romanian. Sometimes, instead of naming the language, there is a reference to the original document of 31 August 1989 that declared Moldovan written in the Latin alphabet the official language.

study religion, but the state will provide only a lay education. Parents have the right to choose an “appropriate educational experience” for their children (“*Constitutia Republicii Moldova*,” 1994). This final point gives parents some school choice. The liberal language policy and the authority granted to parents are similar to policies promoted in the Conceptions.

In many respects, these rights only acknowledged what had already taken place. There were private schools in existence, and schools did teach in the various languages found in the country.

Law of Education 1995

In the fall of 1994 the MET formed a committee to write a law of education. In December of 1994 Parliament formally approved the Conception of Education. In 1995 the Moldova Parliament passed a law of education encompassing preschool to university level. The Constitution and the Conception from 1994 served as the foundation and framework for the law. The law is similar in form and content to other laws in countries with centralized ministries of education. Foreign laws of education served as models for the Moldovan law.

A dean from the State Pedagogical University, Ion Creanga served on the committee that drafted the conception and was involved in drafting the Law of Education. He described the international influence this way

The Conception was edited first, and based on the Conception, the law of education was elaborated. Obviously, first, the laws of education in different countries, different systems of education were studied, especially Occidental education, in particular from France and Latinophone Francophone, and in particular Romania and the United States of

America.

The Moldovan committee selected aspects and components of foreign systems to use in Moldova. This was done, according to the dean, so that “[w]e became closer to European and international standards, in particular American education, so that we could be able to go in other countries, so to speak, to have some mobility.”

A number of ideas introduced in the first Conceptions found a place in the Law of Education. However, many remnants of Soviet laws can be found, especially in the tasks and principles of the school system.

Article five of the Moldovan law contains objectives of the school system.

- (1) The primary educational [educational] objective of schools lies in the free harmonious development of the human and the formation of a creative personality that is able to adapt to the conditions of change in life;
- (2) Education includes:
 - a) development of the personality of the child, of his spiritual and physical capacities and aptitudes to the level of his maximum potential;
 - b) cultivation of respect for the rights and liberties of man, regardless of ethnic belonging, social origin or attitude towards religion – principles recorded in the United Nations Charter;
 - c) preparation of children to assume the responsibilities of life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes and friendship among all peoples, and ethnic, national, and religious groups;
 - d) cultivation of the feeling of the necessity of work for the one's own good and for that of society, of respect for those who produce material and spiritual goods;
 - e) education [educarea] of respect towards parents, towards one's identity, language and cultural values of the people, as well as towards the national values of the country in which he lives, of the country from which he originates, and of civilizations different than one's own;
 - f) cultivation of the feeling of responsibility towards the environment, the formation of an ecological conscience;

g) to assure the physical multilateral preparation with the applying to one's profession for studious youth, the formation of the feeling of necessity to practice physical culture and sport in the course of the whole life;
(3) Students will be educated [*educati*] in the spirit of fundamental civic obligations, sanctioned in the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, among which are the devotion to country, the consolidation of the Moldovan State, and the conscientious fulfillment of obligations. (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 1995)

Here we see terms and sentiments that appear in Soviet documents repeated. Harmonious and multilateral development appear in both laws. Respect for those who work, an emphasis on physical education, and patriotism also appear in both documents. Even peace and tolerance are found in Soviet era documents. These terms also occur in many other texts not originating in the USSR. This emphasizes the point of the difficulty of creating in text educational policy that describes a unique school system. In addition, the meaning of these words will take on different meaning than in Soviet times. The underlying philosophy of Moldova is no longer the Marxist-Leninist philosophy even if the communists are in power. But interpretations of these ideas are in contention in Moldova.

Ensuring the right and equal access to education is essential focusing on the language of instruction. Article 6 assures "the right of citizens to education [*educatie*] and instruction in the maternal language. . . through the creation of the necessary numbers of educational institutions, classes, or groups and the conditions for their operation." To accommodate this, Article 8 gives citizens the right to choose the language of instruction at all levels of education. "The state

assures, . . . the right to choose the language of education [*educarea*] and instruction all levels and stages of education [*invatamint*].” The state language is a required subject in all schools (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 1995).

In addition to the right to choose the language of instruction, the Moldovan law provides many more rights for parents than were included in the Soviet Law:

1. To choose for children the educational institution and the language of instruction;
2. To request respect of the rights and freedoms of children in schools;
3. To know the progress and content of the educational process and to know the results of the evaluations of students;
4. To instruct the child in the family, assuring the possibility of obtaining the studies corresponding to a certain level of education [*invatamint*];
5. To be elected as a part of an administrative or consultative organ of the educational institution. (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 1995)

The obligations for parents include:

1. To assure the placement of the child in some form of obligatory education (public or private) or to instruct the child in the family;
2. To assure the education [*educatie*] of the child in the family and to create adequate conditions for studies, development of aptitudes, extracurricular and self directed activities. (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 1995)

If parents do not contribute to their children’s education, they are legally responsible. Except for the right to choose the school for one’s child, these rights do not differ significantly from the Soviet laws.

Teachers as well have new rights granting them more autonomy in the classroom. Article 55 of the Law of Education describes the rights of teachers and professors. In regards to teaching and learning, they have the right “to choose the programs of study for and methods of teaching, from the textbooks

and materials approved by the Ministry of Education and Youth, which they consider adequate to achieve the state educational standards.” This has been *interpreted* to give a great deal of latitude to teachers. During classroom *observations*, I saw many teachers use materials not approved by the MET. This *point* is significant because it gives teachers the right to vary their teaching from *the* teaching of their colleagues (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 1995).

The list of obligations for teachers, included in Article 56, is significantly *longer* but contains mostly vague guidelines open to interpretation. Teachers are “*to* respect in their activities ethical norms, to cultivate through their own example, *the* moral principles of right, equity, humanism, generosity, hard work, patriotism, *and* other virtues.” They are to teach, cultivate respect for parents and the nation. *And*, to keep propaganda out of the school, teachers are obligated “not to make *chauvinistic*, nationalist, political, religious, militaristic propaganda, this being *incompatible* with the pedagogical activities” (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 1995).

Emerging Language Policy as an Instrument of National Identity

Despite the rhetoric coming from Moscow during the late 1980’s, a former *vice* minister of education, who retired in 1988, told me, “nothing really changed *in* Moldova. There is a big difference between talk and change in the classroom.” *According* to him, change did not start in earnest until June of 1990 when the *government* declared sovereignty and reorganized the Ministry of Public

Education (*invatamint*) and renamed it Ministry of Science and Education (*invatamint*).

Teachers, however, tell a different story. According to those interviewed, **work** began to change for them in the fall of 1989. On 31 August of that year **hundreds** of thousands of Moldovans congregated in the central square of **Chisinau** demanding the use of the Latin alphabet. In post WWII Moldova, the **Cyrillic** alphabet had been used to write Romanian and this language was called **Moldovan**. A decree written the same day announced the use of the Latin **alphabet** to be official in the territory of Moldova. Ironically, the decree was **written** in Cyrillic. Mircea Snegur, president of the Supreme Soviet of Moldova, **signed** the decree. He would later become the first elected president of the **Republic** of Moldova.

This created problems for teachers who began the school year the **following** day. All of their texts were written in Cyrillic, with the exception of **foreign** languages. Many teachers were not accustomed to writing with Latin **letters**. Pamphlets outlining the changes in orthography came into print, and **educational** newspapers printed pages of an *Abecedar*, a phonetic/letter based **activity** book used in first grade to teach reading. Despite the changes, the *Programa Scolara*, the curriculum, from 1989, written in Cyrillic, was already **published** and was a continuation of previous educational policy. Especially in the **reading** content, the primary grade curriculum focused on the Soviet military and **Communist** Party history.

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In May 1990 another demonstration took place called the *Podul de Flori*, Bridge of Flowers. For the first time since World War II, the border between Romania and Moldova was open; thousands of Romanians and Moldovans freely crossed the border, the Prut River, between their respective countries. This event **did** not have a direct impact on the education system, but while the border was **open**, many Moldovans, including teachers, visited the neighboring country. In **some** cases, a teacher told me, “Moldovans went to Romania with clothes or **other** items, which they sold to earn money to buy books.” Teachers brought **these** books to school.

Early official policy of the MET included the use of Romanian texts in **schools**; the first minister of education, Nicholae Matcas¹⁷ promoted the use of **Romanian** texts and the Romanian curriculum for Moldovan schools. Eventually, **Romanians** would send used textbooks to Moldova; many of these included the **signatures** of the students who had used them. Teachers also collected funds **from** students and purchased textbooks in Romania.¹⁸ This was one way **teachers** attempted to change their teaching before the MET published new texts.

After independence, in contrast to the liberal language policy proposed in **1988**, Moldovan/Romanian culture would be dominant in the new school system. **Under** the guise of wanting all youth to be able to participate in the social and

¹⁷ Matcas now resides in Romania. Romania has a controversial policy of allowing Moldovans Romanian citizenship if they can document that their parents or grandparents lived in Besarabia during its union with Romania.

¹⁸ This may have solved the problem of the alphabet, but it did not solve the problem of ideology. The early textbooks imported from Romania included the socialist ideology. Moldovan teachers simply ripped out the picture of Ceaucescu.

economic activity in the country, all students should learn about Moldovan history and culture.

Attaining this objective will contribute the active familiarization of students of other nationalities with the language, history, and culture of Romanians in the geographic space in which the children and youth of other nationalities live. (Baltar, et al., 1992, pp. 9-10)

In another essay, also written by scholars at research institutes, the authors criticize the current status of schooling, specifically language teaching, and propose several solutions. Regarding language instruction, the authors argue that the Soviet-era language courses focused too much on linguistic aspects such as grammar and phonetics, and gave short shrift to the development of expression and language as a perspective on the world. The primary purpose of language is not a medium of communication, according to these scholars, but “an instrument for the spirit” (“Cursurile Integrate Prevazute Pentru Ciclul Primar,” 1992, p. 3). This idea is also found in the revised curriculum of 1998.

Eliminating, Modifying, and Building on Soviet Practice in the Curriculum

Initial period of curriculum change

The early Conceptions of education emphasized the autonomy of the school system and schools, the focus on the individual, the teaching of the Moldovan culture, and the use of the maternal language. These ideas were implemented into law with the passing of the Law of Education in 1995. Taking a step closer to schools, the MET revised the curriculum. With all of the criticism of

the Soviet school system, one of the priorities for the new ministry was to create a new curriculum. The new Moldovan schools would be a national school, would be democratic, would be free of ideology, and would loose its rigid structure of content, and be self governed. All of these ideas would guide the development of the new curriculum. However, the first attempt at creating a new curriculum was very much a continuation of Soviet practices. But it differed from previous curricula in the content of the ideology, now Romanian, and it removed the content requirements mandating the use of specific materials in class.

Maria Harea, who worked with the MET in the early 1990s and is now the chair of the elementary teacher education program at the State Pedagogical University, Ion Creanga, coordinated the efforts to revise the curriculum during the first years of independence. According to an editor of the new curriculum, the first curriculum, called *programa*, was simply the Soviet program without the communist ideology. It was 'depoliticized' as I was told.¹⁹

Printed on the cover of the curriculum are the words, "Valid in the transition period." It would be 6 years before the MET published a new curriculum.

Reading the *programa* published in 1992, communist ideology was indeed absent, but there were many remnants from the Soviet-era. The language program was based on a Soviet era program from the early 1980's. "The content

¹⁹ In Moldova there is the idea that historical research is to be scientific. In interviews with teachers, there did not appear any acknowledgement of contradiction to call the Soviet history politicized and the *History of the Romanians*, the current history textbook, depoliticized. However, Soviet era historians claimed that their work was also scientific (Anderson, 2006).

of the study of the maternal language in the primary classes remain, basically, the one elaborated in the experiment about starting schooling when children are 6 years old (the years 1981-1986)" (Harea, 1992, p. 6). The benefit of this Soviet-era experimental model was in the fact that "the emphasis [was] placed on **speaking and communication activities**" (Harea, 1992, p. 5., emphasis in original). In addition this model segmented the content in ways that took into consideration the characteristics of the developing child. These two ideas, applying what was learned and allowing the characteristics of children to influence teaching, would become more prominent in the later curriculum.

The goals of the program included both affective as well as academic goals typical of the Soviet model but include a definite nationalist influence. For example, "To form an attitude towards the literary language of Romanian as a national value" (Harea, 1992, p. 5). Despite the emphasis on Romanian, there were no recommendations for texts by Romanian or Moldovan authors. This absence is puzzling because teachers would have little knowledge of these authors because they had not studied them or taught them in Soviet schools.

The moral-civic education class in the 1992 curriculum was new in its title, but its content did not substantially differ from content that would have been covered in Soviet school. The language arts classes and the "instruction through work" would include these topics. Or, children would discuss them in the various youth activities. The goal of the classes was to contribute to the formation of productive, healthy citizens. Among the objectives were "to understand the idea

and significance of norms and values which guide life and human activity in community,” “to wish to follow the models discerned . . . in literature, science, and national and universal culture,” “to show attitude of rejection and disapproval towards incidents of insincere behavior, intolerance, lack of respect for those around us, laziness, disorder, and lack of discipline” (Harea, 1992, p. 87). This class was not to be graded with a number but through the comments of the teacher and the student.

The new history course in the 1992 curriculum, in one respect, represents the greatest departure from the Soviet curriculum. Students would now study Romanian and Moldovan history. History would be an independent course in all four of the elementary grades. The textbook was called *Daciada* named after the Daci, the people who battled against the Romans 2500 years ago in what is now Romania. The Romanian language, a Romance language, reflects the Daci influence.

The texts included Moldovan²⁰ heroes, but Romanian heroes as well. In the collection of stories, *Vlad Tepes* (Vlad the Impaler), whom Americans know as Dracula of Bram Stoker’s book, was a hero. This ruler of Romania, and founder of the present day capital of Romania, impaled enemies and criminals on posts. In the second grade text, there was even a picture of one unfortunate victim. According to the authors of the *Daciada*, Vlad the Impaler brought order to the country by meting out such severe punishments, such as impaling, for

²⁰ I refer to Moldova of medieval times that was roughly twice the size present day Republic of Moldova and included parts of present day Romania and Ukraine.

crimes. One story tells of Vlad Tepes leaving a gold goblet near a spring after drinking from it. Many passers-by drank from the goblet, which could be found by the spring long after the ruler's death (Dabija & Silvestru, 1993, pp. 36-37). The authors, by their own admission, were not concerned with the veracity of the stories (Harea, 1992). Instead, they attempted to instill national pride in their students. Importantly, *Vlad Tepes* did not reside in the historical territory of Moldova, part of which is in Romania today, but in Walachia and Transylvania.

The stories and goals of this new history course represented a return to the several practices of Soviet times (Janmaat & Piattoeva, 2007). The course of study was in the form of a Soviet style *programa*. The goal of the course was to inculcate specific values. Loyalty had shifted from the Soviet fatherland to Moldova. "To have a national conscience means to fight ceaselessly for the sacred ideas of the people from which you were born" (Harea, 1992, p. 4). This was similar to the slogan of the Pioneers noted in chapter two. The lessons are written in typical Soviet style with each lesson assigned a certain topic. The textbook crosses the line between fact and fiction, something the authors admit. With the goal of forming a national conscience, the author wanted to convey stories to "ignite a 'patriotic attitude'" (Harea, 1992, p. 4). Only in fourth grade did the course take on the characteristics of the academic discipline of history.

Along with the new subject, there was a new standard for teaching and motivating children allowing for their free development. At the end of the history curriculum the authors urged teachers to be sensitive to the students' interests

and not to force the study of history. "Teaching should be as interesting as possible for the students, without forcing, without pushing them to memorize, at any price, numerous dates, names, and information. The history of the nation [*neam*-people not citizenship] should be studied voluntarily with fondness and natural interest, not forced through processes and methods capable of igniting fear and repulsion for this subject" (Harea, 1992, p. 10). Like the moral-civic class, during the "transition" students would not receive number grades in history.

The goal of this early curriculum, or *programa*, was to remove communist ideology from the curriculum and provide teachers some guidance in their work. In the case of the language arts section, the Moldovans rejected the most recent language *programa* and chose an earlier version. It is no surprise that it relied heavily on the curricula of the past. A great deal of western research indicates that schools change slowly if at all (Cuban, 1984; McLaughlin, 1990a, 1990b; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). As we saw in chapter 2, this is a repetition of what happened in 1917. The addition of the course of history shows how the Soviet approach to history continued in form but differs in content.

Later versions of the history curriculum provide little explanation regarding the history class. There is a brief discussion of the need to write textbooks that tell stories and describe some of the sources and how they are used. There is no mention of instilling specific values, but students should "[d]emonstrate the awareness of belonging to national and general-human communities" (Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998, p. 129). This is a significant

contrast with what took place in Soviet times and even with the *Daciada* that was used in the early 1990's.

The importance of "Curriculum" in replacing "Programa"

The replacement of the *programa* with a curriculum was purportedly one of the most significant changes in the Moldovan educational system. The Soviet *programa* included, as we saw in chapter two, a number of topics that the teacher would discuss. Textbooks included specific material for the teacher to teach. In contrast, the new Moldovan curriculum mandated only objectives and general content considerations; the teacher chooses how to achieve them and what content to use to teach them. Teachers use content to mean two different ideas. Content can mean the specific stories and mathematics problems children are to read and solve; this is the meaning of content in the Soviet era *programa*. Or, content can mean the types of stories or mathematics problems to be read and solved, such as fables and legends, or speed and distance problems; this is the meaning of content in the new curriculum (see Appendix B).

Symbolically, the move to a curriculum was very important. An official guide for the implementation of the new curriculum used during the introduction of the curriculum to teachers indicates the significance of the new curriculum in no uncertain terms.

The curriculum reform is the central component, and, at the same time, guarantees the success of the global reform of national education.

The reform itself suggests the definitive break of our education [*invatamint*] from the uniform and rigid model of the passed period. (Gutu, 1999, p. 5)

Curriculum is a new word in the Moldovan vocabulary. In a book on the implementation of the new curriculum in 2007, the first chapter begins with a description of the word's origin, its definition and its declensions (Paslaru, 2007). The broad definition comes from a UNESCO document, which defines curriculum as all educational (*educativ*) activities in school working towards a goal (There is no specific UNESCO document cited.). Describing the difficulties associated with the school reforms, a municipal inspector said it was difficult “even to pronounce the word curriculum, we wrote it on the chalk board and pronounced it syllable by syllable.”

In 1992, Moldovan scholars started designing a new curriculum. In 1993 piloting of the curriculum began in schools. In 1997, the Ministry of Education approved it, and with the help of the World Bank starting in 1998, it was published, disseminated and the MET began publishing accompanying textbooks. Despite the fact that one of the primary goals of the curriculum reform was flexibility, the curriculum document is quite lengthy. As a form of comparison, the curriculum from 1989 was a small book of 216 pages. The curriculum in 1992 included 148 pages (this contained no Russian Language section), while the 1998 book contained 474 pages. Part of the increase is due to the explanation, described below, of the new content and approach to teaching that is included for each subject area. The curriculum of 1998 included additional subjects not included in previous curricula such as dance, and history. And each subject

includes a long table with objectives to be attained along with content and method recommendations.

Creating a curriculum was the major project and success of the reform. As noted above, some content and methods were recommended. Importantly, the content is not specific material but only general suggestions for students to study (see Appendix B). A municipal inspector described it this way:

The *programa* was the subject²¹ for each individual discipline. There were not given any objectives, just some goals, some end results. The teacher took the *program*, the foundation, and on this base made the long term plans that began with the beginning of school and included daily lesson [topics]. . . the basis of the curriculum are objectives. The teacher has the right to use any textbook, to achieve the objective, and content to fulfill the curriculum . . . This is an essential distinction between a *program* and a curriculum. That is, firstly, in the curriculum are reference objectives of a discipline but in the *program* there was a given content.

The Soviet *programa* was based on content; teachers had to teach that content.

The new curriculum allowed teachers to teach to objectives using their own methods and materials.

Having a curriculum, according to scholars, made the Moldovan school system modern and child-centered. Writing in a book on the design and implementation of the new curriculum in Moldova, Gantea (2007) emphasized the importance of having a 'curriculum' as a base for a school system. According to Gantea, a scholar who helped write the elementary language arts curriculum,

²¹ The term subject here relates to a comment she made at another time and one I heard from other teachers, and I read in documents dating from *perestroika*. Namely, "the student is the subject" of the lesson. The point here is that the content in the *programa*, and covering that content, is of primary importance, teacher decision making and consideration of the interests and abilities of the students are not important.

curriculum is the same as a “*programa* centered on children, accenting the education centered on the process of learning, and not on the material [content]” (p. 67). This idea Gantea attributes to John Dewey and his book *The Child and the Curriculum*. According to Mihai Stanciu, “[T]he philosopher [John Dewey] made a truly Copernican discovery in the educational field: the curriculum is centered on the child, that way he becomes the sun around which gravitates the pedagogical structure”²² (Gantea, 2007).

Vlad Paslaru, a scholar from the *Institutul de Stiinte ale Educatiei* and co-author of the first Conception and who has also been closely involved with the writing of the new curriculum, shares this perspective.

The presence of the phenomenon ‘curriculum’ in education [*invatamint*] of the Republic of Moldova represents a definitive sign of the integration of this in modernity, thus, curriculum corresponds best with the principle of liberty, the integral principle of the formative-productive education [*invatamint*] that today governs the systems of education in most of the countries of the world. (Paslaru, 2002, p. 20)

With all due respect to the author, this is a limited interpretation of the term curriculum. It is possible to write a curriculum that does not promote individual liberty. The principle of liberty refers to the idea that all individuals are unique and education contributes to the development of “each individual, group, or national community” (Paslaru, 2002, p. 20) and the school is allowed to reflect the individual interests as well as a national character. Compared to a *programa* such as what the Soviet Union imposed on Moldova, a curriculum based on objectives and free of specific content does allow a great deal of freedom. On a

²² This misstates Dewey’s text, which calls for a more balanced view emphasizing the characteristics of children and the importance of a curriculum (Dewey, 1956).

superficial level, Paslaru is accurate in his characterization of curriculum; if a curriculum contains only objectives and general content, it is possible to teach to those objectives using any material and any methods consistent with those objectives. As new methods and materials are developed, the 'curriculum' would allow teachers to use those methods and materials. In addition, a flexible curriculum allows the teacher to adapt the teaching to his or her group of students.

The difference between a program and a curriculum is operationalized in a guide for the introduction of the new curriculum to teachers. A table in the introductory section contrasts the "traditional" program with the new curriculum. I reproduce it here in part.

Table 3: Comparison *programa* versus curriculum

<i>Programa</i>	Curriculum
Learning takes place in a linear progression through mastery of information and capacity	The process of learning is seen as a spiral that always extends having content, depth, and breadth
The teacher is the sole source of information	The teacher facilitates and guides students in learning
Methods of teaching conceived as correct and incorrect types of responses or reproductive questions	The teacher expects children to pose questions and stimulates their thought through productive questions
Evaluation is based on memorized information	Evaluation is based on capacity

(Gutu, 1999, pp. 14-16)

The rhetoric in the table continues the critique of Soviet education, but the new curriculum has more specific descriptions of what child centered might mean and

how a teacher is to interact with his or her students. This operationalization perhaps represents some of the confusion of the difference between a *programa* and a curriculum; this table does not define what the concepts are, but describe how the *programa* was implemented in Soviet times and how the curriculum was to be implemented in Moldova.²³

The national curriculum

Changes are evident from the very first pages of the new curriculum published in its entirety in 1998. The guiding principles included “the renunciation of sets of academic prescriptions and rules,” and “the reduction of ‘encyclopedism’” (Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998, p. 7). On the positive side, the principles included a communicative-functional study of language, an emphasis on intrinsic motivation on the part of students, and “the improvement of educational [*invatamint*] methods through experiments of alternative methods” (Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998, p. 7).

The Romanian curriculum- combining national, Soviet, and non-Soviet internationalisms

The Romanian Language curriculum is first in the book of the new national curriculum in 1998. It is called Romanian despite the name of the official

²³ The distinction, in theory, between *programa* and curriculum is not as clear as some scholars and teachers in Moldova portray. The language arts program dating to Soviet times that forms the base of the program in 1993 and the curriculum in 1998, as we will see, did include objectives. The Unesco definition cited by Paslaru (Paslaru, 2007) includes any school activity, which could include a very rigid and controlled course of study.

language of the country being Moldovan. Setting an international tone and showing the western influence on the new curriculum, Dewey, Chomsky, Piaget, and Claparede are mentioned and at least one Romanian scholar. A footnote indicates that the 'paradigm' for the study of Romanian is 'coordinated with the model elaborated in Romania' (Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998, p. 9). Although the research sources are eclectic and international, the curriculum promotes the ideas of nationalism, autonomy, and individualization.

Next the authors describe what this means for teaching. "All of these processes support language as an instrument both of thought and social relationships" (Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998, p. 8). Some rather abstract notions are attributed to language, "It [Romanian] is the highest instrument to assure individual liberty" (Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998, p. 8).

Despite the rhetoric of change, this language arts curriculum, like the one in 1993, refers to a Soviet era curriculum. This curriculum dates from the 1970's when the primary grades consisted of only grades 1-3. This is similar to the reference in the *programa* of 1993 that mentions a similar curriculum dating to the 1980's when children were allowed to start school at age 6. The lead author for both sections, in 1992 and 1997, is Irina Gantea, a well-known scholar from Soviet times. Her name is on many textbooks and teachers' guides dating from the 1980s and 1990s.

Despite this being a new Moldovan curriculum, and despite the rhetoric surrounding the benefits of a new curriculum for Moldovan schools, the language program relies on Soviet, Moldovan, and international research. Soviet researchers created the scientific basis for this reform of the 1970's. Gantea (2007) also suggested that the curriculum of 1998 applied "conceptual ideas of research conducted in the 1980's in the Republic of Moldova" (p. 95) In addition, reiterating what was implied in the list of international scholars in the 1998 curriculum, "world wide psycho-pedagogic research served as a base [for the curriculum], which was accepted and adapted in the experiment from 1993-1997" (p. 95).

Despite the overwhelming criticism of Soviet schools, the authors do mention the positive aspects of the Soviet language arts curriculum from the 1970s. The program has an applied perspective that engaged children in written and oral communication. The development of speech was the core element. It listed objectives, or knowledge and skills to be attained by the end of the program of study. There was a set of materials prepared for the teacher to use, beyond a simple textbook (Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998).

The curriculum asks and answers the rhetorical question as to why a new program is needed. Point one refers to the use of Romanian and the "deideologization" of the curriculum. Second is the need to replace a system that is "informative-reproductive" with a system that is "**formative**, with a **open and flexible content**" (Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998, p.

9). Part of the answer involves criticism of the Soviet version. The Soviet *programa* from the 1970's divided the program into isolated components of reading, writing, and speech, the same material was for all students with no differentiation, and performance tasks were very vague. Third, a revised curriculum uses the practical achievements in the field of integrated language learning, combining reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as part of a cohesive plan of study (Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998).

The introduction of the language arts section included a description of a new paradigm and theory of language study. Language study is a transmitter of cultural and national values and skills that are used for social interaction.²⁴ In general, the language describes a more active class with emphasis on the use of language for communication with less emphasis on grammar and theoretical aspects of linguistics. This is a continuation of a policy began in the 1993 *programa*. Finally there are 30 pages of reference objectives, content, and activities that a teacher could use to teach this material. Importantly, the content is not about stories and texts, but about areas of language that the student should know. For example, writing sentences, the letter combinations, how to write dialogue (see Appendix B).

²⁴ The language arts curriculum must be viewed from the perspective of a Moldovan that lived under Soviet rule and the dominance of the Russian Language. Many ethnic Moldovans lament the fact that in villages across the country, Moldovans do not speak correct Romanian, they speak a combination of Romanian and Russian. Moldovans were not taught Romanian for communication. Many resent that so many members of minority ethnic groups do not learn Romanian.

The new mathematics curriculum- an uncertain break from the past

The origin and inspiration of the mathematics curriculum continues the international influence on Moldovan educational documents. A lead author of the mathematics curriculum described how she worked with her colleagues to design a new curriculum.

When we opened [to the rest of the world due to relaxation of Soviet control] we saw the world first through the Romanians. The Romanians had more possibilities than we did. For a month I was in Iasi and Bucharest, and I read what the world was doing. In Bucharest I worked at the institute, we put German literature on the table, American. Some knew German better, some knew English better, or Russian. And we saw what was happening everywhere, and we made ours [curriculum].

When asked what would be Moldovan when so much of the curriculum came from other countries, she replied, “[T]he methods can be different, but the results that we attain should be similar.” This will provide a contrast with what a Step by Step teacher said in response to a similar question, “The methods are international, but the content is Moldovan.”

The mathematics section starts out by mentioning that the law of education reflects the socio-economic changes in Moldova. Following this is criticism of the Soviet era mathematics program that left students with isolated skills and pieces of information. The new curriculum, however, is based on “modern conceptions . . . it has deep roots in cognitive science (computers, psychology, philosophy, linguistic, anthropology etc.) and maintains the good traditions of autochthonous education” (Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998). These good traditions are left unstated.

This section includes a great deal of criticism of “usual” methods and approaches to the study of mathematics and suggests something new. The curriculum is described as a contrast to Soviet era curriculum, but it is not that different from what came before. We are comparing here two documents, not practices. Teaching should be constructivist, not simply repeating ideas from the textbook. It should be formative rather than informative. Teaching should be centered on the concept. The general objectives in the curriculum contain points about different aspects of mathematics, logic, problem solving, measurement, communication of mathematical ideas, and affective aspects related to mathematics (Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998). This again is a contrast with what putatively took place in Soviet classrooms; teachers taught algorithms and children did not learn to apply the knowledge, but only to complete the taught procedures. Mathematics should be taught conceptually instead. This distinction may be true in practice. However, teaching conceptually was an idea noted in the Soviet era *programa* described in chapter 2. This section also had numerous pages of objectives and suggestions for activities (see Appendix B).

The Changing Role of Teachers and Students in Response to Old Practices and New Ideas

Associated with the national school was a new role for teachers and students. Teachers received greater autonomy, and students were to develop individual identities. This required a new relationship between teacher and

student. Conceptual and legal documents of the early and mid 1990's only vaguely described what this would mean. This changed with the implementation of the new curriculum beginning in 1998.

The Conception of 1988 created high expectations for teachers, distinct from those of the past

In the pedagogic process there must take place a living dialogue on the basis of parity, between teacher and student. The dialogue must not be regulated or forced, rather it appears on the basis of free interaction between teacher and student. (Grupul provizoriu de creatie al ICSP <<Scoala moldoveneasca>>, 1989, p. 3)

This implies a very different relationship between student and teacher, a point that is emphasized, but not clarified, in the following statement:

...consideration that the student is both subject and object of the pedagogical process. (Grupul provizoriu de creatie al ICSP <<Scoala moldoveneasca>>, 1989, p. 3)

This phrase, student as subject, came up during *perestroika* and would become popular as teachers try to define the new student-teacher relationship.

The high expectations continue.

The teacher is a thinker, promoter of democracy, justice, culture, intelligence, and charity. (Grupul provizoriu de creatie al ICSP <<Scoala moldoveneasca>>, 1989, p. 3)

Similarly high expectations for teachers existed in Soviet times, and teacher had a central role in educating constructors of communism. Gorbachev called on them to play a central role in *perestroika*, and now again, they have a primary role in promoting democracy and a new national culture. One thing that does not

change in this period is the high demands placed on teachers. However, there is no tradition for this new role.

Before developing new practices to promote these ideas, the MET issued orders to dismantle Soviet era structures that supported teachers. In September 1990 the Ministry closed the *cabinete metodice* throughout the country. These were educational resource libraries located in many regions and provided some professional development support for teachers. According to the MET archivist, the MET did away with many things of value simply because of their association with the communist regime. Furthermore, at the time, there were no other materials besides Soviet to fill these libraries. Some of these have since been reopened. To replace this loss of support, the order obligated regional superintendents to hire “the most qualified teachers” as inspectors who would also have the added obligation of teacher support (*Ordin* 37: 21.09.1990).

In October of 1991 the MET ordered schools “to remove the position of Pioneer instructor from state educational institutions. . . . Organization of children and youth will be formed on a voluntary basis outside of educational institutions depending on interests and hobbies.” The former Pioneer teachers were now to teach choir and other aesthetic programs (*Ordin* 319, 10.09.91). This order, continuing the critique of Soviet organizations, implied that the participation with the Pioneer was not voluntary, and suggested a new standard for organizations working with children. Nothing has replaced these organizations on a large scale.

There have been little league baseball programs, Boy Scouts, and others. These have had mixed success.

Making a break from past practices the MET proposed a system of qualification with didactic grades, *graduri didactice*, based on the expertise of the teacher. These were indications of the level of expertise attained by teachers. Teachers with higher grades would get a supplement to their salary; *grad superior*, 1, and 2, get a 100%, 50%, and 25% bonus respectively based on their base salary.²⁵ The MET, along with trade unions, were allowed three months to create regulations regarding teacher evaluation (*Ordin* 29: 4.02.1991). Trade unions in Moldova are very weak and have not taken a significant role in reforming schools.

When the MET finally published new standards, they called for a dramatic change in the work of teachers.

- The capacity to set objectives specific to the lessons and activities which [the teacher] teaches in the context of the chapter [of book] and of the discipline taught and to draw up the whole lesson in concord with the set goals. [in the Soviet system, each lesson was outlined in official books, with an affective and content goal specified.]
- Creating lesson with prudent and efficient combination of varied teaching activities, review, testing, independent individual work and in group, directed activity etc.,
- Ability to use active methods, designed to stimulate effective participation in the assimilation of knowledge and the formation of abilities (creating situation-problems, activities in groups, laboratory work, applied activities etc.) and that promotes the intellectual and spiritual development of the students;
- The capacity to use various and adequate forms of work with gifted students, to support and stimulate students who do not manage to work in the same rhythm as others. (*Ordin* 188, 11.05.1992)

²⁵ These bonuses were later reduced to 50%, 40%, and 30% respectively.

This is much different than the specific lesson plans teachers were to follow in Soviet time and calls for much more creativity and capability on the part of classroom teachers to guide an active classroom. Furthermore, as we shall see, these characteristics are consistent with the philosophy of the PCP program that would be introduced four years later.

Compared with a *programa*, the curriculum does allow a great deal of flexibility to the teacher, as we will see in the next section. The *programa* did not allow for the teacher to make significant deviations from the prescribed methods and content. What a teacher learned about his or her students could not be officially applied in the classroom.

Common among most teachers interviewed was the idea that the curriculum gave them more freedom in their teaching.

Compared to the past, we have more freedom in the choice of material. That is, if there is a text in a textbook that I do not like, I can replace it with another. It is important to accomplish the objectives, but the content I can choose for myself. Even today's activity with homonyms [referring to an activity during which students drew pictures of different homonyms], It is written in the curriculum, it is in the textbook, there are only some so-so exercises, but I know that this will not help, I think I did something that is better. (Irina)

According to an assistant director of an elite private school, even teachers teaching the same grade level could use different textbooks, different material. This was something, according to the assistant direction, that his teachers had difficulty accepting.

This idea of freedom for teachers was another modern feature of the curriculum. For some it might have made teaching better, or even easier. But for

many it became more complicated and involved more work. According a school director from Ciocana, a suburb of Chisinau, a curriculum with objectives makes the work for teachers much more difficult. “Now teachers need to create their own lessons using logic and their own thinking.” According to this same director, “In Soviet times there were strict plans for the lessons, explicit, sometimes verbatim, plans for the teacher. Professors were obligated to follow the plans and students learned things by memory that they did not understand.”

As the quotation above by Irina indicates, teachers do not rely solely on MET approved material for their teaching. In classroom observations, I repeatedly saw teachers use materials that were not approved by the MET. Also, the curriculum has changed and, according to teachers, the textbooks do not correspond with the curriculum, requiring them to be creative in their use of teaching materials.

International Support for Teachers to Learn the New Curricula and New Practices

From 1998 through 2004 the World Bank loaned Moldova nearly 17 million dollars for the modernization of the Moldovan school system. The main objectives of the project were to improve the quality of mandatory education “through improved curricula, new textbooks, in-service teacher training and a modern assessment system” (Moarcas, 2005, p. 2). In this section I will discuss the professional development provided for teachers and how materials used for the training framed the implementation of the new curriculum.

From 1998-2003, the World Bank project sponsored professional development seminars to introduce the new curriculum to teachers. During interviews, I asked teachers about opportunities for professional development. None of the teachers interviewed for this research mentioned the World Bank project except two who were trainers for the project. The teacher training sponsored by the World Bank was a countrywide program using a cascade model where central trainers trained regional trainers who in turn trained local trainers who worked with teachers. The program offered a two-week initial course and a one week follow-up course. According to the World Bank report, 35,000 teachers participated in the initial training and 47,000 teachers participated in the follow-up session. Obviously, not all of the participants in the second session participated in the first (Moarcas, 2005). Other than these in-service workshops, teachers would study the curriculum in the professional development seminars that teachers are entitled to every five years. Despite this enormous effort, there were few results from the perspective of Moldovan teachers; as far as I could tell, they do not readily recall the event. In addition, the lack of follow-up, the lack of funding, and the departure of many teachers to other fields of work would certainly limit its effect.

The World Bank sponsored project attempted to put into practice the rhetoric of the Conception, the Constitution, and the Law of Education. The project's publications gave teachers general directions on how to design lessons, to make the class child-centered, and to develop the personality and creativity of

children. The documents and activities used make it clear, as the policy papers indicate, that there is an expectation that teachers change their relationship with their students and with the content.

One teacher who worked as a trainer gave me her materials.²⁶ These include two of three pamphlets entitled *The Development and the Implementation of the Primary Curriculum (Dezvoltarea si Implementarea Curriclulum-ului Invatamintului Primar)*. I was not able to find the guide for mathematics. These pamphlets do not include material the teacher could use in the classroom. They are only abstract and general suggestions about what the teacher may do in the classroom. The MET and the *Institutul de Stiinte Pedagogice si Psihologice* and the *Institutul National de Perfectionare a Cadrelor Didactic* published the materials. The former is an educational research institute, the latter is a professional development institute. They have since merged and become the *Institutul de Stiinte ale Educatiei*.

The guides included a general description and explanation of the national curriculum and general points regarding lesson design and evaluation. In addition, there was a similar discussion around the various primary level disciplines. The authors of the subject area chapters of these guides are authors who also worked on the curriculum of 1998.

The final section of the first pamphlet contains lists of characteristics at each of the ages of typical primary grade students. These include physical

²⁶ I asked at both the World Bank and the MET for more information and documentation on the project; other than an Aide Memoire from 2001, nothing was forthcoming.

development, social development, and cognitive development. The sources of these lists are two books authored and published for the Step by Step program (Gutu, 1999).

In addition to these pamphlets, I received a number of worksheets and workshop plans for a few sessions of the training. Most of these focus on general pedagogical and classroom management considerations. These provide insight into an official version of lesson planning, evaluation, and classroom and behavior management.

One worksheet promotes complex methods of assessment and learning. The portfolio is “a method of evaluating a student’s scholastic performance . . . [It is] a flexible, complex, integrated instrument of evaluation. . . a viable alternative to the traditional methods of evaluation.” Another suggestion goes over “investigation” as a classroom activity. This is an activity that a teacher might use when there is “a situation/problem that does not have a simple solution.” These two approaches to learning and evaluation would create a much more complex environment and call for far more resources than the methods used previously.

Another page includes a flow chart entitled “Improvement of learning”. This includes the advice that to improve learning “you must change the interpretation. You must change the way of understanding of the event, both how you see the event and how the student sees it. To do this you must stop the process. You must STOP, LOOK, LISTEN, THINK, TALK, THINK, TALK, and then CHANGE.” This implies a very different relationship between student and teacher. A great

deal of consideration and discussion in the class should go into a lesson; students become interested partners in the lesson and their perspectives are essential. This implies that a source of motivation is no longer the grades or the societal pressure to conform, but the intrinsic motivation that comes from mutual respect.

The worksheets cover the topic of classroom and behavior management; importantly, they suggest that teachers listen to and discuss problems with the students. One gives advice for managing a lesson: Give feedback to students, listen to what they say and respect their suggestions. Keep the level of activity appropriate level to avoid boredom as well as too much information. Even cheating is addressed: give students the option of working with peers, discuss the problem of cheating, and supervise students while they work. Another worksheet suggests addressing behavior problems as a class; the teacher and students together create a list of negative behavior and possible consequences. Teachers receive some guidance about dealing with poor behavior through escalating intervention: ignore, stand close to student, orally admonish student, move student to desk at front of class, create make-up time to replace time lost in class, discuss with parents, create a contract, have student supervise other students in hallway “supervising behavior in the hall will make student proud of fulfilling tasks similar to those of adults.”

Lesson design worksheets have material similar to that found in the pamphlets, discussed above, published by the MET as well as these indicators of a “well-thought lesson plan”:

- Defines the instructional objectives in an operational form, in observable and testable performance;
- Defines objectives that can be attained in the time provided;
- Defines operational objectives of the content;
- Permits the differentiation of instruction in terms of preparation and rhythm of those taught;
- Defines the work tasks to fulfill each objective;
- Is reasonable;
- Is revised into a clear form that permits the continuation of the unit in which each objective can be transformed into a measurable result;
- Offers the possibility to reduce to concise writing without harming the thinking process.

What is notable about this list is that teachers are the ones who need to create the lesson plan. Consistent with the notion of a flexible curriculum, teachers are to teach according to the interests and abilities of their students.

Summary

As I noted in the previous chapter, the discussion of substantial change in education began during the period of *perestroika*. This led to changes in the Moldovan school system prior to the dissolution of the USSR. What started as a restructuring of a school system turned into something else along the way. Prompted by the *glasnost*, and then emboldened by declarations of sovereignty and independence, the school reform turned into a radical attempt to promote a

national school. For the first time, Moldova had the opportunity to create its own Moldovan school system.

The first calls for a national school system in Moldova, reflective of a Union wide movement, came in 1988. A number of educational scholars authored a *Conceptia*, or framework, for a Moldovan school. They revised this in 1992 after independence, and Parliament later revised and adopted it in 1994. These documents laid the foundation for the Law of Education and the new school system. Primarily they called for the teaching of national values, something that was never clearly defined. They also called for the use of the Romanian in instruction, teacher autonomy, local control, and the development of capable, independent students. Many of these ideas, or inspiration for these ideas came from other countries. These are both a reaction to the Soviet system and a continuation of the rhetoric of *perestroika*.

The process of reform began with a discussion of the role of schools in Soviet society and continued in Moldova with a renunciation of the Soviet school system. The new school system, in many ways, formed as a reaction to what came before. This of course is at the level of policy. As teachers and scholars developed a new curriculum, as they wrote textbooks and trained the country's teachers, more complex and difficult aspects of educational change come to the fore.

The intention of the reforms was to change the role of schools in society, and at times the documents refer to societal changes to justify educational

changes. Based on the documents, the schools were to change from places where children learned communist ideology, and learned to repeat it at appropriate times, to places where they learned to think independently. The new policies placed new tasks on teachers who were to set their own educational objectives for their students, to interact with their students in new ways, and now had ways to increase their salary. In addition, schools received some modicum of autonomy as the MET removed content without providing replacements. Much of the new rhetoric and policies contrasted with the practices of the communist schools.

From the beginning of this process, the attempt to nationalize the Soviet schools of Moldova was an international process. Moldova was not alone among the Soviet Republics in designating an official language other than Russian. Moldova was not alone in attempting to nationalize its schools. Furthermore, the Conception of 1994, the Law of Education, and the curriculum all were developed after systematically looking at similar documents from other countries.

Ties with Romania and the legacy of the Soviet Union strongly influenced school reform. Romania held a special place in the hearts and minds of many Moldovans. There was discussion of Union with Romania in the 1990s. The emphasis on language and the inclusion of Romanian heroes in the new Moldovan history textbooks, and the importation of textbooks published in Romania indicates this hope. Furthermore, despite criticism of nearly all things

Soviet, the MET relied on a Soviet era language arts program modified to fit the context of modern Moldova.

Implementing the new ideas in the schools and classrooms proved challenging. The reforms called for a substantially different approach to teaching and learning where teachers accommodated their students and students took an active role in their learning. The MET, with the help of the World Bank, did provide some training for teachers. But teachers did not readily recall this training as significant. Finally, social and economic conditions would impede the school reform, something I discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: DETERIORATING CONDITIONS OF EDUCATION: FROM COMMUNISM TO CAPITALISM

In the previous chapters I have outlined how the MET attempted to change the Soviet era school system into a national Moldovan school system. This started with the dismantling of Soviet images and structures, such as youth organizations, and the removal of Soviet ideology from the school curriculum. In the attempt to create the national school system, the MET and the government wrote frameworks called conceptions, laws and statutes to guide school activity. These focused broad policy and only vaguely or indirectly influenced the teaching and learning in the classroom. It was not until 1998 that a new curriculum was published and introduced to teacher through a series of nationwide seminars.

While officials and scholars developed these documents, Moldova was undergoing an economic transformation that the school curriculum was meant to reflect in theory if not in reality. Namely, the economy transformed from a command/communist system to a market, capitalist system. Moldova was impoverished in the process of this transformation. These economic conditions and limitations would prevent, or at least severely limit, the successful implementation of the curriculum and significantly change the financing structure of schools.

Economic Challenges

Economic problems continued the process of dismantling the Soviet, now Moldovan, schools that policy started. This has had an effect on the material state of school buildings as well as the process of teaching and learning taking place in classrooms. This suggests Moldova has gone through a period of “de-development” during which the physical as well as human capacity for productive work has decreased (Meurs & Ranasinghe, 2003).

Moldova had the misfortune of suffering the greatest economic decline of any of the former Soviet Republics. The gross domestic product fell by nearly two-thirds following independence (Orlova & Ronnas, 1999; World Bank, 2005). Moldova, in Soviet times, had primarily an agrarian economy that was highly dependent on price supports, an open market to the rest of the USSR, and energy subsidies to function. With the independence, Moldova lost these economic supports and the economy shrank precipitously. What manufacturing was in the Soviet republic was located in Transnistria, which became, *de facto*, independent in 1992 and does not share its revenues with the rest of the republic.

In 1991 the Moldovan *leu* became the national currency. Citizens were given 1 *leu* for every 1000 Soviet rubles. In effect, the savings that could have purchased a car in Soviet times became sufficient to buy a few loaves of bread. Some people made money during this time with the devaluation; they borrowed

thousands of Soviet rubles before the devaluing, and then paid off the loan with a few *lei* (plural of *leu*) after devaluation (Pastuh-Cubolteanu, 2007).

By 1998 all of the collective farms were privatized. The land was divided and given to current and retired collective farm workers according to the amount of time they had worked on the collective farm. An elderly retiree who had worked a lifetime in the collective might receive several hectares, a newcomer might receive a few hundred square meters. By coincidence, the end of the collective farms corresponded with the Russian financial crisis of 1998. The Moldovan *leu* was again devalued from about 4 *lei* to the US Dollar to about 12 *lei* to the US dollar. The combination of these two events corresponded with the beginning of a very large emigration of Moldovans looking for work.

Emigration: Parents and Teachers Leaving the Country

Official estimates of the number of Moldovans living outside of Moldova are about 360,000 citizens (Barbarosie, Gremalschi, Jigau, & Vladicescu, 2008). The population of Moldova is about 4.5 million. An official from the International Organization of Migration estimated that the number of emigrants could be as high as one million (Nyanenkova, 2005). The discrepancy is due, in part, to the large numbers of Moldovans who leave the country illegally. Based on government statistics 4% of children have both parents and 11% of children have one parent working abroad (Barbarosie, et al., 2008). In a Unicef study, the figures are 9% and 28% respectively (Info-Prim Neo, 2006). These figures vary greatly and usually include an explanation of the uncertainty involved in the

estimates. At the school level, statistics also vary significantly. One school visited for this research on the outskirts of Chisinau reported that 25% of students at the school do not live with either parent and an additional 20% live with a single parent.

The situation has created a plethora of anecdotes resulting from the situation. In a private school a director told of a child whose mother was abroad and whose father committed suicide. The mother could not return because she was abroad illegally. In the village of Zaim, on a nearly daily basis, children told of parents who were leaving, coming, or with whom they spoke on the telephone the night before. At *scoala* Primavara, a grandmother copied her child's agenda and sent it to the child's mother in Italy, who called and discussed it with the teacher. In a newspaper political cartoon, a teacher is shown reprimanding a student who is listening to music with headphones and slouching at his desk. The teacher threatens to visit his parents, and asks for the boy's address. The boy responds, "Go ahead, Sir, Piazzo Santa Chiara, Milano, Italy" ("Constatari," 2005, p. 1).

Another result of the foreign workers is the large amount of money coming into the country. Remittances make up over a third of the GDP of Moldova, 36.2% in 2005 (Ratha & Xu, 2008). While this contributes to the wealth of the country, its effects are uneven. One school director pointed out the inflation caused by this influx of money. Teachers then deal with the children left behind; they pay inflated prices, but are left in Moldova earning very little money (Dogaru,

2005). Teachers who ask for money from students, as bribes or to sell grades, expect more money from students whose parents are working abroad than from those with parents in the country (Kauffman, 2008).

School Finance: Deteriorating Budgets

The public schools have not fared much better than the country's economy. Without a strong tax base, there are few funds for schools. According to a report from the Institute for Public Policy in Chisinau (Girnet, 2005), schools receive only about 40% of the funds needed for operations and maintenance. This is enough to cover teacher salaries, heating and lighting but little more. Depending on the financial situation of the village, the local mayor may provide supplementary funds to the school. Many schools have resorted to soliciting support from parents to subsidize the school budget through cash contributions or in-kind gifts of material or labor.²⁷

Schools are short of funding even though the amount of money a school receives for each student has doubled in recent years. In 2002 a school received 827.4 MDL (1,596 in 2008 real lei or 151 USD in 2008 currency) for each student and 1767.137 MDL in 2007 (167 USD 2008) (Ivanu, 2007). After inflation, this is only a 10% increase. In terms of educational outlays compared to GDP, the percentage of the budget allocated to education has decreased by more than half since 1997 from 10.4% to 4.5% in 2005 (Barbarosie, et al., 2008). Two factors

²⁷ I have heard that parents routinely maintained and decorated the classrooms of their respective students during Soviet times. This practice seems to have extended to include parental support of operations and in places building maintenance.

contribute to this increase in allocations and decrease in percentage of the GDP: student enrollment has declined significantly, and the rate of inflation has varied between 10 and 15% since 2003-2007 and 9% in 2008 (Department of State, 2009).

Table 4: State allocations for education

	1990*	1995*	2000*	2005*	2008*
<i>Lei in current prices</i>		575,800,000 (356,261,707)	718,700,000 (165,684,242)	2,696,900,000 (363,518,950)	1,580,768,200 (139,890,991)
<i>Percent of budget</i>	19.3	24.2	16.8	19.4	
<i>Percent of GDP</i>		10.4 (1997)	5.4	6.8	

Sums in brackets are equivalents in 2008 US dollars. *("Anuarul Statistic Al Republicii Moldova," 1996), + (Biroul National de Statistica al Republica Moldova, 2006), * (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 2007)

The lack of funding has created a condition of “decentralization by default” (Meurs & Ranasinghe, 2003) in which the MET does not have funds to support and monitor the schools in its charge and individual schools must find their own sources of support. For example, many teachers and administrators attend professional development classes sponsored by the Open Society Institute, and write grants to IREX and other international aid agencies. In Chisinau, where the population is generally better off, parents contribute hundreds of *lei* each month to maintain the schools. In rural areas, where the population is much poorer, 20-30 lei (2-3 USD) is a common monthly contribution.

Not all funds collected are official. The Institute of Public Policy in Chisinau conducted a study to estimate the amount of informal payments to schools. The report concluded that these informal payments amount to approximately 50% of the state allocated funds. Some of the payments are obvious corruption such as payments for grades. Because of the lack of accounting and transparency, even plausible payments such as those for repairs may be skimmed or diverted (Kauffman, 2008).

Table 5: Estimated supplementary payments by parents during one year

Categories of Payment	MDL, mil.	USD 2008 millions
Individual lessons	92.5	8.8
Supplementary group lessons	26.0	2.5
Gifts for teachers	25.0	2,4
Payments to parent committee (NGO)	20.0	1.9
Repairs in classroom and school	14.6	1.4
School events	13.0	1.2
Exams	6.0	0.57
Heat (technical service / repairs)	5.5	0.52
Fee for a good note	3.7	0.35
Security in school	1.7	0.16
Preparing school documents	1.5	0.14

(Institutul de Politici Publice, 2007)

In a study by Ivanu (2007), in the Municipality of Chisinau, schools are funded at about 70% of what is needed by the MET. This is based on the MET formula for determining what is needed, which, according to Ivanu, does not include many capital repairs. In effect, the amount needed reported here falls far

short of what is needed in the school. This sum is subsidized by city funds, but still constitutes only 80-90% of what is needed.

Table 6: Disbursement of the budget of education in the Municipality of Chisinau per year as of 1 August 2007 (thousands of lei)

<i>Status</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>
<i>Needed</i>	310263.2 (54,435,000)	376263.4 (57,056,700)	423281.96 (57,054,800)	471249.2 (57,745,800)	629369.7 (67,591,100)
<i>Approved</i>	200754.2 (35,981,500)	208378.8 (33,007,300)	268320.3 (37,981,400)	298208.3 (36,737,900)	466723.4 (51,213,800)
<i>Percentage</i>	66.1	57.85	66.57	63.62	75.77
<i>Percentage for salaries</i>	45.93	52.76	56.2	54.02	48.18
<i>Disbursed</i>	257529.9 (46,149,900)	290052.4 (45,976,300)	323955.8 (45,660,900)	433431.3 (53,241,600)	341307.8* (38,344,400)
<i>Percent of needed</i>	84.78	80.58	80.03	92.2	56.73*

(Ivanu, 2007). * Indicates funding for first nine months. Numbers in parentheses are 2008 USD. Calculations of USD sums based on data from the National Bank of Moldova and the National Bureau of Statistics in Moldova.

The difference between the sums approved by the government and disbursed sums reflects the contributions from the municipal government. For example in 2006, 298,208,300 MDL was allocated in the federal budget. The Municipality of Chisinau added an additional 135,223,000 MDL from its budget.

Parent associations have attempted to make up for the lack of funds.

According to statute, a maximum of 50% of the money collected may be used to supplement school salaries. The rest must be used for capital repairs, operations, and many schools have used some of the money to provide meals for children. The policies of the different schools and parent associations differ.

Typically there is an entrance fee or a capital investment fee from between 1000 to 2000 MDL (88-176 USD 2008), in addition there is a monthly fee from 150-450 MDL (13-40 USD 2008). These figures are for more selective schools in Chisinau. At less selective schools and in rural areas, contributions of 20 MDL (1.75 USD 2008) per family per month are at times difficult to collect. The poorer families are not expected to contribute anything.

In addition to parent contributions, various aid organizations have provided grants to schools. The World Bank has sponsored repairs and renovations to schools throughout the country. NGO's have also done as much.

Teacher Shortage

The most pressing issue regarding the teacher corps is the shortage of teachers and the preponderance of teachers who are reaching or have reached the age of retirement. The National Bureau of Statistics estimates that 61% of working teachers started teaching before independence, that is, they have more than 18 years of teaching experience ("Activitatea Instituțiilor De Învățămînt", 2007). One survey found that circa 40% of teachers finished university or college 20 to 30 years ago, the percentage being much higher in rural areas. Only about 27% have taught less than 13 years. According to a director of the Institute for the Science of Education, 50% of teachers have left the profession. No official statistics are available describing this phenomenon. Although this number is unclear, it does reflect that many teachers have left, and this is reflected in a chronic shortage of teachers.

Table 7: General education teachers, years of experience

Disagragated by experience:	Number	Percent of total
– up to three years	3442	8,39%
– from three to eight years	3687	8,99%
– from eight to thirteen years	3968	9,68%
– from thirteen to 18 years	5809	14,17%
– more than eighteen years	24099	58,77%

(Coroi, Gremalschi, Vicol, & Cara, 2005, p. 7)

This is counterintuitive because of the low teacher-student ratios throughout most of the country. However, the salaries of teachers are so low, that it is extremely difficult for teachers to relocate from rural areas to cities, where teacher-student ratios are much higher. In addition, the village school is, for many villages, the single remaining community organization. The collective farms and factories have, for the most part, closed. Closing the school is a political issue with substantial consequences for villages.

Teacher Salaries: Living in Poverty

With the change to a market economy, an idea noted in many orders in the MET, the MET ordered changes in teacher remuneration. Order 29 dated 31 January 1991 calls for an increase in the salaries of teachers. “With the intention of improving the material condition of teachers, of intensifying their social protection in conditions of shifting to a market economy, of improving the system of remuneration for work.” This order increased the base salary of teachers; in addition it allowed for competition and a hierarchy. The *Ordin* continued the

practice of awarding bonuses to teachers in more challenging positions such as boarding schools, talented and gifted classes, and foreign language classes.

In addition, this order assigned ownership of houses or apartments to teachers “who have worked in the public educational system in the republic for at least 25 years.” Other teachers received parcels of land and materials to construct a house (*Ordin* 29: 4.02.1991, p 6).

Many times since independence, the MET has increased teacher salaries, but with the high rates of inflation, the increases are negligible. The average monthly salary in the field of education during the year 2007 was 1351 MDL. The average for all workers in the country 2063 MDL per month (“Activitatea Institutiiilor De Invatamint”, 2007)

Teacher compensation is based on several factors. First is the level of education; those graduating from university earn slightly more than those who graduated from *collegium*. Next, the salary schedule takes into consideration the years in the profession, every few years teachers are given an increase based on seniority. Next is the level of qualification. At independence, Moldova implemented *graduri didactice*, didactic grades. Teachers begin work without a grade and after specified periods of time may progress to grade two, grade one, and superior. Promotion is based on an increasingly complex evaluation. Teachers earn a 30% over the base pay for grade two, 40% over the base pay for grade one, and 50% over the base pay for superior. Teachers can earn

additional money if they work in a residential facility or in special education. They earn an extra 10 lei a month for grading papers.

Given the fact that teacher salaries are below the poverty line, teachers are in a difficult position. They cannot live on their salaries. Of the single teachers at Primavara, all reported getting help from family; one lives with a sister who pays most of the bills, another brings back bags of food from her parents' home after every visit, or in one case, the teacher took on students in breach of school policy. Many of the married teachers have husbands with better paying jobs. As one such teacher told me, "A family with two teachers is a luxury we cannot afford" (Tatiana). One teacher had a second job. In rural areas teachers arrive at the school with the students and return home with students. They have gardens to tend, cows to milk and poultry to feed. In the fall of 2008 during the first week of school, teachers were protesting in front of parliament. Their goal was to improve salaries by 600 MDL beginning on 1 September, and by an additional 900 MDL in January. By July 2009 they hope to have a salary for teachers equal to the minimum consumer basket of necessities (INFOTAG, 2008).

Student population: Declining Enrollment

As the table below indicates, there is a decline in enrollment in all types of schools except lyceums and the vocational schools. This is due to the fact that the population of children is decreasing and to the fact that many schools have become lyceums.

Table 8: Distribution of students by type of school

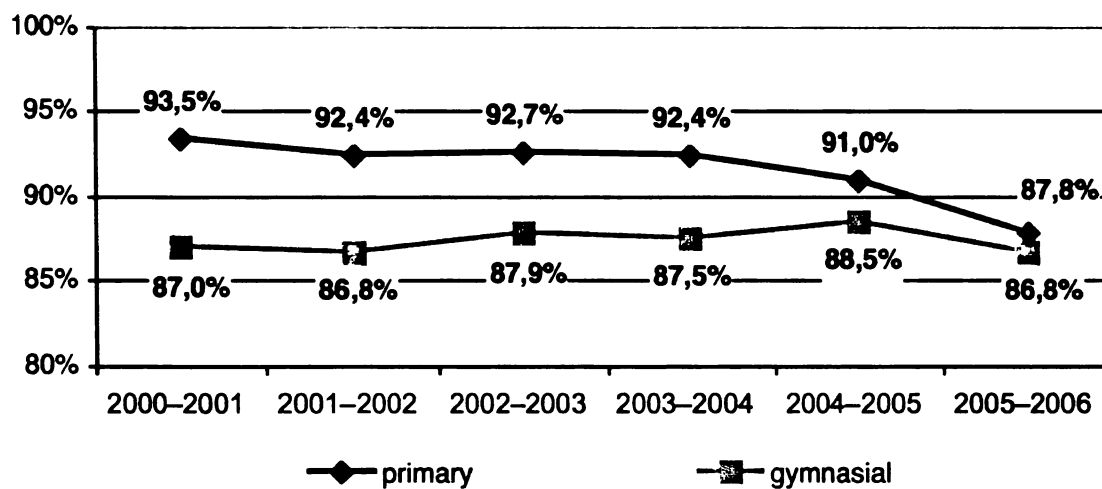
School type	School year	2001/2002	2006/2007
Primary school		19500	12300
Gymnasium		146500	113900
Lyceums		138000	257500
General schools		301700	103300
Vocational schools		22,999	23,656
Professional Schools		15,207	30,223

("Anuarul Statistic Al Republicii Moldova," 2007, pp. 155,160 , 162)

As of the 2006-2007 school year, about one-third of students attended schools in urban settings and two-thirds attended schools in rural settings (Niculcea, undated).

With parents allowed to seek entrance for their children at any school, a significant number of students do not attend their local school. No data has been published regarding this phenomenon. A village school near a regional center may lose primary and secondary students to the lyceums in the regional center. Some children from villages and regional centers may live with relatives in larger cities or in the capital to attend school. There is some competition among schools in Chisinau for students. With the declining student population, discussed below, and this redistribution of students, there is concern about what will happen to the village schools. Without the collective farms, there are not many employment options for the young.

The school population is decreasing in Moldova and the truancy rate is increasing. Interestingly, the decrease in children is greater in urban areas since 2000. There is a 24% decrease in urban areas compared to a 20% decline in rural areas. This may be due to the fact that it is more difficult to move to Chisinau because of the costs and many parents leave their children with grandparents who live in rural areas.



(Barbarosie, et al., 2008, p. 17)

Figure 1: Net enrollment

The declining enrollment has left a great deal of extra capacity in schools. The total capacity of schools in Moldova is approximately 730,198 places. With only 491,500 students, only about 63% of the capacity is used. In some regions the percentage of excess capacity is more than 50%. Estimates call for a further nationwide decline of 46% of the number of students in classes 1-9, making the situation more acute (Niculcea, undated, p. 3). The distribution of students creates a low average teacher to student ratio. In the school year 2006-2007

there were 13 students to the teacher. This is a reduction from 15 students per teacher in 2001-2002. There is an order from the ministry dictating how to combine classes, at the primary level, grades one and three and grades two and four (Barbarosie, et al., 2008, p. 15). This situation created some urgency in the calls for consolidating the school system. This would reduce the cost of teacher salaries as well as maintenance for schools. This would also mean closing some schools in villages, a politically and socially difficult endeavor.

Corruption: Supplementing the State

It is hard to discuss schooling in Moldova without mentioning corruption. In casual conversation, bitterness is expressed towards teachers in general because of the bribery. A spokesman from the anti-corruption combating division told me that education is the most corrupt of the state enterprises with 56 proven infractions in 2007.²⁸ Even TV commercials raised the subject and pointed out the potential problems. For example, one commercial posed the question, "Imagine having a doctor who paid for his grades instead of studying?" This has become something of a joke in political cartoons and for those sympathetic to teachers who point to the police or the customs agents who are notorious for their bribe taking, or of the higher officials who abscond with thousands and millions of euros. The issue has challenged a long-standing tradition; in the

²⁸ This is seen as something of a joke; police and customs agents are notorious for their **Corruption**. Police and customs agents have better connections in the government and are **Protected**, according to the word on the street. Teachers are seen as a scapegoat.

municipality of Chisinau, teachers are no longer allowed to accept gifts of any kind.

Corruption is widespread throughout the country. Transparency International in Moldova conducted a survey into the number of businessmen and heads of households who gave bribes. Approximately 39% of heads of households and 53% of businessmen said they gave bribes. Heads of households mentioned that they paid bribes to attain visas (80.7%), to the police (51.2%), to customs agents (57.2%), in hospitals (42.5%), and in schools (36.3%) ("Membrii Gospodariilor Casnice Si Oamenii De Afaceri Dau Anual Mite De Milioane De Lei in Diverse Institutii De Stat," 2008).

There is some basis to the criticism of teachers. Corruption takes many forms. Some report their teachers stating in class that money is required for high grades. Some comes in more deceptive ways; the teacher gives a student low grades until the parents enroll him or her in after school lessons, for a fee. Some is quite hidden and comes in the form of gifts for teachers. Some come through the administration; one young teacher reported getting a phone call at two in the morning from her school director asking for help drafting a student essay for the day's exam. Others are for the good of the school; teachers or administrators collect money to repair or paint a room or hallway. There is little accountability for these funds and many say that the money is not used as intended (Kauffman, 2008).

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The MOE admits the problem. The director of evaluation went so far as to announce in an interview, "This year the Baccalaureate exams will not be for sale in the market!" Regardless of the protection of the exams, students report that they are asked to pay hundreds of MDL to take the baccalaureate exam, which should be free or with a small fee for writing implements and paper. Those that pay may also get help from teachers during the exam (Kauffman, 2008).

In an attempt to remedy the situation, the school administration of Municipality of Chisinau set up a hotline for anonymous callers to report cases of corruption. The number of calls has decreased substantially in the two years since it was set up, but there is no record of disciplinary action taken as a result. Instead, the authorities visit the school reported and discuss issues of corruption. Any further investigation would be up to the center for combating corruption. Of all the parents and teachers with whom I spoke, only two considered corruption a minor issue, fabricated, as one elementary teacher noted, by ministry officials "who have too much time and not anything else to do" (Christina).

In a study by the Institute for Public Policy in 2007 of informal payments to schools, one question asked whether students of poor families were at a disadvantage because their parents are not able to make supplementary payments to the school. Seventeen percent of directors and 11% of teachers were totally in agreement or in agreement with this statement. Fifty percent of Parents responded the same way (Institutul de Politici Publice, 2007).

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Corruption in schools is not limited to the teachers taking bribes and directors skimming funds. In 2001 there were large protests against the newly elected communist regime. One school director interviewed for this research took part in the protests. At the time of the protests she was an assistant director at a central lyceum. Positions in schools in central Chisinau are considered plum assignments because those schools attract students and families with greater resources and interest in education. According to her, she was transferred to a school on the outskirts of Chisinau because of her involvement in the protests. She considers this a punishment because of all of the problems at her new school. Other protesters who were teachers lost their jobs. Some of these teachers sued to get their jobs back, but, according to the school director, judges received phone calls (from whom is not known), admitted to being pressured, and sided against the teachers. At least one of these teachers now works at a private school, and an assistant director confirmed the story.

Promoteu, a private school, was also involved in litigation that reached the European Court of Human Rights. A number of people donated funds to the school at its founding. According to an assistant director, these donations were deducted from the donors' taxes. Some of these donors, a decade later, considered the donations an investment and wanted to sell the school and take the profits. According to records downloaded from the Court's website, the case reached the court of appeals in Moldova and the school lost the case. The European Court of Human Rights reversed the decision noting that one of the

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judges on the Court of Appeals had had a son at the school. The son had been expelled, and the father had promised revenge.

In the village of Zaim, a representative from a local cooperative farm requested the help of students to harvest plums and apples in the fall of 2006. In Moldova this is not an uncommon occurrence. In return for the work, students would receive minimal wages plus prizes for those who harvested the most. In addition, the school would get a new refrigerator and a cash payment. This matter came before the parents in a school-wide meeting held at the beginning of the year. The parents approved the arrangement. After the harvest, according to the director, the collective farm only gave the school partial cash payment and no refrigerator. According to an assistant director, something similar happened several years before. Students did receive their compensation. There was no cost-effective action the school could take to enforce the contract. The fraud may be an isolated incident, but bringing students to work in the fields is not. The MET has approved taking student from classes to harvest (Sanduta, 2008).

Deteriorating Conditions of Schools

The physical condition of schools leaves a lot to be desired. In a report from the MET cartography division, 60% of schools are over 30 years old. Over 40% need some sort of capital repair (Barbarosie, et al., 2008). In the rural schools I visited for this research there was often some part of the building that had leaking roofs. In classrooms and gymnasiums, the wooden floors were either uneven, or warped, and some patched with sheet metal. Windows were often

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double paned, but with thin inexpensive glass in wooden frames that were warped and ill-fitting. These were stuffed with wool or cotton matting and taped during the winter. Doors often lacked proper doorknobs and were locked with padlocks. These too were ill fitting and pieces of rubber were tacked on many doors to create the friction to hold them closed. Most furniture was in similar condition. Desks and chairs were often painted multiple times, usually with a glossy pale blue paint.

Schools lack many basic amenities. In the two largest cities, almost all schools have running water and are connected to a sewer system; in other areas, rural and small cities, only 61% of schools have such plumbing. These schools have outhouses for both teachers and students. Whether of wood or concrete, they are little more than holes in floors built over pits. Similarly, only 10% have running hot water, and 72% have a modern heating system (Barbarosie, et al., 2008). Regardless of the status of the furnace or source of heat, with the increase in fuel costs, many schools visited during this research did not have funds to heat the schools adequately on a regular basis. Heat was not used until as late in the fall as possible and ended when the coal ran out, or as early as possible in the spring. In some places, watchmen were hired to guard the piles of coal on school grounds. The government is installing natural gas lines throughout the country. Many schools have installed natural gas furnaces, some through the help of World Bank funded projects; this has ameliorated the situation somewhat, but with increasing costs of gas, heat is still a problem. Most schools are built

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from stone and are extremely difficult to keep warm. Ventilation was in a worse state than heating; most schools have no ventilation system other than windows. Even when schools had light fixtures and a steady electricity source, light fixtures were often broken and using electricity was discouraged to save money.

Summary

Moldova has experienced de-development (Meurs & Ranasinghe, 2003) since independence. De-development reflects a decrease in the human and physical capital of the system. In this chapter I have tried to describe briefly the current state of schools in Moldova. The buildings need repairs, the teachers are underpaid, and the schools, because of the facilities, are often uncomfortable. Many teachers have left the profession. Support for teachers is minimal. They are eligible for professional development paid for by MET only once every five years. However well-provisioned the schools were in Soviet time, they have suffered since independence. In addition to the challenge of reforming the curriculum, the Moldovan educational system must also rebuild its schools and teacher corps.

CHAPTER FIVE: "STEP BY STEP": AN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM PURSUING THE NATIONAL IDEAL

So far I have discussed the evolution of the Moldovan national school at the level of national policy. This began with scholarly statements, continued with the dismantling of the Soviet system, and then the ideas of the national school were put into law. These ideas included the emphasis on local control, on the teaching of the country's history, on Moldovan/Romanian culture, and the development of independent, creative individuals. In Moldova, the MET does not have a monopoly on implementing these ideas in Moldovan schools. That is, the state is not the only developer of a school model that meets the goals of the national school: teacher autonomy, community involvement and control, and individualization. Nongovernmental organizations have had an important role to play.

One of these organizations is The Open Society Institute of Moldova, which has sponsored the "Step by Step" program, that began as a preschool program and spawned elementary and middle school programs. This program became known as "Step by Step" (PCP) and it promotes a set of practices that, according to its staff, are unique from those found in a standard national school. However, in the chapter that follows I argue that the philosophy and practices of the PCP are consistent, regardless of its origins, with the idea of a national school. In fact, in the areas where PCP claims to be different than the typical state school are those areas that were strongly promoted as part of the national school: autonomy, local control, and individualization.

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In this chapter I provide a brief overview of the program's history and philosophy. I show how its origin is international, similar to many ideas in other Moldovan documents, and reflects a popular appeal. In the following two chapters I discuss the teachers and their work in PCP and finally the perspective of the parents on this program.

History of the Step by Step program in Moldova

The Open Society Institute of Moldova, sponsored by the Soros Foundation, sponsored a preschool program modeled after the American Head Start program. In MET documents, the program was at first called "Head Start." The experimental program was piloted in schools in two large cities, Chisinau and Balti; a regional center, Orhei; and a single village beginning in 1994 (Hot. 231, 02.08.94). The original technical support of the program came from Children's Resources International, an American organization that wrote several books about teaching and the developmental characteristics of children and conducted seminars for participating teachers in Moldova.

The program had a single goal, "To support the process of democratization of the education systems" of the former Soviet Bloc (Cincilei, 2001, p. 4). Step by Step would accomplish this by introducing alternative teaching methods that supposedly correspond to the age of the child. These include active learning, the development in children of critical thinking skills, communication, and problem solving tasks. Accomplishing these tasks would be

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realized with true collaboration with the family (translated and paraphrased, Cincilei, 2001).

Similar programs started in 1994 in thirteen other FSB countries. In 1999 the various country organizations collaborated to form the International Step by Step Association (ISSA). The association now includes associations in over 20 countries. Moldovan representatives actively participate in the organization and attend various conferences in Europe. The scope of work of the organization has expanded. During the year of this research, the school director of Primavara attended conferences with other national Step by Step organizations to create a set of standards for Step by Step schools. This coalition of schools is voluntary, but the director of Primavara has decided to evaluate her school using the standards developed by ISSA. In addition, ISSA offers certification of teachers meeting their standards; several teachers at Primavara have earned them.

In spite of these international origins, the program is not unconnected to the national policy changes discussed in previous chapters. The MET evaluated the preschool program in an undated report and concluded that the program is not an 'alternative' program because it conforms to the contents and standards designed by the government. Despite this or perhaps because of this, in 1996, the MET approved an expansion of the program into the primary grades beginning in the first grade (*Ordin 288*, 16.08.96). According to the national director of PCP, the expansion was in part due to the request of parents and local education officials.

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This MET decision encouraged the expansion of the program and called on regional authorities to support those schools wishing to implement the program. Some of the first schools received the benefit of sponsorship from the Soros foundation. However, from the beginning of the program's entry into the primary grades there were 'volunteer' schools that adopted the program without the support from Soros. The program has since expanded into a middle school. As of the time of this research, the program has not reached the high school level. However, the Open Society Institute of Moldova has operated an in-service training program called Pro-Didactica for secondary school teachers. In addition there is a university component teaching teacher candidates about PCP. According to PCP directors, this coursework has not been successful because university officials do not support it.

On the original list of schools participating in the primary grades expansion included some of the more prestigious lyceums in Chisinau. None of these schools currently use the PCP. According to an assistant director of PCP, they were not willing to make the commitment, in teacher training or in class schedules, to adopt the program. The teachers in these schools may have received PCP training, but the schools have not adopted the program.

In the late 1990's the World Bank sponsored the Moldovan Social Investment Fund (FISM), which in turn sponsored the PCP and supported its expansion. This fund provides matching funds for community projects provided that the community contributes at least 15% of the project budget with money or

in-kind donations. The Social Investment Fund also encouraged schools that won grants through the office to try the PCP. Some schools applied for grants specifically with the hope of gaining funds for PCP training, others asked for funds for capital repairs and decided to try PCP. FISM helped schools with capital expenditures related to the program's pedagogy such as purchasing tables, chairs, and other classroom material.

After initially supporting the program, the government has become more critical of it. According to the director of PCP and the director of preuniversity education at the MET, the MET no longer extends its unqualified support to the program. According to the law of education, parents have a choice as to what kind of school they want for children, and PCP has the right to provide a choice. However, according to the director of preuniversity education at the MET, PCP is not seen as a program for widespread implementation in Moldova. In addition, previously the MET accepted the training provided by PCP for teacher promotion. This recognition is under review. According to the PCP national director, the MET, since the election of the communist government in 2001, has not been receptive to NGOs working with schools.

Hundreds of schools from across the country adopted the PCP program. In some schools perhaps a single teacher has attempted to adopt the PCP methods. In others, the entire elementary cycle has changed. As of 2007, 359 schools use the PCP methodology. This is roughly a fifth of the total number of schools in Moldova. These figures are only approximate. The PCP directors

complain of teachers who then leave the teaching profession to work in other fields or in other countries after receiving extensive training in PCP. In addition there are teachers who receive training, teach in a school using PCP, then move to a school that does not use the program. Regardless of the official figures, PCP has a significant presence in Moldovan schools

Four centers, two in Chisinau (one of these is the site of my research), one in the north of the country, and one in the south, offer courses for interested teachers. Teachers in schools adopting the program attend the courses at no charge. PCP is beginning to offer courses for a fee to those teachers looking only for professional development credit. The complete cycle of training consists of four years of professional development for primary grade teachers. In total, teachers have nearly 30 days of training consisting of week-long seminars in the summer and a number of two day seminars through the school year. Topics for seminars include the promotion of creativity, multiple intelligences, observation and evaluation, learning styles, two lessons unique to PCP, and a number of teaching methods. Occasionally, PCP trainers visit implementing schools to support the teachers.

Gantea (2007) published the results of a survey of teachers conducted by the Institute for Educational Sciences. The survey contained three sections in which teachers evaluated their teaching style, their communication style, and their values. Teachers at two schools in Chisinau and 50 other teachers from rural areas who were taking part in in-service classes at the Institute of

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Educational Sciences participated. The first two sections included a comparison of PCP trained teachers and the general education teachers. The methodology of the survey has not been reprinted in any detail. I am not certain of the types of questions, or how they were analyzed. However, Irina Gantea, a well-known scholar, concludes that PCP teachers are more democratic and less authoritarian than general school teachers. She writes, "Teachers from the PCP program have adopted behavior and actions that are much more favorable to the development of personality of the child and his education [*educatia*]" (Gantea, 2007, p. 108). Regardless of the methodology, this veteran Moldovan scholar essentially concludes that the PCP teachers are doing a better job, than non-PCP teachers, implementing democratic principles in education, something promoted in the Law of Education and the Conception of 1994 (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 1994, 1995).

What PCP looks like in Moldovan schools

Walking into a PCP classroom, the difference is immediately obvious. Students do not stand when an adult enters, as they do at most schools. Students sit around tables, or in some cases, at desks that are placed to form groups of four or six students. In most classes, double desks, for two students each, are arranged in columns and rows. There is usually some sort of easel with a carpet and benches where the children meet to discuss the morning message (*mesaj*), or other topics through the day. Typically, students do not leave their seats except to answer questions or work at the chalkboard. In PCP schools with

more resources, there are bookshelves full of children's books and teacher resources. In poorer schools, there may be just a handful of books other than the textbooks. Children's work is posted on the walls, something rarely seen in non-PCP schools. In non-PCP schools teachers often stand at the front of the class and lecture. During a PCP lesson, the teacher walks through the room working with the class as a whole, with small groups, or with individuals.

The primary program has as its origins the preschool program. A typical PCP preschool classroom contains a number of centers with two teachers assisting students as they rotate through the centers. This was the model used by teachers who taught the PCP at the primary level during its first years of implementation, except they had but one teacher. Teachers told me that they worked extremely hard to design activities to allow children to work semi-independently as they rotated through the centers during the course of the day. This model did not last more than two years.

According to teachers, trainers from America observed the classrooms and indicated that this was not how they intended the primary grades to be. Teachers could use centers, but the entire day would not consist of students moving from center to center. In addition to it being very difficult for the teacher, the PCP director also noted that the MET would not have accepted such a model. The director implied this would be too radical a change for the MET. The PCP national director noted that there was also a pedagogical rationale for change.

This was used in classes, making rotations, something which we later renounced because it was something that offered little choice for children. [They worked] in one center or another, there was little consideration of the rhythm of each child to finish the work. [For each rotation] he needed to complete the task assigned by the teacher, to make a presentation, and so on. There was something mechanical in this rotation, something artificial and we felt it. . . . This put the emphasis on the product made by the child inside a unit of time, and this was not very good. A teaching method is not viewed as a value in itself, if so, we loose the principle at the basis of the program.

Students and teachers were more focused on maintaining the schedule than exploring the material and content of the center. Current practice in the primary grades now uses a combination of whole class teaching as well as group and individual instruction. According to one teacher, centers have become resource areas where children can access materials and resources needed for their work (Christina). A combination of influences changed this practice. It seems that the international consultants discouraged its use, and the PCP staff felt that it was inadequate as well. Centers are not common in non-PCP schools.

The class schedule approved by the MET differs significantly from the standard schedule used in non-PCP schools. It was not until 2002 that PCP in the primary grades received an official schedule approved by the MET; until that time they worked on their own.²⁹ The PCP schedule includes two classes not found in other schedules. One is called *Activitate de invatamint in grup*, Group study activity. This is often simply called *mesaj* (message) because it almost always contains an interactive note from the teacher, which the students

²⁹ This comment and the previous comment regarding the use of the unapproved model of PCP reflects the decreased power of the MET during the time period.

complete. The *mesaj* may include puzzles, word play or games as well as mathematics problems or other academically related topics. There are always opportunities for children to complete sentences or problems, make comments, or correct errors. Usually there is a chance for children to sign up to share something, akin to show and tell in the U. S. Sometimes children write the *mesaj* or lead its discussion.

Teachers have a great deal of flexibility during this class that meets every day, usually the first lesson of the day. They may choose themes that relate to subjects covered in other lessons, to review previously taught topics, or its theme may relate to other aspects of the class. In addition teachers may discuss current events. According to the class framework from the MET, teachers do have an obligation to discuss the topics found in the class *Educatia morala spirituala* (Moral and spiritual education), a class that is not included in the schedule for PCP schools.

The second class unique to PCP schools is called *activitatea tematica* (thematic activity) and is now called *studiu tematica* (thematic study). The 'study' in the first word makes the activity sound more academic. This class meets for three lessons a week. For this class, children are allowed to select a topic to study. Most simply, the teacher solicits suggestions from students and then there is a vote, with run-offs as needed, to decide on a single topic for study. Some teachers have a more elaborate selection process that includes having students justify the importance of their suggestions and the availability of an adequate

supply of information. Children write small books, give reports, and presentations to share what they have learned. In schools with few resources it is very difficult for teachers to prepare for this class because of the wide range of topics.

The rest of the class time is dedicated to the standard national curriculum with some modifications. In the elementary grades for example, students typically have seven lessons of Romanian each week. The PCP schedule allows for only five lessons per week. All classes are to follow the same PCP philosophy. Despite the significant differences that may appear between PCP classes and others, program implementers insist in documents and interviews, that the teachers at PCP schools teach and fulfill the national curriculum. Fulfilling the national curriculum is required by law; however, nearly every teacher said the curriculum is overloaded and extremely difficult to fulfill. Regardless, every teacher claimed to fulfill the national curriculum. It is nearly impossible to evaluate this, and the national tests are of no help. In fourth grade there are only two one-hour tests, one in Romanian and one in mathematics. These do not to assess the entire curriculum.

The Theoretical Foundations of PCP: Individualism and Teacher Autonomy

Three aspects of schooling form the core of the PCP. This first is a focus on the child. PCP claims to use methods that are more appropriate for the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional needs of children. Children have opportunities to express their feelings and ideas. They have the opportunity to

work individually or in groups and participate in active learning through games and discovery. Second concerns the teacher. Teachers allow for the individual development of a child and to take into consideration the developmental characteristics of children whom they teach; this gives teachers substantial freedom and authority in classroom management and lesson design. The teacher allows children some say in determining what and how they study. And the teacher works with parents to support the student. Third is the partnership with families and the community. In the literature from the PCP, this partnership focuses on educational aspects. Parents are welcome to come to observe the classrooms and work with children regarding any expertise or experience they may have (Cincilei, 2001; Cincilei & Focsa-Seminov, 2001).

An eclectic theoretical basis

The program has an eclectic theoretical base. It claims numerous psychologists and pedagogues as theoretical contributors. Among them are Jean Piaget, Erik Erickson, Lev Vigotski, John Dewey, Carl Rogers, Ovide Decroly, and Howard Gardner. From each, the program has taken specific ideas regarding teaching and child development. The brief descriptions come from the cited text, which describes a few of the scholars' ideas that have influenced the PCP program.

PCP claims to put the curriculum in a more coherent sequence to help children understand the concepts more completely. This is based on the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. Jean Piaget constructed the idea of cognitive

development through stages, but acknowledged that the rate at which children pass through these stages is unique for each child. Children develop mental structures or schema, which influence the assimilation of new information. Learning is a tension between adaptation and assimilation as the child changes his schema to understand new information (translated and paraphrased, Cincilei & Focsa-Seminov, 2001). Lev Vigotski studied learning and the zone of proximal development. In addition he theorized that children learn in social contexts and the information is learned depending on its relevance and complexity (translated and paraphrased, Cincilei & Focsa-Seminov, 2001). The Soviet-era curriculum, according to critics, consisted of a list of information to be learned that were often disconnected from each other.

PCP claims that the school should be integrated with society. This is based on the ideas of Erikson and Dewey. Erik Erikson researched a child's learning and integration into the surrounding society. A person passes through eight stages of self-awareness and social integration. Children learn cumulatively as they pass through the stages (translated and paraphrased, Cincilei & Focsa-Seminov, 2001). In manuals published for the PCP, there are long lists of developmental characteristics of children at different ages. John Dewey suggested that "education is a development in, through, and for experience." Learning comes through reorganizing the experience in ways we understand. Experience is important for learning and students should not be limited to the classroom (translated and paraphrased, Cincilei & Focsa-Seminov, 2001). These

are ideas that Dewey praised in the earlier years of the Soviet Union, but are now seen as something very different than what was found in Soviet schools. PCP emphasizes parent involvement in the classroom and well as making connection between the children's lives and the content to be learned. Soviet manuals made the same claims, but few now suggest that this actually took place.

Soviet-era schools were said to be very teacher centered. PCP has tried to change this to allow children some voice in their learning. Carl Rogers suggested that learning cannot be directive; a teacher can only guide the process of learning. Learning should be significant, personal, and self directed. "Democracy presupposes that education [*invatamint*] must help children become individuals capable of initiative and who are able to assume responsibility . . . and can adapt when the situations change" (translated and paraphrased, Cincilei & Focsa-Seminov, 2001, p. 37). As noted above, during the *studiu thematic*, children are given the opportunity to guide, to a certain degree, their own learning.

In contrast to what took place in Soviet schools, PCP attempts to create a child friendly school. Ovide Decroly thought that children must be viewed in their natural and social environment. Children should have opportunities to feel, think, work, and express themselves. Topics of study should be more holistic, not broken into disciplines, but objects of study to be investigated through various perspectives (translated and paraphrased, Cincilei & Focsa-Seminov, 2001, pp. 37-38). By placing students into groups, PCP teachers attempt to create a more

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social environment in which students can work, and teachers do encourage, to a certain degree, their students to express their ideas, at least orally. In descriptions of the PCP, and during interviews, teachers promote a holistic approach to learning. I seldom saw this take place in the classes I observed.

Howard Gardner proposed that each person has different ways that determine how he assimilates information and expresses it. Any uniform style of teaching would be insufficient to reach all the varieties of children (translated and paraphrased, Cincilei & Focsa-Seminov, 2001, pp. 38-39). Regarding this theory, the Soviet school system, combined with the after school programs, might have done an exemplary job in introducing children to various aspects of intelligence such as music, dancing, writing, ecology. But, because of economic problems, many of these activities no longer receive funding.

In literature describing the program and in interviews the influence of these scholars is clear. The program, according to teachers and administrators, strives to create a school in which children can develop at their own pace, that is experiential, that involves parents and the community, and that is relevant to the lives and interests of children. How Primavera teachers put these ideas into practice is the topic of the next chapter.

Numerous times I heard the phrase "child-centered" at the school. I also heard and saw a number of definitions of this term including: "The child is responsible for his learning," "The child guides instruction," "the child is active," "The child and the teacher bring information." The PCP national director accepted

all of these interpretations, but considered it impossible to define the term absolutely. According to the national PCP director:

Each teacher individually must find the balance [between what the child wants and what the teacher must teach], to feel it. There are not any specific recipes, in choosing a theory ready for every situation, sometimes the selected material must be abandoned, but everything depends on how to combine this with what the child already knows, so it not too challenging and children give up.

This is the challenge for any teacher, and the director has doubts about the ability of many teachers to meet this challenge.

For all children, yes [it is a good program]. If we talk of all teachers, . . . we indirectly say that not all teachers are sufficiently creative, sufficiently reflective, sufficiently responsible, . . . because a dedicated teacher by definition is a creative person, willing to continue to learn, if he does not have these qualities, then surely, it is easier for him to have a predefined program, then he is not a good teacher. Then when we pose the question if the program is suitable for all creative, responsible teachers, I would say yes. But we refer to those who are left after the huge departure of good teachers, I cannot say yes. It is difficult to effect a change, you cannot force them to move forward, and that means we cannot move forward.

The relationship between PCP and the MET

PCP variation from the standard curriculum has caused some tension with the MET. Earlier, in 1997 the MET had encouraged the expansion of PCP and directed regional officials to support its expansion. But in the fall of 2006 the director³⁰ of preuniversity education, when asked if more schools should adopt PCP told me, "No, the state program, I consider is a good one, at least it is more

³⁰ This official also said that teachers' salaries are adequate, and that the differing amounts of money that schools could collect from their respective communities would not result in differing educational opportunities.

transparent for the whole country and for parents, Step by Step is good, but there are many questions for us currently. . . The lack of student evaluation [referring to the lack of number grades] at the end of the elementary level. And there are others.” In an interview in the spring of 2008, the director continued her critique of the program. Despite having a presence in nearly one-fifth of the schools in the country the director, when asked if the program had influenced education in Moldova, responded, “I do not think so, categorically I do not think so.” She continued with her opinion that the program had many problems, again referring to the lack of numerical grades. In addition she mentioned that program lacked continuity, despite advancing into the gymnasium level. Finally she said that PCP “will never be a very widespread program in Moldova.”

In another interview with the national director of PCP, the director mentioned that the relationship between PCP and the MET had been better in the early years of the program. The deterioration of that relationship she dates to the election of the communist government. For example, the professional development classes that the PCP offers had been valid for in-service credit to renew a teaching license. At the time of data collection, however, that status was under reconsideration.

Summary

The presence of the PCP in Moldova does create an alternative to the MET and other official educational authorities. The PCP articulates a philosophy and a set of practices that contrasts with what takes place in most schools in

Moldova, but in a way that is consistent with the ideas found in many MET documents. The philosophy of the PCP is based on some of the same scholars whose names are mentioned in the national curriculum of 1998. It emphasizes the development of the individual, it involves the parents and the wider community, and it is connected with other schools in other countries.

The PCP is an eclectic program containing educational ideas discussed around the world. It is an international program that is both connected to schools in other countries yet it also fulfills the national curriculum. It is child-centered; it claims to take into consideration the cognitive and physical development of the child in the lesson and activity design. It teaches children to think for themselves and promotes the individual. For teachers it is a way to connect with other schools and an international education community. Through its long-term professional development, the PCP provides a great deal of support, in terms of methodology, to teachers. All of this makes it an attractive program for teachers and parents.

CHAPTER SIX: PRIMAVARA: A SCHOOL REACHING FOR THE NATIONAL IDEAL

In chapter three I described the laws and the policies that promoted a national Moldovan school. In chapter four I discussed the daunting financial and societal problems challenging schools. Despite vague policies and financial problems, schools continue to operate. In chapter five I described the philosophy of PCP. In PCP schools, it is up to teachers and school directors to put word into action and fulfill both national policy and the PCP philosophy. As I will show in this chapter, the teachers at Primavara attempted to do this and in the process created a unique school in Moldova.

Primavara School

Scoala-gradinita Primavara "Pas cu Pas" Centru Educational Didactic is located in Botanica, a sector of Chisinau named for the botanic gardens located there. Surrounding the campus are three and five story apartment buildings. They are typical Soviet-era apartment buildings with inconsistent repairs that make them look bedraggled. In one long building, retail stores occupy the ground floor. The store fronts face the street and away from the school, only the service entrances are visible. A heating main covered with insulation and plaster runs above ground along one side of the school grounds just outside the fence. Many trees and bushes grow on the school grounds. Gardens with flowers and bushes surround the school with a few benches along asphalt paths circling the school and leading to various entrances. On the north side there is a small play area with a field and two undersized soccer goals, a few benches, and a small brick

castle. Nowhere is there grass except in remote corners; the area is muddy and unused during rain. The area reserved for the kindergarten classes has age-appropriate play equipment. On the south side of the school, not often used by children, there is the furnace outhouse, an abandoned car, and uncut grass among the trees. A fence encircles the campus.

The school is made of limestone blocks; mortar is visible because the walls are unfinished, a common state for Moldovan schools. On the second floor, on the sides of the building are mosaics of characters from children's stories. Some of them are complete; others are not. Ivy grows extensively covering a few walls of the building.

When the school opened in 1999 the building needed a great deal of repairs. According to the director, the roof leaked, windows were drafty, and doors were missing. Over the nine year life of the school the school has received many improvements. There are new windows, new flooring, new furniture, roof repairs, doors, and teaching supplies. This has been accomplished primarily from parent funds. In addition, many parents contribute to the school on an ad hoc basis; some of this is in-kind contribution. This may include furniture, teaching materials, or a transmitter for the school radio broadcasts.

Walking through the school for the first time is a challenging experience. The main entryway is built around an old window. It is a new addition to the building, new since the opening of the school. Often a couple of students stand at the door greeting people as they enter or exit. These students are from the class

that has *serviciu*, service, and are to monitor their colleagues as well as greet visitors. From the entryway one can progress straight and descend a few uneven stairs, past a couple of classrooms, and then into one of the two story pods.

Taking a left from the entryway one goes down a dark narrow hallway, similar in width to what one would find in a private residence, and quite crowded when classes are passing, and past three administrative offices on the right. On the left is the kitchen and the dining area, called a polyvalent room where activities such as Christmas skits take place in addition to the daily use as a cafeteria. Past the offices and the polyvalent room is a hall to the left and one straight ahead. This area is filled with plants and is well lighted due to the large picture windows lining the halls. A student recently broke one of the windows; the glass is not tempered and is fragile. Going straight, one passes the music room, containing a piano and small risers for students, and the *sala sportiva*, a long classroom with faux wood flooring; two elephant ropes hang from the 8 foot ceiling, and netting protects the new windows. Continuing along the hallway one enters another pod with classrooms upstairs, and a conference room and science classroom downstairs. Science classes do not often meet in this room, but there are some science materials such as burners in this room. After school groups meet here.

Going left at the polyvalent hall brings one down another hallway with plants and glass on both sides. On the left one looks into the polyvalent room; looking right one see a small garden with two wading pools that have been filled in with

dirt and planted with flowers. Past the polyvalent hall one can go straight down a ramp or down some stairs. The ramp is for a handicapped student, recently installed. This pod contains the kindergarten rooms with dormitories for naptime and classrooms. Before the ramp, taking a left, one goes down another dark hall. This is especially dark after the sunset; it is not possible to see doors without the lights, which are often off. On the right are offices for the nurse and the accountant. There is sometimes a crowd here of parents waiting to pay the monthly tuition. On the left is a short hall into the kitchen that also contains newly renovated bathrooms for boys and girls. Continuing, one climbs three steps, uneven and quite high for an elementary school. From there one can go upstairs to the library, computer room and a classroom, or downstairs to a couple of classrooms.

Because of the orientation of the building and the pods, some classrooms have a great deal of sunlight requiring the teacher to cover the windows with paper, while others get very little light and they stay somewhat cooler. In all classrooms there are three windows along two sides of the room. Some classes are quite cramped for the 25 students. Smaller classrooms are only 8 meters on a side. Other classrooms are 8 meters by 10 meters. Many classrooms have bathrooms, often shared with another class. Children bring towels for hand washing and there are hooks on which to hang them.

Plants are plentiful in the school. They line the hallways that are lined with windows. Between two and three dozen of them fill each classroom except the

classrooms for music and physical education and the smaller rooms. There is a small flowerbed below one of the stairways in one of the pods. Even in the classrooms, some of the pots are as big as five and ten gallons.

The classrooms appear haphazard in their construction. The floors are sometimes carpeted, with carpet simply rolled out over wood or a vinyl covering. Other classrooms have faux stone or wood vinyl flooring. In places there are holes in the vinyl, seeming to indicate a hole in whatever flooring is underneath. The floors and the walls are seldom true, even or level. In some rooms, vinyl framed windows have replaced the wood framed windows. In other rooms, old double, wood framed windows are still present. In the latter case, the edges of the windows are taped in the winter to prevent drafts. The MET issues an order to do so every year.

Heat seems to be plentiful once the boiler is lit, even in classrooms on the north side. Primavara has a private gas fired boiler, something advertised in its brochure, that keeps the school comfortable. At times teachers open their windows to cool off the rooms. Before the boiler is lit, it can get quite cold. Officially, heat is not turned on until there are three successive days with highs of 8 degrees Celsius or lower. Most schools and apartments do not have autonomous furnaces and are dependent on centralized agencies to turn on and off heat and to set the temperature. Often this is not respected, because it gets very cold in the stone schools, and there is likely some political pressure to start heating schools and apartments. There are small grates in walls indicating the

exhaust vent. In some classes these vents are covered with wallpaper.

Regardless, the classrooms become very stuffy very quickly with 25 students in each.

All the rooms have tables at which the students sit and work. Each room has a *covor* (rug) around which the class periodically meets through the day. Every room has an easel near the *covor* on which the *mesaj* (morning message) is hung. Almost all classes have benches around the *covor*. Most do not have enough benches for all of the students to sit, in that case, students bring chairs to the *covor*. The tables are often trapezoidal in shape, and two are placed together to form a hexagon. Sometimes there is a small round table or a square table for a few students.

Teachers often have small round or square tables at which they work. Only one has a desk. They often have a bookshelf next to the table with books and other teaching materials.

Every room has the names of academic disciplines written on the walls in some fashion, one has them embroidered. Children's work is hung on the walls around the names of the disciplines.

In each room there is also a chalkboard. All the chalkboards have been replaced since Soviet times, something that is not always the case in other schools. There is also a small library with children's books, and some resources such as dictionaries and encyclopedias. Some class libraries contain several hundred books.

By American standards the school looks shabby. The unfinished stonework, the uneven floors and stairs, the dark hallways, and the lights askew give the feeling that the building was not quite finished. Compared to other schools in Moldova, Primavara is very nice.

The school is open from 8:00 in the morning to 6:00 in the evening. Lessons begin officially at 8:30 and children have five or six lessons a day (45 minute lessons with breaks of 10-15 minutes between each). Many children often come to school before 8:00 to socialize and work on the *mesaj* (discussed below). After school, students have the option of participating in a study hall and various after school activities called *cercuri*, circles. These include classes or clubs focusing on English, music, chess, dance, newspaper, and rhetoric.

Primavara Compared to Other Schools Following the National Curriculum

In the contract of the parent association, and as stated by numerous teachers and directors of PCP, PCP teachers teach the same national curriculum as all other schools in the country. However, if curriculum includes all the methods of teaching and educational activities that contribute to the development of a student (Paslaru, 2007), then Primavara provides something more, or at least different, than the national curriculum. Even the lesson schedule of PCP, approved by the MET, provides for a variety of activities that would not be included in the national curriculum. To say that PCP teaches the same curriculum as the standard national curriculum is inaccurate.

PCP differs, from other schools, precisely in the implementation of ideas that educational policy promoted as part of a national school, namely teacher autonomy, parent involvement, individualization, and the development of a unique person able to express himself or herself. One teacher put it this way

I say [a student in PCP] will do the same things that children in other schools do, but will do something more. They will learn to work in groups, to work in pairs. They will try to choose a theme of study through which they will develop, which will expand their skills and knowledge, in addition, [they] will learn to make a decision and argue to support the idea.
(Tatiana)

According to the teachers, these students at the end of elementary school should have a different set of skills compared to children attending other schools.

Repeatedly teachers at Primavara and at other schools told me that the children at PCP schools learn to express themselves and become more capable to adapt or resolve problems, parents and the municipal inspector also noted that children at PCP develop communication and reasoning skills not developed at other schools.

The municipal inspector of elementary schools described PCP and compared the program to that found in other schools:

I look at the competitions, at the exams, [students at PCP] have more skills, [they can] do something with information. . . Other lyceums are focused more on information. It is more superficial, for those who work more with information, traditionally, it is easier to solve the tasks that are proposed for the competitions, the evaluations, the exams, the final evaluations that are proposed by the ministry, because those are the expectations of the ministry and they work in that style. They consider it better, those from other lyceums. Recently some teachers from Step by Step have worked more with information and they have taken a few places [in competitions].

The Step by Step program is very good, because children feel free, there is more democracy in the class, freedom to choose a book for which there is a need. They have a library in the class; that is good. The child at any time may refer to the textbook, dictionary. There is a better connection with parents, at home they always have to search, they have searching tasks, something to do and bring to school. Children at other schools have more problems, exercises to do, to read literature.

Schools that do perform well in the competitions and tests are proud of the accomplishment. They use such recognition to legitimize their work. In interviews with directors and teachers of other schools, they often pointed out the performance of their students in academic competitions.

The superintendent of the sector praised the Primavera and its students. He compared a discussion he saw in second grade at Primavera with what he saw at the ninth grade at other schools. He was aware that Primavera does not have many students in the municipal competitions and blames it on the old system of evaluation based on assessing the amount of information memorized, "This does not denigrate their preparation; change the method of evaluation then they would take first place, many places, and the others would take fewer." Without changing the system of evaluation, he is not optimistic about change in schools, "The system of evaluation dictates the need for change, because in the old system they [the other schools] get results, tell me, what is the point in changing?" PCP has made those changes.

Other complications make the implementation or fulfillment of the national curriculum difficult. Despite the revision and "decongestion" of the curriculum in 2005, which removed some of the objectives to be taught, with one exception,

every teacher told me that the curriculum is too large for the time allowed. For PCP teachers this problem was compounded because of the class schedule. Compared to the standard curriculum, PCP students have fewer language classes. A typical elementary student would have seven or eight lessons of Romanian each week, the PCP student have only five. Instead, PCP students have five lessons of *mesaj* and three lessons of *studiu tematica* each week. The PCP student also have more lessons per week, ranging from 23 to 26 depending on the grade level compared to 20-23 lessons in the standard curriculum. Only one PCP teacher suggested that she takes shortcuts to get through the curriculum. Admitting to shorting the national curriculum would be akin to admitting to not doing their job. Several said they use the *mesaj* lessons to make up the needed time. Occasionally teachers would forego the *mesaj* and use the lesson to teach another academic topic. One justification for this was the upcoming national exams in the spring; another was the need for a more extended length of time to study a topic.

The differences between the practices of PCP and the practices in other schools, as told by the inspector, superintendent, teachers, and directors, make the PCP more consistent with the goals of national school. The *mesaj* allows the teacher some autonomy and promotes a positive relationship between student and teacher. The *studiu thematic* affords students some possibility to guide their own learning. The more active methods give children a chance to socialize in

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class, collaborate with peers, and express their ideas. All of these are goals promoted at the national level.

Continuity in the Face of Change

Student writing in the context of earlier practice

PCP teaching was not entirely innovative; that is, not everything they did was new. The theme of fall was prevalent in the school during the fall of 2007. What is striking is the similarity among the classes. In fact I saw it in several schools at multiple elementary grade levels. The content of these lessons dates to Soviet times. In 1984 a mother wrote a letter to a Soviet periodical; she was angry that her son had to compose a memorized composition. That is, the child's homework was to write a composition, but his teachers had told him what to write verbatim. She lived in Moscow and the letter includes the composition.

The golden autumn has come. The leaves on the trees have turned yellow. It's rainy. It has gotten colder. People and animals are preparing for winter. (Vanina, 1984)

In Primavara in the fall of 2007, I read and heard very similar ideas in discussions about autumn and the 'signs of fall.' In a fourth grade class there is mention of the golden fall, which is a common phrase in Moldova. The students then mentioned leaves turning color and falling, "animals gather provisions for winter," "there is sadness and joy because birds have left and it is pleasing because I know that spring will come." "It is sad because leaves fall and animals prepare for what is coming." In a third grade class I heard similar ideas. The teacher asks, "how do you feel when the birds leave" and a student responds, " Sad, but with

hope because they return in the spring.” Various parts of this script appeared in other classes through the fall. Whether this is part of the cultural norms, it is clear that there is not a promotion of creative responses to this theme.

Fall was pervasive. Even in a seminar for PCP, one of my interviewees expressed frustration that so many teachers from around the country felt that they needed to start the *mesaj* with something about the fall. In nearly every school I visited there were displays made from natural materials: fruits, vegetables, seeds, grass, grains. Students participated in competitions and made heads from squash or eggplant, a little house from grass and sticks, an image of a bird or a tree with seeds. To a lesser degree the repetition occurred around Christmas, but not at other times of the year.

Regardless of the topic, writing was not a large component of the curriculum. Some of the writing, written by hand, that students brought to class as part of their homework was often copied from other sources. Teachers explained that it was often selected from other sources, or copied outright. Teachers accepted this. They also acknowledged that it would be better for students to write their own material or write in their own words, but they did not expect this of their students. To add some intellectual activity to the exercise, one teacher said that the students had to justify why they chose the texts they did.

In the fourth grade portfolios, there were very few samples of writing. They did write, but it was usually restricted to the 45 minute time period and usually short. For the national tests in Romanian, with a duration of only 60 minutes,

there is not very much time to construct an extensive composition. In the 2006 test, the most extensive writing task called for the students to write “four sentences about your friend.” This was somewhat related to the text on which the test was based. A typical writing sample is similar to this one from a fourth grade science class with the assignment of “About what does the large oak talk with the small grass?”:

They discuss the most useful medicinal plant, chamomile.

-What do you think, is the chamomile near your blades useful?

-Certainly it is, from the flower one prepares tea which is good for colds.

-And the nettle?

-The nettle is a very useful plant, if you kick with your foot, you will have hives, but in exchange your cold passes. Some children don't know this, said the oak

-That's too bad, If he knew how useful it is, he would not be afraid of this medicinal plant.

Several students worked on this in a group setting. This assignment was not very different than other writing topics in other classes such as “create a legend about a smile,” or “create a dialogue between two leaves.” Another class of fourth grade students was to write about their places of birth. For most this was the city of Chisinau. Of the four children who read their compositions in front of the class, none of them mentioned a personal experience about living in Chisinau. There were some empty comments such there are “many institutions” and many roads that are not “voluminous.”

Students do write more for their *studiu tematic*, but that suffers from the same copying issue mentioned above. Homework can be more expressive of the

individual. But writing homework assignments are still very short with just 6-8 sentences.

Mathematics in the context of earlier practice

Other activities I saw at Primavara date from Soviet times. As part of the *mesaj* the teacher often asked the students to analyze the date. Typical responses included whether the number was odd or even, prime or composite, mentioning its factors, mentioning the digit in the ones column or the tens column, the preceding and succeeding number. Teachers created arithmetic problems from the two digits of the date. I found similar activities in mathematics teacher guides in Soviet times.

Furthermore, in mathematics classes in addition to emphasis on oral calculation, there is a habit of reading mathematics expressions in different ways and having children calculate the values. For example, the expression $(5+2)-(2+1)$ might be read “five plus two minus the sum 2 plus one” or it could be read “the difference between the sums 5 and 2 and 2 and one.” Some of these activities became quite elaborate with extensive use of the genitive case.

I saw a variety of mathematics activities through the school. In several classes I saw children use blocks of unifix cubes to represent numbers and relationships. There was a strong emphasis on learning algorithms and cue words that indicate the necessary operations. In a fourth grade class a teacher begins:

Teacher: I am thinking of a number. If I increase it by 2,002 I get 12,002.

Student: 10,000

Teacher: How do you know?

Student: We find the unknown terms through subtraction.

This response was acceptable to the teacher. Another teacher was going over word problems and the cue words such as “‘by how much’ means addition or subtraction, ‘by how many times’ indicates multiplication or division.” There is a tendency to rely on algorithms and cues in nearly every class.

There were a couple of exceptions to this as well. A first grade class was measuring the volume of their backpacks using non-standard measures. The measured the dimensions using unifix cubes, and then measured the volumes by the number of notebooks they could hold. Another teacher mentioned studying bees across the curriculum, writing about them, reading about them, and discussing the geometry of the comb. She complained that the curriculum does not allow the flexibility to do this very often.

The school director made it clear that it did not matter when the ideas appeared, but how they were used. “They talk of traditional and nontraditional methods,” the director says, “traditional methods can be transformed into nontraditional. What matters is the child and finding a method that fits him or her.”

Despite the use of practices that might have been used in Soviet times, the context of these practices has changed dramatically. In the analysis of numbers, for example, those numbers would have a different meaning when the students are gathered in a circle reading the *mesaj* that a colleague wrote compared to numbers out of the textbook. This type of familiarity and

socialization would not have happened in Soviet times according to teachers interviewed. If the writing classes and the mathematics classes reveal the shortcomings in achieving the national goals they also may reveal strong cultural traits such as the significance of fall in a very rural country and the emphasis on oral language over written language.

Nationalism: history and culture at odds with the current government

Despite the emphasis on history and national values in the early stages of school reform, children do not study history very much at the elementary level. Only fourth grade students have history class, which meets only once a week. The text was *History of the Romanians* and focused on Romania from its earliest to its more recent history. History teachers in general followed the curriculum using the textbook.

A new "integrated history" textbook was released at the spring of 2008. The communist government had published a new series of textbooks using an approach called integrated history. This started as an attempt, supported by the European Union, to place the history of Moldova in the context of modern Europe. The communist government used the opportunity to rewrite textbooks that portrayed its Soviet past in more positive light. Teachers at Primavara criticized the fourth grade book for its lack of substance and in general poor quality. Because of the autonomy granted to teachers, they were not obligated to use the new text. Teachers in poorer schools may not have this option; with limited funds there may not be money to purchase other materials.

Despite the minimal time given to history in the school, there were many *opportunities* to discuss Moldovan culture. Each class had a Christmas skit *based* on Romanian tradition. The Romanian language course included many *Moldovan/Romanian* authors. During *mesaj*, described below, teachers *discussed* topics such as the national and city holidays. The teachers' choir *participated* in competitions in Romanian and hosted a Romanian choir in *Chisinau*. Students had participated in an exchange with Romanian students as *well*.

Although the nationality is still debated in Moldova, at Primavara, there *was* a definite pro-Romanian perspective. There was no public advocacy for *Union* with Romania, but the faculty promoted Romanian traditions. Importantly, *the* school did not celebrate some of the Slavic holidays that the government and *other* schools celebrated. It is a relatively simple matter to allow minority groups, *such* as Bulgarians and Gagauzians, to celebrate their traditions and holidays. *But* there is no consensus about the origins of Moldovan culture. With Moldova's *historical*, linguistic, and familial ties with Romania, countered by Soviet efforts to *distance* Moldova from Romania, the debate about nationality will likely continue.

Autonomy at the Classroom Level for Teachers and Students

Even though the PCP policy is to fulfill the national curriculum, the *experiences* of children at the school are different from other schools. There are *different* expectations for students and for teachers at the school. In the next

section, I show the experiences of teachers and children in two of the classes *unique* to PCP.

Mesaj and studiu thematic

The *mesaj* lesson begins the day in every class. It is formally called Group **L**earning Activity but is referred to as '*mesaj* (message) because of its primary **a**ctivity. It is a 45 minute lesson like others and is named after the message to the **c**lass that students read. This is an interactive text, sometimes authored by **s**tudents. It may include a variety of activities and usually has some interactive **c**omponent: sign up to share, proofreading, or completing a puzzle. Children **o**ften work on the *mesaj* before the first bell. Teachers have a great deal of **l**atitude in the content of these lessons; there is no written curriculum. Teachers **d**ecide what to teach based on their individual evaluation of the class.

A young teacher, reflecting on a *mesaj* lesson just before 'City Day' **d**escribed her *mesaj* design this way:

Ala: The goal of the *mesaj* was, mainly, to remember information about our city, because in two days it will be the city holiday and I wanted mostly to recall some information. What are the symbols? the history? We also learned of the country's symbols [and] of the symbols of the city. Also, there are objectives that are always part of the *mesaj*: to form sentences correctly, and to express the child's idea.

Researcher: Where are the goals, where are they written?

Ala: I write the goals myself.

Researcher: And the other teachers?

Ala: The other teachers, each teacher formulates specific goals for the *mesaj*. It depends on the theme of the *mesaj* . . . For example, yesterday I

focused more on mathematics. I had a game, mathematics exercises. When I see that the children lack, or do not understand something, or do not understand well, we review using the *mesaj*.

The *mesaj* also at times involved affective goals. A second grade teacher, **Tatiana**, started the day with a chair in the middle of the carpet and asked **children** to sit in the chair and tell why they smiled. Children enthusiastically **dashed** for the chair, trying to get there before others and very quickly stated their **reasons**, often without smiling. Reasons included: a mother's birthday, completed **homework**, a father or mother coming home. When asked about how she chose **this theme**, she mentioned walking down the road thinking of her problems (her **father** died during the school year) and a person smiled at her making her feel **better**. Having noticed that the students returned from the fall vacation a little sad, **she** decided to discuss smiling and how students could encourage others. In **addition** to this affective exercise, students did proofread during this time, made **corrections**, and pointed out diphthongs.

Tatiana then divided the class into four groups, using a strategy suggested **by the** students, and gave each group one of the following tasks: 1) Why do **people** smile? create a list. 2) Write a story about a smile, illustrate the text. 3) **Start** a list of strategies to raise the mood of a sad person. 4) Answer the **question**: "What would happen if the smile did not exist?" Each group completed **the** assigned tasks and shared their results.

The *studiu tematic* lesson is not as varied as the *mesaj*; it generally contains an academic focus in process if not in topic. The class proposes topics

and then votes to select a single topic for study. A couple of teachers were becoming more adventurous and allowing two or three topics for study by different students or groups of students simultaneously. In younger grades, children often choose to study animals, in older grades they have studied topics such as ancient Egypt, modes of transport, professions, and dinosaurs. Students also choose how to present what they have learned as well. Very popular recently were small booklets and posters.

The teachers justify the activity by arguing that the *studiu tematic* does meet the objectives of the national curriculum.

You see, we have something specific to the program, that is, the thematic unit, which we study only in the program. When we study cars, we fulfill many curricular objectives, from Romanian, and from science, and from mathematics, and from art, and from computers; it is an integrated study. [The curriculum] does not list cars, . . . We must know specific drawing techniques, we must know to use new words. Through the medium of a unit that interests [the students] we improve other [skills]. (Ramona)

But the very fact that students can choose the topic of study creates a very unique dynamic in the classroom. School, for these children, is not only about studying topics from a list generated by the MET, rather, the children are involved in what is learned as well as how it is learned.

Studiu tematic was the most obvious expression of democracy in the classroom. Teachers, at least in their rhetoric, actively promoted democracy and student expression. This was a common theme when I asked teachers why PCP is a good program for Moldova. Students had the opportunity to define, not just influence, a part of the educational process. They suggested topics, justified the

suggestions, and voted on them. A more elaborate process took place in a third *grade* class that had complained about the fairness. This involved listing topics *on an* easel then, with the list facing away from the students, each student went *behind* the easel to place a vote for the desired topic.

Several teachers had the students justify what they chose for the unit's *theme*. This was part of a second idea that nearly all teachers mention; students *learn* to justify and present arguments in support of their opinions. I saw this take *place* in a fourth grade class. The teacher had three criteria for choosing a topic. 1) *Why* this topic is necessary? 2) What are the conditions of the unit? and 3) *How* will we proceed? During my observation, students chose plants as a topic. *They* thought it necessary so that in case they were injured in the forest they *could* treat themselves using medicinal plants. This unit also took place in the *spring*, and it is important to learn how to plant a garden. The end result would be *the* knowledge they would gain about plants. For three, they suggested that they *could* visit the botanical gardens, create a terrarium, they could plant a garden. *The* teacher suggested that 'plants' was too general and children suggested *narrower* topics such as medicinal plants, house plants, and garden plants. This *project* did go forward, and the students, like all other classes, had a small plot *near* the school in which they cultivated various plants.

For the love of learning: motivating students without grades

Children at PCP do not receive grades. The emphasis, according to PCP, should be on the natural curiosity of the student, not the attainment of grades.

This is not a new idea in the former Soviet Union. In the movement of Pedagogy of Cooperation dating from *perestroika*, teachers proposed not using grades at the elementary level. In the curriculum from 1992, both the moral-civil education course and the history course were to be ungraded. According to the director of PCP, MET at one point discussed the idea of foregoing grades at the elementary level.

Although the teachers at Primavara do not give out grades, there is some confusion as to what replaces them. The prohibition of number grades was to avoid comparison among students, to avoid the connotations carried by the numbers, to promote intrinsic motivation, and to focus on what the child has learned and can do instead of on the evaluation. In some cases students received words in their agendas such as “excellent,” “good job,” or for younger students a symbol. None of the teachers could explain how excellent is any different than giving a ten or how a “*bine*” is different than an eight or nine. One young teacher could not tell me why the PCP program does not allow number grades. More experienced teachers knew the philosophy and sometimes wrote observations about student behavior and performance in class. They wrote what the student did, recited a poem from memory or solved math problems correctly. The key is to write an observation not an evaluation. This is an important topic and a half-day of training was dedicated to it during a PCP teacher in-service seminar.

At times, at the end of a lesson, students would eagerly bring their **agendas** to the teacher for notation. This is not different than what I saw in other **schools** not using PCP. Even after the classmates gave an oral evaluation of a **student's** performance, some students still wanted the written evaluation from the **teacher**. These were students who spent their entire elementary tenure in this **school**, it was not learned behavior from different schools.

The school did have an inspection of the students' agendas. An assistant **director** looked through them and wrote a two page report about what she found. **Some** teachers received public admonishment for writing only negative **comments** in the agendas. A music teacher continued to use number grades. **Comments** such as "you made a big effort" and "I am glad for your success this **week**" received praise. While negative commentary was criticized, there were no **comments** in the letter about writing observations instead of evaluations (nota **informative** in urma verificarii agendelor elevilor, 16 nov. 2007, Olevschi).

Although keeping elementary classes grade-free is not part of the national **policy**, there is an underlying theme that teachers should find ways to motivate **students** without them. In the curriculum of 1993, the history courses and moral-**civic** education classes were not to be graded. In the papers used during the **World** Bank project there is the implicit expectation that teachers find ways of **motivating** students other than coercion. The value of this practice is accepted **widely**, but only implemented at PCP schools.

Discipline in the Context of More Student and Teacher Autonomy

In every school, it is a challenge to manage the attention and movement of **hundreds** of children. In Primavara, the philosophy of the school creates unique **challenges** for the faculty. First, the school does not give grades and allows **children** a say in the activities. In theory, this would keep students interested for **the** love of learning, but challenges teachers to find other ways of motivating **students**. Second, by claiming to adapt to the needs of the children, the faculty **suggests** that the students will be content in their studies and not have the need **to misbehave**. "From the moment that the program is oriented to the needs of **children**, the behavior management is produced naturally and efficiently. The **need** to discipline the group of children disappears, since the spirit of self **discipline** is formed" (Cincilei & Focsa-Seminov, 2001, p. 55). There is some **precedent** for this attitude in the former Soviet Union.³¹ One of the keys to Anton **Makarenko's** success was the environment in which he worked with delinquent **children** (Gehring, et al., 2005; Monoszon, 1987). When children at Primavara did **misbehave**, the school's philosophy or its implementation was in doubt.

When discipline was a problem, teachers often blamed parents. This did **not** come out in formal interviews, but usually during casual conversations after **the** teachers got to know me. Ramona told of the likely conditions of some of her **students** who have parents and grandparents waiting on them. One grandparent

³¹ One village teacher in a PCP school I interviewed laughed at the communist idea that there would be stores but no money in a communist society. Yet she used the PCP that had a similar philosophy regarding grades.

made lunch, one parent helped with clothes, another drove him to school and the *child* did not have to take any responsibility. Christina complained in general *about* the children of the city. She had only worked in the school since 2005. According to her, urban children were more superficial, more interested in *money*, compared to village children. A teacher assistant blamed the difficulties *she* was having with students on their home life. As I will show in the next *chapter*, teachers, during parent meetings, often tried to teach parents parenting *skills*.

Nonetheless, discipline in the school is not a major issue. The school is a *choice* school with a high bar for entrance, and most of the students are well-behaved, most of the time. This changed somewhat in the spring of the research *year* during which there were a number of complaints among teachers regarding *student* behavior. This is not inconsistent with discipline issues at many schools *in the* spring. However, the nature of the school, with tables instead of individual *desks*, with a great deal of student participation and active students, makes *management* a challenge.

Schoolwide, the assistant director for discipline (*educatie*) promoted *activities* to improve children's behavior. One was a reward program for which a *McDonalds* flag would be given to classes who were best behaved. At the end of *the year*, the classes with the most flags would receive a reward. Another was a *display* on the bulletin board showing pictures of acceptable and unacceptable *behavior*. This included pictures of children running, pushing, as well as picture of

more positive behavior such as students walking in an orderly line. This idea came from a school in Latvia, which a teacher had visited during the school year. In addition there were signs up in the hallways encouraging positive behavior.

The threat of parent involvement was a regular occurrence in the classroom. This may have been more common among the younger teachers, but occurred regularly among the more experienced teachers as well. Communication with parents took place primarily through the students' agendas. These were booklets all students had that included the schedule of classes, homework, and notes from the teachers. Parents were to sign them on a regular basis. A teacher's request to "bring me your agenda" is a threat. When directed towards the whole class or to a group the teacher often told students to "put your agendas on the desk" or "bring the agendas to the front." Most of the time behavior would change after this threat, or after a teacher actually wrote a note to parents in the agendas of a misbehaving student. It often caused students to stop what they were doing and focus on their school work. Students ignored this threat when they thought the teacher would not go through with the threat, and at times the students got away with it. This was not consistent with the philosophy of the school, which promotes intrinsic motivation and self-discipline. An assistant director agreed that the threat to write in agendas is not consistent with the school philosophy, and is a fear tactic used by some teachers.

Other discipline measures were few. There was the constant reminder of students to focus on their work that is common in all elementary classrooms. In

addressing discipline issues, teachers often discussed the Rights of the Child. For example, if a classmate is interfering with a fellow student, he or she is interfering with his right to an education and should stop. One class set up a class pact which was derived from children's rights such as the right to express oneself, the right to live in safety (violated when one is hit). These were glued into the students' agendas and shared with parents. When children violated the rules, the teacher referred them to the pact. Another teacher took notes regarding the behavior of the students; the threatening signal was when she picked up a notepad and started writing. Those students who misbehaved in class received extra homework. This caused some of her third grade students to cry. "In the end I do not know who gains more," this teacher said, "those who have extra work or those who do not. It could be reversed. It is an attempt to be more conscientious about their behavior. There is an effect, because we do not give grades, do not grade behavior, this is one way to do it" (Ramona). The teacher admits that the practice is a punishment and a replacement for grades. In other schools, teachers use grades to manipulate behavior.

Discipline problems did increase in the spring, or at least the teachers discussion of them and frustration with them did. Some students wrote a vulgar word in one of the bathrooms. In a reversal of history, they wrote a Russian word using Latin letters. Students were disrespectful. Two students were suspended after hitting classmates on several occasions. The director had meetings with

parents regarding the hitting. Two other students traded classes in an attempt to create a new environment for them.

I observed one of these meetings with parents and children. In this case, the child had been suspended or expelled from two other schools. The director accepted the boy into the school knowing this. This was a point of pride that the school agreed to work with the boy, but also frustration because the boy was still causing problems. The school director encouraged the parents to observe the boy in the class, so he knows he is "the center of attention of the parents." She told parents not to hit the child. After the parents left, she did have kind words to say to the boy, reminding him of the good things he has done. To me alone she said, "It would be easiest to tell the parents to take the boy to a different school, then he might end up on the streets, on drugs."

PCP has set very lofty goals regarding discipline and student motivation. At times teacher have used less idealistic means to manage their students, some of these inconsistent with PCP. However, the director repeatedly used and encouraged teachers to use more positive approaches to discipline. In school meetings, she would try to reason with the children and persuade them rather than use punishment. Importantly, the staff has not given up. The director has admitted children with various special needs in a system that has few services for such children.

Building a Model School in a Deteriorating System

Primavara was established as a *scoala/gradinita* (school/kindergarten) with an additional room designated for use as a training center for teachers wanting to learn about the PCP. This form of school, combining a school and a kindergarten is a recent form for Moldova that allows continuity from preschool to school. It includes only preschool, kindergarten, and primary level classes. Typically in Moldova, kindergartens are not included as part of a school, and there are few exclusively primary schools.

There is a single director of the school and three part-time assistant directors. One assistant director is in charge of education (*educatie*) or discipline and is responsible for organizing and monitoring the afterschool activities. Her activities include posting signs around the school with various aphorisms encouraging children to be friendly, and study. She also gives out awards to classes that are well-behaved. She is also president of the parent association even though she has no children at the school. According to her, she was nominated so the association would have someone at the school on a regular basis to resolve any issues that arose. Two other assistant directors, who are also fulltime teachers, have responsibilities regarding instruction. For example, one works with assistant teachers and monitors their work. The other works with teachers applying for a promotion in didactic grade. Both have other responsibilities related to instructional leadership.

In the primary grades, the school has 14 teachers and 342 students. During the 2007-2008 school year the teachers' teaching experience ranged from 1 year to 36 years. Three teachers had less than five years of experience. Two teachers had more than 30 years. Six teachers had recently passed an International Step by Step Association certification process. This would not increase the salary from the state, but may increase the salary from the parent association; these subsidies are based in part on qualification and contribution to the school. Two teachers left teaching for several years and worked in other areas. Of these two, one worked in a factory, missed children, and returned to the classroom. The second worked in England for several years.

Table 9: Teacher qualifications and experience

Name	Didactic grade	Years experience	International certification
Ludmilla	0	3	
Svetlana	1	12	yes
Liuba		36	
Angela	1	18	
Christina	1	21	yes
Violeta	1	19	yes
Ramona	1	18	yes
Lora		33(5 year break)	
Jana	0	1	
Irina	1	23	yes
Ala	0	3	
Tatiana	superior	16	yes
Magdalena	1	18	
Elvira		7(three year break)	
Sveta, director	superior		

All names are pseudonyms

The faculty of Primavara is unique in several ways. Nationwide, only 8 percent of teachers have three or fewer years of teaching experience. Primavara

has three out of the fourteen in this category. One had taught for three years as an assistant teacher in the school, a second for a semester and then moved to classroom teacher, the third had teaching experience at a different school. All three of the novice teachers applied for didactic grades in the spring. The didactic grades of the teachers are high as well. Nationwide, only one percent of teachers have the superior didactic grade.

The number of teachers with grade one is so high that the MET recently denied the promotion of a recent applicant. The teacher, Ramona, appealed the decision against her promotion. Ramona asked for an explanation as to why her application was denied, and the ministry official responsible was not able to give an explanation. After several months of arguing, the MET official revealed that she felt that there were too many grade one teachers at the school. This was not judged an acceptable reason, and the MET conferred promotion.

Not unusual for schools in Chisinau, the school has teachers from other parts of the country. In rural schools, most teachers grew up in the village where they work or married someone who did. At Primavara the director recruited most of the teachers on the staff. These include several teachers with a great deal of experience as trainers for the program. In this respect, the faculty does not reflect the faculties of many other schools. However, the other prestigious schools in the capital would be able to recruit teachers in a similar manner. All of the teachers in the school are female; most teachers in Moldova are, a problem acknowledged by an MET official.

Many of the teachers working at the school are also trainers for the Step by Step program. This is something of a laboratory school, where PCP is implemented, combined with a model school, where many come to see how PCP works. The laboratory school concept is new in Moldova. Only in 2007/2008 did the MET designate a laboratory school for the Institute for Educational Sciences.

For each of the fourteen classes, with two exceptions, there is a teacher assistant (*assistant didactic*). The MET documents describing the format of the PCP class includes the implication that a teacher and teacher assistant work together in the classroom, similar to the preschool model. This has changed, and at Primavara the teacher assistants work with children in the after-school program. This is a form of professional development. In general, the classroom teachers come from the teacher assistant pool. Not all students participate in after-school activities, and in two classes there are not enough children to justify a teaching assistant; children from these class who wish to stay join other classes at the same grade level.

Assistants are required to teach a lesson called *ora educative* that includes various affective topics such as reading stories and discussing the positive and negative characteristics of the characters. Often this does not happen because children come and go to and from circles, and the assistants are under some pressure to have children finish their homework during this time. An assistant director supervises the teacher assistants and monitors the schedule of *ora educativa* of each assistant. She is aware that not all of the

assistants teach the classes that are planned and entered into the class register. To pass inspection, and justify the teacher assistant salaries, the records are required.

Primavara accepts children for first grade at 6 or 7 years of age. According to the director, age is only one factor in admissions. The admissions process involves a short academic test and an interview. The test consists of drawing and reading and writing if the child can. The director discusses with the parent the maturity of the child, and how he or she interacts with children as well as with adults. Through the first part of the year, the teacher monitors the health of the child. If the child seems to be sick frequently, they discuss the matter and consider dis-enrolling the child. This did not take place during my research

The children come from families who, for the most part, value education and are middle class by Moldovan standards. Children from all sectors of the city attend the school. For some parents, this means a 45 minute drive across the city each way. But they are not part of the elite that attend the more prestigious schools. According to the municipal school inspector,

To 'Gheorghe Asachi'³² go good children [well prepared for school], from good families, but to 'Step by Step' [referring to Primavara] go a variety of children. 'Gheorghe Asachi,' 'Mircea Eliade,' only children who are close to those at 'Promoteu.' Lyceums of the elite . . . They are prepared for school, they come to school and already know how to read, many know how to write, to calculate, they know computers. But to 'Step by Step' I would not say they all are prepared, only those who attend the kindergarten 'Step by Step' [are well prepared for first grade].

³² Gheorghe Asachi and Mircea Eliade are two of the first public schools converted to lyceums and are located in central Chisinau. Promoteu is a private school, the first in the country, and is widely considered the best school in the country.

Although the students are not as well prepared as students at the prestigious lyceums, they are much better off than rural schools and some of the other schools in Chisinau. The superintendent similarly described the students attending Primavara.

A better way to teach: teachers choose PCP

Before discussing why teachers teach the PCP, it is important to consider why teachers teach at all. If 25% of the adult population is abroad and up to 50% of teachers have left the profession, teachers who remain in their positions are unusual. In interviews teachers often described a relationship with a teacher as the reason for entering the profession. The *prima invatoara*, the first teacher, whom children have as a teacher for four years often leaves a big impression. This was the case with many teachers and served as motivation to enter the profession. Notably, several teachers who began their career in Soviet times mentioned that parents or relatives attempted to dissuade them from the choice because of the difficulty of working with so many children. Several teachers were married to teachers who left the profession to find higher paying work. The younger teachers are dependent on subsidies from family to survive. One older teacher worked as a teacher assistant after school in addition to her regular teacher obligations. A physical education teacher worked a second job in a small business. Teachers at Primavara are dedicated teachers who somehow made it work to stay in the profession.

Two themes are evident in the interviews regarding the teachers' decisions to work with PCP. First there was some initial contact with the program prior to working with the program, for some this was personal contact such as through a family member. Second, many teachers expressed a personal characteristic or motivation that prompted them to try something new. It was a step towards a teaching style with which they felt more comfortable.

The novice teachers seem to have fallen into their positions. All three had some contact, through practica, with PCP. Two had worked at Primavara, one with a PCP school in Balti. When they finished their degree programs, they applied to Primavara and were hired. For these teachers, there was not a big transition to enter into the PCP. They did admit that the PCP was different from what they had experienced in schools.

The young teachers were able to articulate their understandings of the program and reasons for the choice in different degrees. One such teacher was not able to articulate the program very well. Two of the three teachers were able to articulate the uniqueness of the PCP and expressed the desire to use PCP methods wherever they taught. As one told me, "I say with pride that the program [PCP] is good for children. . . I cannot imagine going to a traditional school, I started my career as a teacher in the PCP program and if I went to a different school, I would do the same things" (Ludmilla). For Ala, PCP was something totally new for her. She had seen nothing like group work or pair work until she got to the university. Importantly, these teachers were supported as they

attempted to teach according to the PCP since they started teaching it during practica.

There are two teachers who have over 25 years of experience. In the case of Ludmilla, she claims that her teaching has changed very little. She had been recruited at the school without previous experience with PCP. During an interview with the inspector, Ludmilla's name arose. One of her students placed in a fourth grade olympiad. Hers was the only student from the school to place. The inspector was not surprised because she felt that Ludmilla did not implement PCP very well. The other veteran teacher was one of the first teachers who adopted the PCP in the village of Mereni outside of Chisinau. She said she joined PCP when her school started the program in 1996. Mereni was also the location of one of the first PCP kindergartens in 1994.

The other nine teachers have a more complicated background. Most of these teachers had contact with PCP before they adopted the program. One had children in the kindergarten program and then adopted the program when it expanded to the elementary school. One heard about the preschool program in her village and went to a seminar about it. Another had a mother who was a director of a kindergarten who adopted the program. Six of the teachers worked in or near the first schools that adopted the programs in Balti, a large city in the north, or Mereni, a town outside of Chisinau and had a school that piloted the program.

There were advantages to adopting the program for these teachers. Many of them work or have worked as trainers for the PCP. Compensation for trainers is not high, currently about 150 lei per day, but this is significant for an occupation that earns on average 1080 lei per month. Teachers who work for Primavara also receive a salary from the parent association. This amounted to a sum about equal to the state salary. This decreases the temptation of corruption and impropriety that often arises as teachers try to make ends meet. They also had some perquisites such as travel to various training venues. Many had traveled to Romania, and other cities in Europe for various conferences. During the research, the director traveled once to Bratislava and once to Istanbul, and a teacher traveled to Lithuania.

The financial benefit of adopting PCP is significant, but probably is not the sole motivation for teachers. One teacher assistant told me that by taking on tutoring students, she would be able to earn more as a teacher in a different school where tutoring was allowed than she could at Primavara with the salary supplements. Even the municipal inspector said that the city administration is having difficulties hiring a director of elementary professional development because teachers could make more money with the tutoring than they could in the administrative position. According to the director, some teachers do not want to come to Primavara because they would lose all of the gifts and tutoring supplements they find in other schools.

Several teachers articulated a more personal reason for adopting PCP. This involved a reaction to what took place in schools in Soviet times, as well as an attraction of the PCP.

Ramona expressed the push and the pull as something personal. She started teaching only after independence, but spent nearly all of her student life in "Soviet" schools. Her first job was in a 'traditional' school (using the standard national curriculum) and found her ideas not well received.

Ramona: I worked only two years in a traditional class, but even there in the traditional class I used many elements from Step by Step not knowing of Step by Step, intuitively. For example, we had in science something connected to plants and I brought into the class, we cultivated different seeds, we put them at the window to grow onions. We experimented, observed, measured, all that stuff. The director, who was there, was very displeased of what we did. "That was not in the program, that was not part of the school expectations," he said. I was disappointed a little. I worked for children so they would like to learn a lot, but that was not what the school expected. When I moved to Step by Step it was a joy for me, because I found what I was looking for.

Researcher: . . . Where did you get the idea to cultivate plants?

Ramona: Probably that comes from the creativity of each person, that is, [PCP] permits each teacher to proceed as he sees it.

Researcher: Did you have a teacher who cultivated plants?

Ramona: No, I think it come from somewhere intuitive, creativity. That is how it was at the moment, even if they are the same methods, which we study at the seminar, techniques, we use them very differently. Not like how we are told, but we try modalities, variations, of all kinds to see which is most appropriate, that is, we experiment.

According to this account, Ramona found in the PCP an opportunity to express her intuition, something stifled at her previous school. Notably, this type of hands-on activity is something the municipal inspector promoted. Although Ramona

claimed the creativity as her own, she did have a mother who directed a kindergarten using the program and admitted to talking with her about PCP before she adopted the program.

For other teachers in this middle group, a little older than Ramona, there was a noted reaction to what came before and to their experience as students and teachers. Tatiana expresses this sentiment.

I am from the beginning of the Step by Step program, that is I was among the twenty teachers who started the activity Step by Step. It was not clear to me what I needed, at the beginning, to do, but I felt that a change in education was necessary. I felt that inside . . . simply the way children were educated before, for me was rigid, very rigid . . . Probably I was conscious that at school many things are formed. I, from my timidity, suffered for the fact that I did not vary from the word of the teacher and that left an impression. I being now, at the age, I reached the age of majority, I was afraid to make decisions, to say my opinions, so they would not be analyzed, or to say, punished by others. . . . that is, I am very sensitive to the issue. . . . The fact that I entered into the Step by Step program is not a show or a holiday, but I figured to change myself, in the first place, to be natural.

Similar to Ramona, Tatiana sees the PCP as a chance to express herself.

However, this is a reaction to both her experience in Soviet schools, and to the environment in what she calls 'traditional' schools of which she is very critical.

This is similar to some of the rhetoric included in the early calls for a national school that could be interpreted as a reaction to what happened in Soviet schools.

Tatiana went on to say that her son was in the kindergarten using PCP and the kindergarten director recommended that she adopt the program when it expanded to the elementary grades. That being said, she did acknowledge that it

took time to change and it was not easy. Both Ramona and Tatiana had introductions to the PCP and recommendation before they started implementing the program themselves.

The sense of a need to change came from a number of teachers. Some complained about the rigidity of the Soviet times. For those who joined the PCP early, there was a sense of excitement, of doing something new. Other teachers from other schools mention the excitement of change that took over the country in the early to mid 1990's. One teacher at Primavara took a very pragmatic view and said that she realized, after attending a seminar, that she could teach more and better with the methods promoted by PCP.

Ramona and Tatiana bring up the idea of freedom to teach the way one sees fit. This is something that even the first PCP teachers expressed. "[Teachers] were very thankful for the faith that was offered them through this program. Teachers were no longer corseted by directions coming from on high" (Cioranica, 2004, p. 1). From the very beginning of the program in Moldova, teachers were very pleased with the freedom they had to teach as they saw fit and took the responsibility very seriously (Cioranica, 2004). This sentiment is consistent with the criticism of Soviet school for forcing teachers, and students, to conform to a standard. It is also one reaction to the new freedom and flexibility allowed to teachers. In the early conceptions and the law of education, teachers were to use their new flexibility to evaluate their students and to provide individualized instruction.

Despite the early excitement, several of these teachers expressed fatigue. It is a demanding program; many parents take advantage of what the program and the school has to offer. They do not feel that the MET is supportive. They are tired of working so hard for so little compensation. Teachers passed around a fable during the spring of 2008 telling the story of an ant that worked diligently but had a bureaucratic boss that demanded numerous forms and reports from the ant detailing the ant's work. In the end, the ant hardly had time to do his work because of the paperwork. This, I was told, was how the teachers felt regarding their work.

Financing Primavara: beyond state funding

The school is well supplied for a Moldovan public school. Most of the improvements have come from the work and donations of the parents. Parents have contributed and continue to contribute a substantial amount to the school.

Primavara, like all schools, has a parent organization with the following goal:

Providing a quality education consistent with the age and individual needs of the child, which assures a free and harmonious development, contribute to the formation of a creative personality within the framework of a true partnership with the family, based on respect of its values.

This statement entails financial support for school maintenance and repairs, for subsidies to teacher salaries, and teaching supplies. In contrast to the Soviet-era relationship with the family, this contract obligates the faculty to respect the values of the family.

The parent association is a non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to supporting the school. All parents pay 1800 (159 USD) lei to enter the organization upon enrolling their child in the school. Parents pay approximately 450 (40 USD) lei per month for tuition, lunch, and after school activities. The monthly fee is about 70% of this amount during the summer. The total state allocation for the school amounts to 1,917,601 MDL (169,699 USD) for the 2007-2008 school year; for the 2007 calendar year, the parent organization collected 986,830 MDL (87,330 USD) (sums provided by the school accountant).

Of the parents interviewed for this research, most said this was a significant sum, and a few had difficulty paying it. For others, the sum was quite modest. Roughly one-third of the school budget comes from the parent association. This is similar to the proportion of school funds that come from informal payments families make to schools as estimated by the IPP (Institutul de Politici Publice, 2007).

For comparison, a private school charged 600 Euros on enrollment and then 60 euros (90 USD 2008) a month per student for twelve months a year in tuition. A rural school I visited had difficulty collecting 20 (1.75 USD) lei per student per month

Collecting and raising money is a constant issue at the school. An assistant director commented that the superintendent for the sector of Botanica denied requests for support from the school because the school was relatively well off already. However, the school choir, consisting of teachers only, traveled

to Romania in the fall of 2007 and in the spring hosted a Romanian choir in Chisinau. Money for the travel came through the superintendent. When asked about this, he did not want to talk of specifics. He only held out his hand, palm upwards implying that he had asked for the money from some sponsors.

The school collects fees monthly, and outside of most classrooms at the middle of the month appear lists of families who have not paid the monthly fees. Part of these funds goes to subsidize teacher salaries; the law limits salary subsidies to 50% of the funds collected. The rest is used to sponsor various activities, and for maintenance of the school. Money is also used for classroom projects. Parents pay extra for children to stay at the school after the lessons and work on homework with the assistant.

Summary

Though it is unique, Primavara is in many ways conforms to the idea of a national school. The school and its teachers have undergone a process of development similar to the process reflected in MET and scholarly documents. Just as the ideas in the curriculum and Conceptions received inspiration from foreign systems, the PCP is based on a foreign program. Both the legal documents and the PCP, however, took those ideas and let them evolve in the Moldovan context. Teachers were critical of the other schools, whether those of the Soviet era or the other schools that have not adopted more active teaching methods. They reacted against these other schools in choosing the PCP. These

teachers also looked outside of Moldova for a solution or at least for ideas to use just as MET officials did.

Teachers did try to fulfill the PCP philosophy. This came out most clearly in the lessons for which they had the most flexibility. Children did have the opportunity to voice their opinions, at least orally, in both the *mesaj* and *studiu thematic*. In these classes especially, children were allowed a great deal of authority. These were unique to PCP, but they were consistent with the ideas found in MET documents. Teachers developed special, collaborative relationships with their students. Finally, PCP allowed teachers more autonomy in their own work, to use their skills to evaluate their students and to design lessons tailored to their students.

It would be unfair to point to instances in which the teachers did not fulfill the PCP philosophy as general criticism of the program. In general, though, students had little opportunity or expectation to express themselves in writing. This may be a continuation of the emphasis on oral expression that was common in the Soviet System (Cummings, 1999). Importantly, teachers used at least some Soviet era methods in the contexts of the PCP classroom.

The faculty is dedicated to support all students. In accepting students expelled from other schools, or children with special needs, the teachers were taking on responsibilities that other schools typically do not. In addition, teachers have the added task of convincing parents and others that the methods they use are to the benefit of children.

For several reasons, the success of Primavara is not likely to be replicated at other schools. The success of the school is dependent on a very dedicated faculty and group of parents. The former contribute a great deal of time to developing the PCP at their school, and the latter contribute monetarily and, as we will see in the next chapter, with a great deal of time. In addition, the practices used in PCP do not prepare students for the various academic competitions nor are they yet considered the norm in Moldovan schools. The combination of these to exceptional groups, teachers and parents, would be difficult to duplicate in any public school.

Primavara has turned out to be a national school even though it is at odds with the current communist government. It teaches in the national language and Moldovan or Romanian history. In terms of practices, the teachers are very consistent with national ideas as written in legal documents. Teachers exercise autonomy and develop activities specific to their classes. They use methods and activities to develop the unique qualities of students and help them learn to express their ideas. These are all ideas consistent with the official ideal of the national school. Finally, they readily collaborate with the parents and the wider community, a topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: LEARNING TO WORK TOGETHER

In the Soviet era, parents were minimally involved in schools. The state defined educational practices and content and parents had minimal influence. Parent involvement has been a part of educational reform in Moldova since the period *perestroika*. Involvement of parents and local community was intended to make schools more democratic and reflect the local concerns of those involved in schools. Parent involvement is a priority for PCP schools and is one of the standards ISSA promotes.

Although one of the goals of schools is to make them more democratic, Primavara is not a full democracy. Parent involvement is limited to areas outside pedagogical concerns. In addition, tension between the school employees and parents exist as each group tries to influence the other to fulfill their expectations of what school and family should be. This is a delicate balance because of the amount of money parents pay to the school, and the school's dependency on those funds. In this chapter I discuss the interaction between school officials and parents and show how parents react against the state and try to create, or at least choose, a school that is consistent with their interests. These interests, however, are not always the same as the interests of the PCP proponents, nor of the state.

National Policy of Local Control and Parental Involvement

Regulations guiding school management note that parents should be involved through parent committees and should have representation on the school council. The regulations are vague regarding the details. Parents have the right to participate and vote regarding some aspects of school level policy along with the teachers' council. The teachers' council is made up of all of the teachers of the school and makes decisions regarding the instructive-educative (*educativ*) process. For example, the council will discuss the promotion or retention of students, and all teachers have a vote regardless of the class or grade level of the student. Parents did not participate in these meetings that I observed at Primavara. It is up to the director to invite parents to meetings of the council when appropriate (Ministerulu Educatiei si Tineretului, 2007a, p. 17).

According to national policy, in each class the teacher is to form a class level parent council; the president of which is a representative for the school level parent council. There are similar tasks for both councils, to help with attendance, to support the teacher and school with extra-curricular activities, to solicit funds, to contribute to the procurement of school materials. The school level council is also to suggest disciplines for study in areas in which the school has a choice, to support the school in annual festivals, and to be involved in the "improvement of the equality of life and of the students' activities" (Ministerului Educatiei si Tineretului, 2007a). This regulation makes it clear that parents have little influence on the national curriculum. But in other areas, such as methods of

teaching, selection of textbooks, and discipline, parents are not precluded from influencing the decisions.

In general, parents are to play a much greater role in schools than what took place in Soviet schools. This was to be the case with their own children as well as with the school overall. This goal is consistently found in the early drafts of the Conceptions as well as in the Law of Education. This is not very different than what was found in Soviet era laws, but in PCP schools, this was to be a deliberate policy and practice.

Teaching Parental Involvement

In the case of Primavara the relationship between parents and teachers as well as with the school in general is a complicated one. The school has the governmental obligation to teach the national curriculum, but many parents enroll their children in the school because it offers something different than most schools in Moldova. This forces parents to face the prospect that their children will probably attend a more 'traditional' middle or high school. They in turn bring some pressure on the school to conform to traditional standards. Several teachers and the school director mentioned this issue in interviews. This is a decreasing concern and has been resolved for many since a number of promotions of students have been successful in middle school.

While PCP offers something different, new for Moldovan schools, and parents want this, there is also a continued effort on the part of the school to inform parents and teach them how to be active in their child's education. At

times this enters into the area of child rearing and discipline. At the same time the school depends on parents to financially support the school and must in some ways conform to the expectations of parents.

Parent conferences at Primavara

Twice a year teachers have meetings with all the parents in the class. Typically these took place in late fall and early spring. Teachers and one interviewed parent complained about the low attendance on the part of parents. The meetings I observed had between one half and two-thirds of the students represented. In Soviet times, several informants told me, school directors or teachers would stand in front of the gathered parents and criticize by name the children who were misbehaving. Soviet era school directors also would write letters to the place of employment of the parents of misbehaving students and the respective supervisors would admonish the parents of misbehaving students in front of their coworkers. These practices continue but is becoming more rare.

Nothing so humiliating took place in Primavara. However, I did see one teacher have a 30 minute monologue in front of the gathered parents discussing the many discipline problems she was having in class. Parents were silent throughout this talk; at the end, one parent stood and spoke in support of the teacher.

The main part of these meetings was devoted to some issues of child rearing and parent-child interaction. Many of the parents I interviewed thought these discussions productive. They did not feel put upon, but welcomed the

opportunity to discuss the issues. “[Parents] play very interesting games. We deduce how we should behave. It is a method of deduction” (Fanta). Parents were not told what to do, but simply discussed the issues.

A first grade teacher discussed responsibility with the parents of her students with the idea of encouraging parents to expect more responsibility from their children. One parent discussed this in our interview. She laughed at how little parents expect of their children. “The only responsibilities that the parents were able to mention were connected to homework. Other than that, nothing. By the time a child reaches that age, he should have some responsibilities. . . In that regard, there is work to be done” (Vicol).

Another teacher provided tips on working with one’s children at the parent meeting. This included a worksheet, written for teachers but with tips such as, “Learn how to listen and to hear,” and “Create in the family a nice atmosphere.” Another worksheet suggested ways to reward and punish children, “a physical punishment or shouting, most often, confirms the inability to find a good solution,” and “promote positive behavior, needed habits will be formed quicker than with excessive sanctions.”

Despite the above anecdotes, teachers at the school told me repeatedly in interviews that they have a close relationship with parents, and that parents are a great help to the school and in the classroom. A veteran teacher said this about her relationship with parents:

Lora: My parents are very receptive. For example, with their help with repaired the class, made the cupboards where the children undress [ie.

take off their jackets]. . . they did, every year, the general cleaning in the fall, and in the springs, in the winter vacation. They helped to paint the fence around the school. They always help, if we go on a field trip, one or two parents come, . . . they are shoulder to shoulder with us.

Researcher: how do they work at lessons?

Lora: At lessons, when they come they are involved, at lessons and at home they show care, to help, to encourage. . . If problems appear we meet and discuss, find optimal measures to help the child succeed.

This is the teacher who had grandparents sit and observe an entire open lesson dedicated to parent involvement (discussed below).

A young teacher had this to say about her work with parents:

We collaborate very much with parents because in first grade parents come in the morning and in the evening to pick up their children. Every time they come they have questions and expect answers. Questions of every type: 'What else do you need?' 'I would like,' for example, 'to help you with something, but with what could I help?' Only today, this morning, a father came in, he had not come often, usually the mother came and today he came and asked "Miss Ludmilla, with what can I help you?" . . . they do not always want to discuss with me, only when there is the need. The rest of the time they come and say what could they do. In first grade, we speak to parents very often . . . This is very good, because they as parents understand the best [their children] and when we have questions, together it is much easier to solve whatever problem or find an answer to any question. (Ludmilla)

The offers to help are mostly about material needs and working together to solve discipline problems. Interestingly, one of the parents, reflecting an attitude expressed by many, said that teachers are the experts, "I have one child, the teacher has 32, she is a specialist" (Junca).

These responses to interview questions were typical in that they claimed a close relationship with parents but with a focus on material help and solving

discipline problems. When discussing teaching and learning, teacher and parents mentioned most often that parents help with homework and discipline, and that parents come into the class as experts talking of a hobby or their profession.

A school level parent-teacher meeting at Primavera: involved to stay uninvolved

In spite of the efforts highlighted above, there were points of tension in the relationship between parents and the faculty. This tension came to the fore during a proposed schedule change in the late spring of 2008. The school has a wide variety of activities taking place after school into the evening including a study hall during which students worked on homework with teacher assistants. Through the year several teachers said that they thought that they were taking over some of the responsibilities of parents, and that parents should take their children home after lessons. However, many parents work full time jobs or two jobs to make ends meet and depend on the after school supervision for their children. When the school decided to change the end time of the study hall to 3:00 pm and the various extracurricular activities at 4:00, there was something of a "revolt" according to an assistant director.

The director called a meeting to discuss school finances but also to address the concerns of parents regarding the after school sessions. The eighteen parents present were quiet during the first part of the meeting, and several faculty members carefully orchestrated the transition to the discussion of the after school program.

First spoke a teacher with a soft voice that could pull at one's emotions. She told a story of a boy who goes to his father and asks how much he is paid. The father brusquely tells him to go away. Realizing the severity in his voice, the next time the son approaches, the father asks what he wants. Again the boy asks how much the father is paid. This time the father responds, "five dollars." The boy asks for three dollars. "Why do you need three dollars?" the father asks. "Because I already have two and I want to spend an hour with you."

A more pragmatic teacher speaks next and comments on some of the problems she sees with the after-school activities. She complains of the parents who bring their children at 8:00 am and pick them up at 6:00 pm. And of the parent who comes to pick up a child, asks if the homework is completed, and then waits in the hall while the child completes the homework with the teacher assistant.

The director speaks next, again citing reasons why the extended school day is not very good. She mentions chronic illness, increased morbidity, and the fact that relatively few students stay past 4:00 pm. She calls the school a "second home," notes that the school is "child centered," but suggests children should be outside, with family, with friends. Before finishing she acknowledges that for some families, this is impossible.

Finally parents are allowed to speak, and they do so vociferously. "We come from the other end of the city," or "We both work," and "We chose this school because of the after-school program." "We can add something," suggests

a parent implying that they pay more money in support of the after-school program. These last two comments conflict with the faculty's hopes of having parents more involved with the school and in the children's lives. Another parent thanks the faculty, "we thank you for the security and the extraordinary responsibility taken by the school."

The school director does acknowledge that it is better "to have children in the school than watching television or on the streets." She finally tells the parents, "find a solution." One parent suggests that only one group of students at each grade level stays late. This is the solution finally adopted.

Despite the obvious difference of opinion between the faculty and this group of parents, the director makes a number of unifying statements about working together, parents nod in agreement, and the meeting breaks into small group discussions as people prepare to leave.

This issue and its process towards resolution indicate how schools have become more democratic in their governance. Parents were able to force a meeting on the topic, the faculty did what it could to persuade parents, but they could not dictate the rules. In the end they reached a compromise. There was only one other instance I saw when parents tried to influence the teaching process. In one class several parents complained about the lack of grades. The teacher and other parents emphasized the value of not giving grades to children. It is important to point out that in other respects at no time during the year did I observe teachers and parents debate the core educational tasks of teachers

The questioning and commenting in the parent meeting about the after school program is a stark contrast from the meeting at the beginning of the year. During that meeting, the teachers and directors spoke and informed the parents of the goals for the school. No questions were asked except about the food served at school.

This is a clear example of parent involvement in the school, but it is an example of parents getting involved so that they would not have to be involved further. In a similar way, the parent association chose a president who does not have children at the school. They were not taking greater responsibility for their children's education, but perhaps less. This may have been due to constraints due to work, and may not reflect the sentiments of the parents. But their strong appeal to keep the school open until 6:00 pm would allow them to do other things while teachers and teacher assistants watched their children.

Parents in Primavera Classrooms: Under the Teacher's Direction

Considering the rhetoric of family partnerships, parents participated little in the teaching and learning at school. Every parent interviewed did claim to work with children on homework, but teachers still complained that many parents did not sign the agendas, and, according to teachers, many students did not complete their homework. Parents were present in the school. They observed classes, helped with special activities, and at times worked with students. But the role granted to parents in the teaching and learning process was limited.

During the spring of 2008 the school held a series of open lessons. Open lessons date back to the Soviet era. Similar series of open lessons take place in all schools as part of the professional development. These usually involve a demonstration lesson with observers present, sometime high level school officials, sometimes just colleagues. After the lesson, observers would discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. Often the focus of an open lesson is a teaching methodology. In contrast, at Primavara, the focus for this series was on parent involvement in a class not offered at non-PCP schools. The series was called, "The implication of parents in the lesson of *studiu tematic*." These open lessons were to showcase how different teachers worked with parents during the *studiu tematic* and to serve as a point of discussion for improving how teachers work with parents.

The first lesson was in a second grade class and eleven teachers and teacher assistants observed with an observation guide provided by an assistant director. The theme of the unit, previously selected by the students, was mice. The teacher had asked several parents or grandparents to participate. A grandfather was there and when he had a chance to talk he pulled a mouse trap out of his pocket and sprang it with a stuffed mouse. Other teachers found this morbid and inappropriate. In groups children discussed their homework, creating a mouse with household materials, writing a story about a mouse, researching about mice. The teacher made a point of asking who helped the children complete the homework. They all mentioned parents or grandparents. Another

parent of a student in the class was the school nurse. At the teacher's prompt, she told the class about how mice are used in medical experiments and are very useful. Another parent helps hang the homework on the wall. This is the extent of parent participation. When they were not working on the tasks noted about, the parents sat quietly in the classroom.

In a private discussion with the teacher after the lesson, she told me that she wanted the parents to present two distinct perspectives on mice. She also said she implicated parents by assigning homework that children could complete with the help of parents. One assistant director accepted this approach as a reasonable manner to involve parents, a second assistant director did not. A fellow teacher told me that she involved parents in homework "all of the time" (Magdalena). When I mentioned this model of parent involvement to the city inspector, she dismissed the notion entirely, "This is not parent involvement." For her, parent involvement took place in the school.

In a second open lesson in a fourth grade class, two grandparents were present. They sat through the entire lesson saying nothing to the class. At the end of the lesson they both were given a chance to make a comment. They both praised what they saw.

As the above lessons indicate, the teachers are still uncertain how to involve parents in the classroom, or are reluctant to do so. Improving this collaboration was a goal of the open lesson series. A third lesson demonstrated

that at least one teacher at Primavara attempted to involve parents more actively in lessons.

A third open lesson in a third grade class had parents working more actively with students. This class studied a unit on professions. A parent of a student in the class who works for Radio Free Europe was present to discuss journalism. The father had been a university professor and later told me that he did not want to interact with the students, but the teacher pushed him to do so. He told a little about his profession. He asked the class, "What is better a Harry Potter book or a Harry Potter movie?" He received a few responses but appeared uncomfortable. He asks a few other questions about literature, solicits a few responses, and assigns a brief writing task. He then sits on the side of the classroom for the remainder of the lesson, and the teacher takes over instruction.

This same teacher did have other parents attend her lessons as part of the *studiu tematic*, and they were more participatory. A newspaper editor, a grandfather of a student, and reporter for an independent newspaper engaged in interviews and heated discussions with the students. A woman who painted fingernails, a popular fad in Moldova, also presented to the class and had students paint fake nails. The teacher acknowledged that lessons with these parents were more successful.

Only once did I see a parent work with children in a small group as a teacher assistant. This was during the fall of 2006 when I attended the school as part of a seminar for teachers implementing PCP. The parent was helping

several students draw a poster for a *studiu tematic* activity. When the students were not working as she expected, she took the marker from them and started drawing herself. Teachers mention that this type of participation is promoted, but I saw little evidence of it, and parents seemed reluctant to do it.

This type of participation by parents is consistent with their comments in interviews. I asked each parent if and how he or she worked in the class. They all responded that they did, but most of the work was not with children.

Galusca: The idea of this school is that parents should collaborate with the school, to actively participate. Furniture, that is at the entrance, where children undress, was a parent project. Cosmetic repairs, which we make at the beginning of the year, we did this also. The bulletin board is also ours.

Researcher: Did you participate in the educational process?

Galusca: I do not usually see parents participate, it is not prohibited, if someone wants, he can choose a topic and teach.

This was a typical response, they could influence things, but the influence was predominantly with material provisions. When I specifically asked about working with children and the educational process, parents said no they could not or did not. Some did participate; as I mentioned above, parents taught classes about their professions, or their hobbies, at the request of teachers. The reason given for non-participation was often work obligations, or the fact that it is the teachers' responsibility and parents are not pedagogues. "No, I do not get involved [with teaching]. If I have a good idea, I will tell it to [the teacher], but I am not a pedagogue, I am a mama" (Maria). This was a nearly unanimous sentiment among parents.

Another parent was more articulate in his response about how parents might influence the school.

Miron: I think as parents, if there is unity among them, a number of them together, and if there is a deviation from normal, parents together should be able to influence [the school]. I understand that signing a contract I began to take part, I was made a member of the association 'Step by Step,' while when you enter the association, I think that each has the right to say something. If his proposal is constructive, it has the right to be heard.

Researcher: Have you participated in lessons?

Miron: No, during the lesson I have not been involved. My wife has observed several lessons. She has followed along only; she was not involved, that is, the teacher should do the work and not be disturbed by anyone."

If there is a large number of parents who push for a change, or attempt to stop a change, they can indeed have an influence. Part of this influence comes from the financial arrangements of the school. Except for the issue of the after school activities, I saw no evidence of this.

According to the director of pre-university education at the MET, parents have a great deal of influence including the power to dismiss teachers. As she mentioned, "If the whole class of 30 [sets of parents] are not in agreement with how the teacher teaches, [they can have the teacher removed] it seldom happens, but it happens."

From another perspective, the influence stems from the role of democracy in the school. All voices are heard, and discussion ensues to find a reasonable solution. Teachers at the school make significant efforts to involve parents in certain activities.

The comments of the parents and the behavior of the teachers during the open lessons indicate a limit to parent involvement. Inside the classroom, teachers dominate and determine what takes place. Parents rarely participate in the teaching and learning. When they do present to a class, it is as an expert discussing a hobby or a profession. Regarding the typical school subjects, parents were less willing to get involved in the classroom. Concerning the management of the school, such as the after-school activities, parents can, and at times do, have a very influential role in the school.

There is mention that parents cannot participate at school because of their work. There are two sides to this. According to the director, "Because of the low salaries, some parents have to work in one, two or even three places." However, teachers told me that some parents who work are too busy because they prioritize work to the detriment of children and their education. There are very wealthy families at the school. One teacher mentioned that one of her student's parents were bank managers, who send children to school with their driver.

In informal discussions after the first round of interviews, teachers mentioned more critical comments about parents. There was an underlying current of criticism of parents and how they reared their children. Part of this came up in the parent meetings when teachers felt compelled to provide mini-seminars on parenting skills. In casual comments there were complaints that parents do not expect very much of their children and do not want to take responsibility for their learning. We saw that at the parent meeting when the after-

school program was under discussion. Even the director when I briefly told her of the positive comments parents have made about the school, responded, "Many want PCP, but they do not want to involve themselves in it."

From both the teachers' side and from the parents' side, the support from parents was not about academics, except in terms of the parents' own children. The parents accept the program when they come to the school. After that, it seems that parents have little influence over how teachers teach. That being said, three sets of parents requested that their children be moved to a different class because of the poor discipline in a class. I do not know if this was the fault of the teacher or if this was due to a difficult group of students, but the director did honor the requests.

Keeping the State at a Distance

According to the Moldovan Constitution, education is to be free. In the case of Primavara, the parent association contributed about one-third of the annual budget in cash, and there were additional in-kind contributions. The parents I interviewed simply accepted that the state would not pay for schooling. Most of the parents wanted something different than what was at the usual schools and were resigned to pay for it.

One father related an anecdote about a man going to the doctor. When the patient protested about the charge, the doctor responded, "*Platiti degeaba, lacuiesc degeaba.*" This is a play on the word *degeaba* that can mean both "nothing" and "for no purpose." We can translate the phrase as, "you get what

you pay for.” He accepted that the state would not pay for schools and that if he wanted something from schools, he would have to pay for it.

Another father was more articulate in expressing his wish that the state contribute more, but, given the current government, is glad to be somewhat independent of it.

Iulian: I will begin by saying that for a while now, the state does not interest me. I think it is better if I give money for repairs and I do not have anything to do with the state. That is better. On the other hand, as a person who pays taxes, who takes part in the civil society, however anemic it is, I think that the state should contribute more, after all, I pay taxes. I do not know, and I cannot say specifically, but I think it is better this way. You have nothing to do with it, and watch for your own needs.

Researcher: But the state says you must study this, and this . . .

Iulian: Yes, you see, [the state] gets involved with the curriculum. You cannot escape it entirely. Even if you invest in your school it comes and tells you how to teach history or other [classes]. Anyhow, the influence of the state is felt at the level of textbook writing and so on [through the system], because our state is a little different from that the of American state. Probably you have noticed this issue. . . . Here, the state only demands, but in practice does not give you anything.

This father wanted a school near his home, a school with a western style of instruction, and a school that teaches English. He was willing to pay for it and was willing to accept some level of state intervention. Like most parents he was aware that teachers have very low salaries; without supplementing these salaries he was likely to lose or lack good teachers for his son.

All of the parents acknowledged that the state should pay, but they accepted that it the state “cannot or does not want” (Sylva) to pay for schools. They also accept the fact that they have to pay for it. “We come to a school, for

example, we need money to enter, I cannot say that we do not want to give money, if we want to enter, we give it" (Galusca). Regarding having to pay for schools despite the state's promises, one father said, "It is normal, we are used to it already. ...Sometimes you can [afford to pay extra], it is worth it to pay money to be comfortable" (Victor).

This complacency or acceptance may be a continuation of the corruption rampant in the Soviet system. To be comfortable, to get better food, to get better service, people paid bribes and performed favors for friends and contacts. There is a consequence to the lack of state funding and people do what is needed to get by, namely corruption. A mother, a university professor, said this about the situation.

When the state does not contribute, each person has to find [funds] in his own pocket, corruption is the result, unfortunately. We feel dirty, because the teachers are compelled to accept any kind of baksheesh [*porcarii*] you feel put down upon in front of the students, but this you do to be able to live, to exist. It is disastrous what happens, because in this way, education [*invatamint*] is transformed into commerce, which is not normal. (Fanta)

Another parent agreed with the issue of corruption, agreed that the state should pay more for education, but was glad to pay to avoid the corruption found in other schools

The money is administered legally; it is paid with a receipt, with an accountant, for expenses that exist. In other schools I have to pay, but I pay without the accountant, without receipt, I pay direct into the pocket [of someone], I don't like this. They ask for money without embarrassment, there is no restraint. You may have to pay one time a month or maybe more often. (Filat)

At least for these parents at Primavara, they felt the money was above board and

that they got something in return for what they paid. They got a special program that they felt was fitting to their children. They got a warm school. They got the after-school program to watch their children. And they avoided the corruption often found in other schools.

Choosing Primavera: an alternative to the state

Parents chose the school for a number of reasons, mostly because they wanted something unique for their children and often they knew someone with children at the school. One parent had a boy who suffered trauma at birth and had a brain tumor. Another father had a child who was language delayed. A mother wanted her precocious girl to start school at age six, and no other schools would accept her at that age. A father complained that in other schools children have parents abroad, his child was disciplined and did not want him to be in a class with "low expectations" (Miron). A mother was concerned about her shy child and wanted a more tolerant school. A father liked the idea of a western style school and needed a school near his home. Except for this last comment, parents looked for some special treatment for their children, whether this was remedial help, more advanced work, or greater patience. And they felt that the teaching and the philosophy of PCP would provide this.

There was discussion by many parents noting that the type of instruction at Primavera was different. Several of them attributed this difference to its foreign nature. One father heard the following about the school, "It is a school in which they teach according to an occidental model, in which the child is not intimidated

from the beginning by grades, that is, he is somehow motivated to be more active, to dialogue with the teacher, there was talk of an interactive system of education [*invatamint*] (Iulian). Another parent contrasts PCP to the typical Moldovan school; "I am not pleased with our national educational system. . . Step by Step works according to a different system, a little different, with children they are not so stressed, not overwhelmed with useless things, it works more with the development of their personality" (Fanta). Another told me, "I went to some state [schools]," and did not like them (Dana). Even when parents did not suggest that PCP was a foreign type of school, they did indicate that the school was unique, "I did not want bring her to an ordinary school after attending a [PCP] kindergarten" (Vicol). Another parent mentioned how things have changed so much in society but "the attitudes remain the same;" the PCP school with a program from the United States would be different (Miron). Whether parents attributed PCP to foreign countries or not, there was a belief that PCP was different than the typical Moldovan school.

Throughout these conversations there was frequent criticism of the typical schools in the country. Often parents compared present-day schools to the schools they had attended, and they wanted something different for their own children. "Here there is group work to develop social skills and to work with others. But in Soviet times it was otherwise. There was a middle level, if someone was higher he was cut, if he was lower, he was lifted" (Midoni). He then compared Soviet schools, and soviet society in general, to the bed of Procrustes.

Another parent liked the more relaxed atmosphere in the schools and said that Primavara was better “than one of the old style where I studied,” referring to other schools in Moldova (Filat).

On the cynical side, a few teachers said that the parents choose the school because they hear good things and because the school feeds children and has a long after-school program. This was certainly a factor for some. For other parents, some convincing is required. First grade teachers note that many parents visit the school frequently during the first months of first grade, but that this interest or surveillance decreases significantly over time as parents begin to trust the teachers. This may also represent the anxiety of young parents sending their children to school for the first time.

For many new parents some convincing is needed to get them to accept the school and its teaching methods. A strategy teachers use to introduce parents to the program and to change the parents’ perspectives is to focus parent attention on the child, not on the teacher. Teachers give visiting parents an observation form. Regardless of the reason for the parent’s visit, the form has a single table for observation regarding the child and a second table for “Suggestions for improvement for the child.” There is no place for comments on the teacher. Teachers suggest that after watching the activities of the child, instead of focusing on the teacher, parents become convinced that the program is good.

Another approach to convincing parents begins with the question “What do you want for your child?” The typical choice is either a great deal of information or

for the child to be capable or resourceful (*descurcaret*, resourceful, or as a verb a se *descurca*, to manage). "They want capable students, but in fact when they come to the school they want children who know a great deal, but after a discussion with me they say, "Yes, we want smart children, but we want them to manage very well in life" (Christina). This teacher even admitted that parents do not necessarily understand the PCP methods. According to teachers at Primavara, many parents in Moldova continue to adhere to the Soviet model of schooling in which students are given a great deal of information with little opportunity to apply it. The question remains as to whether the capabilities taught at PCP prepare the child for life in Moldova outside of school.

There seemed to be the most consistency between what the teachers wanted to provide and what the parents wanted in terms of the characteristics of the students. The faculty worked to develop in children the ability to think for themselves, to be able to communicate freely, to be able to argue a position, and to be *descurcaret*, resourceful. Parents, in general wanted the same things for their children, and they were able to see those skills develop in their children. In response to the question, "What do you want for your children from the school?" parents made these statements.

Knowledge that one should have according to the age, to be resourceful [*descurcaret*], not to be afraid of people, to be *descurcaret* means to be able to communicate with people, not to be afraid of people. (Natalie)

I want my child to leave here prepared to continue [to the next level]. I think that children leave here as multilaterally, formed personalities. (Vicol)

Principally I want my child to be a person [*om*]³³. (Midoni)

What interests me is that he has this knowledge [appropriate to age], to be an egoist in the positive sense of the word, to understand that to succeed in life one has to put forth the efforts . . . to have a degree of communicability . . . to be open minded. (Iulian)

Interestingly, these parents want some of the same goals that came up during the era of *perestroika* and were promoted as a Moldovan national school.

Summary

Parents have chosen Primavara because they feel the school is different. The school implements western teaching practices. It individualizes instruction. It avoids the corruption rampant in the school system. These ideas are all ideas associated with the national school. Parents contribute substantial resources to the school to make this possible. They are also very open to teaching methods that are different than those that they experienced. These unusual characteristics of the Primavara school community limit the possibility to reproduce the school's success in other locations.

Parent involvement in the classroom is stifled for several reasons. For some, work schedules do not allow them to be present at the school. For others, there seems to be a reluctance to get involved in the activities of the class, except when the parent is talking as an expert. Teachers in general agree with this; they refer to parents primarily for material support and discipline problems. To a lesser degree there is mention of discussing with parents the characteristics

³³ The term *om* in Romanian literally means human or person. In this context it is most similar to the term "man" in Rudyard Kipling's poem "If", "you'll be a Man my son!" The word *om* does not connote a specific gender.

of the child so teachers can work with him or her more effectively. Teachers at Primavara claim that this is significantly more parent involvement than what would be found at other schools.

Parent involvement in the school is important according to school regulations and the philosophy of the PCP. Parents are supposed to have voting rights on the school council, but there are no clear guidelines regarding the issues in which parents should be involved. Many do attend meetings at the classroom level and at the school level. There are some parents who use their authority to create conditions that allow them to be more passive. However messy and difficult this involvement is, the school is involved with its local community.

Parents seem to accept that the state plays a diminished role in the school. They pay a third of the budget of the school and are glad to have an alternative to the typical state school. In return, they get something special for their children, and something different from their own experiences.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE NATIONAL SCHOOL: AN INTERSECTION OF PROBLEMS, POLICIES, AND POLITICS

I began this dissertation with the metaphor of empty pedestals. These pedestals once held images of Lenin, the father of the Soviet Union, providing a symbol for schools. Without that symbol, schools lost direction. What were they to teach if not the Marxist-Leninist world view and the party-approved curriculum? This would form one end of the transition. My goal was not to study the new form of schools, but to examine how teachers, administrators, and policy makers have adjusted to social change in Moldova. This would entail an examination of how actors at various levels attempted to change the existing system, and what they sought to replace it.

The loss of communism as a guiding force for Moldova resulted in three significant losses for schools. The first was the loss of content; much of the content children studied was explicitly communist, or from a Marxist-Leninist perspective. Second, the schools lost an educational ideal that was expressed in the Moral Code and the rules for the youth organizations; the communist content studied in schools reinforced these ideas. Third, the methods used to teach were rigid, teacher-centered, and did not allow for individualization. The solution to these problems would be a national school system, a system that Moldovans would define and govern.

It is important to note what the Moldovan school system inherited and attempted to keep. At independence, the country had a network of schools that served nearly all students from first grade to university. There were established

teacher preparation programs. Moldova had scholars who had completed doctoral degrees in education. And Moldova had a population that was accustomed to attending school. The challenge would be to change this system into a system with new goals, with new materials, and new practices.

Instead of trying to define beginnings and endings of transition, it is useful to consider Kingdon's (2003) classic analysis of policy change. In this model three policy streams come together, problems, policies, and politics. In this process of change in Moldova, policies probably came first. Gantea (2007) points to the opening of Soviet scholars towards western research in the 1960's, and then Moldovan scholars continued this research in their own studies. The opening of the USSR to the west during the period of *perestroika* contributed to this process. Another policy stream involved the pursuit of nationalism through language and history. This too was a movement that involved much of the USSR.

The problems too arose long before *perestroika*. Through the late 1980s as the school system extended and the economy stagnated there was more and more dissatisfaction with the school system (B. Holmes, et al., 1995). This paralleled general unrest in society. Gorbachev attempted to resolve these issues with the policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. This did not work out as planned, and the events in the political stream culminated with sovereignty and independence, giving Moldova and the other republics responsibility for their school systems and their fates. Independence gave policy makers in Moldova the political opportunity and the rationale to create a new school system.

With the new responsibility and authority, Moldova went through three stages of change to develop a Moldovan school system. First came the dismantling of the Soviet system. The Moldovan MET removed Soviet ideology and many of the structures and organizations affiliated with that ideology. That left a large void for schools to be filled over the next decade with new policies, curriculum, texts, and practices; this is a second stage. The creation of all of these aspects, including the early calls for a national school system, was under the influence and with the inspiration of foreign school systems. A third stage involves adapting these international ideas to Moldova through their implementation and evolution in a new context.

Decentralization

Local control of schools is often attempted to improve the schools by giving parents more control of school management, allowing the school community to tailor the school to local needs, to increase accountability of school employees, and to increase funds coming from local sources (Cheng, 1993; 1986; Rivarola & Fuller, 1999). A more cynical aspect of decentralization is “decentralization by default” (Popleton, Gershunsky, & Pullin, 1994). This idea suggests that by decentralizing the school system, the MET gains some legitimacy for acting, while hiding the fact it cannot really control the schools anyway. The result of such policies is often increased inequity (McGinn & Street, 1986). All of these aspects are at play in Moldova.

The decentralization of the Moldovan school system took place in two stages. Starting with the USSR, the first stage was the transfer of authority of the schools from the Soviet Ministry of Science and Enlightenment to the Moldovan Ministry of Science and Education. This started in June of 1990 with the reorganization of the MET and declaration of sovereignty and was completed with the declaration of independence in 1991. The second stage transferred some authority from the MET to local schools. The idea of decentralization arose in the period of *Perestroika* and introduced the notion of local control with parents and students participating in school decisions. This second stage never continued to the point that lagodin suggested, but schools in present day Moldova have a great deal of freedom.

With the first stage of decentralization, Moldova gained control of its schools and its curriculum. Despite the new autonomy and the desire for school reform, the MET allowed little change. The tri-level hierarchy of school, regional authority, and MET did not change. The MET did allow a few new school models, two of which survive, one being PCP. And private schools opened. But all of these schools were obligated to adhere to the national curriculum and answered to the MET and its inspectors. Other reforms such as school choice had limited influence and were open only to those who had means. Parents had to pay for transportation, or relocation, and fees that increased with the prestige of the school.

The main result of this republic control was the creation of a curriculum. The new curriculum contained objectives, general content guidelines, and suggestions for classroom activities that were to make the school western and modern. Teachers were given more flexibility and responsibility in designing lessons. This change appears unimportant when we consider that teachers were to use only MET approved books and materials, but the MET rarely enforced this rule. The MET did promote more extensive change in teaching methods, and did introduce these to teachers with the financial assistance of the World Bank. But, based on my research, this short-term intervention had little lasting effect. A number of challenges have impeded the opportunity for teachers to take advantage of their new freedom. Their initial training was limited and short-term. The poor schools had few funds to purchase materials that would give teachers a choice in what they teach. Time constraints, caused by taking on private students, an increased work load, or working in their gardens, have prevented teachers from developing new plans that differ from the standard textbook. The decentralization of the school system has granted new authority to parents. The school statute allows parents to play a role in the school council. The statute leaves it to the school director to determine when to invite parents to the council meetings. Primavara did allow and encourage parent involvement in school management. With the authority to influence the school comes the authority to influence the school in such a way that parents do not need to participate. This took place at Primavara, when parents protested the early

dismissal of students from the after-school study hall and voted a non-parent and school employee as the president of the parent association. But this is the messy part of democratic governance; it is impossible to predict the outcomes or the negotiations that lead up to those outcomes.

In the area of pedagogy, parent involvement has had little effect. The faculty did not encourage parents to participate in the daily activities of the class and parents felt that they were not qualified to do so. An exception to this was when parents spoke of their profession or hobby to the students. This took place a number of times at the school during my research. There is little evidence that parents have influenced the teaching in order to adapt it to local conditions. However, by choosing the school, they are making a choice to support the pedagogy and philosophy of PCP.

A much more consequential matter of local control deals with school finances. Schools are substantially under-funded in Moldova. Even by minimal norms set up by the MET, schools receive about 70% of needed funds. In addition, a beginning teacher earns a salary below the poverty level. As a result, schools have suffered. Teachers have left the professions. Schools are cold and crumbling. There are few resources for students or teachers. Corruption is widespread.

The school statute encourages parents to seek financial support for schools. Most schools have set up parent associations as NGOs that collect fees from members and spend the money on the school. In some cases schools have

found funding for capital projects through World Bank, USAID, or Peace Corps programs. As McGinn (1986) suggests, this does result in a great deal of inequity. Schools that have the financial support of parents, parents with money to give to the school, will have conditions much more conducive to learning than schools without such supportive parents. The MET director of preuniversity education is convinced that this source of financing does not affect the quality of schools. In reality, these funds, in the case of Primavara, have gone towards books, computers, teaching materials, teachers, and even heating in order to significantly enhance educational opportunities at the school.

A Hybrid School System

Margaret Archer (1979) describes the centralized school system as a system where nearly all decisions must filter through the central authority. In the case of Moldova the central authority is the MET. It approves the opening and the closure of schools, approves the curriculum, approves textbooks, and inspects the schools. Even private, or non-state schools, are under the jurisdiction of the MET and must follow the national curriculum. Carnoy (2006) is skeptical that the influence of the state is on decline in this period of globalization. He writes, "The state is the supplier and definer of education, the way changes take place in educational systems is largely defined by the political relationship of the nation's citizenry to the state and the way that the state has organized the educational system politically" (p. 555). The state, through the MET, nominally controls schools and the entire education system in Moldova. Even the acceptance of the

various projects co-financed by the World Bank takes place only with the government's consent.

Yet in the case of the PCP program, the state has relinquished some control. Since its inception the PCP has moved into primary grades and middle school in part due to the influence of parents asking for the expansion of the program. The director of preuniversity education denied this parental influence. Regardless, the PCP has since grown into an organization with widespread influence in the country. It has published classroom materials and provides professional development services to teachers. Some of these ideas have even entered official MET publications.

More importantly, PCP receives a great deal of guidance from the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), an international organization that was formed several years after the MET approved PCP in Moldova. There are Moldovan representatives on the various committees in the ISSA. This NGO has no official standing in Moldova except through the national PCP organization. During the year of research at Primavara, the faculty referred to standards from the ISSA to guide its professional development. A number of teachers at Primavara worked to get ISSA certification instead of channeling their efforts into Moldovan didactic grades. Few if any attend professional development sponsored by various state agencies. Their eyes are on a different standard that is international.

According to teachers, parents, the municipal school inspector, and the sector superintendent, the different vision of a school creates a different set of experiences for children than would be found at a regular school. Even though the curricular goals are to be the same, children at a PCP will likely have a different skill set. The knowledge they may gain from school may be similar, but the communication and thinking skills will, it seems, be different. The relationship they have with the content and with their teachers is different. They are given many opportunities to express their ideas and guide the direction of their learning. In a broader interpretation of curriculum, the curriculum taught at Primavara is quite different than its interpretation at other non-PCP schools. Furthermore, PCP teaches these ideas to teachers across the country.

The PCP at Primavara is not a model that other schools could replicate in the near term. Although many schools use some of the PCP ideas and claim to adhere to the program, most schools, especially in rural areas, do not have the finances to provide the time, training, and resources needed to teach at the level Primavara teachers teach. Nor is it possible for many schools to recruit the highly qualified teachers needed to do so. However, PCP continues to provide training and support for schools across the country. Economics may limit the implementation of PCP, and politics may do the same, but currently the PCP is sharing its ideas across the country.

ideas. Several teachers view this as a reaction to their own experiences in in a way that they feel comfortable. PCP allowed them the creativity to apply their guidance to their teaching. They did this predominantly seeking freedom to teach regarding those that use the PCP. Their reaction was to look elsewhere for Regarding the teaching of those who have remained, I have evidence

support.

tutors, jobs outside of education, work in their gardens or depend on family for families. A third response is extra work, teachers take on extra teaching loads, supplement their income through soliciting of funds from students and their some of the other corruption going on in the country. Teachers are able to corruption. Corruption is widespread in schools although it is petty compared to demographics suggest that this is a continuing problem. The second answer is number of teachers who have left is 50%. Anecdotal evidence and teacher Estimates of emigrants run as high as one million people, one estimate of the but rather because of the low salaries and increased difficulty of the work. one suggested that they left because of the change in educational philosophy, revolution. The most widespread answer is that they leave the profession. No I set out to find how teachers act and react in the circumstances of social

Teachers

MET continues to grant PCP this autonomy and authority is in question. enter the school system without the approval of the MET. Whether or not the PCP is not a parallel school system, but it does allow for new ideas to

Parent involvement has shown many benefits, primarily on the financial side. It has not, however, led to unique locally guided school that the policy perhaps envisioned. Schools are to be democratic allowing parents a participatory role and some authority in the decision making process. In many cases this is to the benefit of the school. Parents at Primavara contribute large sums of money to the school; parents across the country contribute large sums of money to schools. Parents at Primavara do have some influence regarding after-school programs and the general management of the school. However, regarding the formal courses at the school, they have very little influence. How much influence is uncertain because the parents I interviewed have not tried to influence the pedagogic process. By their own admission and desire, parents do not involve themselves in the teaching and learning in the school. Despite claims

Parents

schools and found that PCP offered an alternative. There is also an underlying criticism of the MET, and its policies of limiting alternative teaching programs as well as alternative materials supporting those programs. Using the PCP also grants the teacher some sort of legitimacy. The PCP does not emphasize the national tests and the academic olympiads. The focus is on the development of the child. For teachers in schools with students who do not score high on tests, the PCP can justify their work by noting their contribution to the development of children and their use of an international educational model.

to work with their children on their homework, parents do not feel qualified to work with children in the classroom.

The greater involvement of parents, a goal of PCP and the MET, has created some tension at Primavara. Teachers regularly talk with parents about child rearing and promoted their vision of family-school collaboration. Some parents have resisted this vision and use their involvement and influence to limit their obligations.

The parents' attitude to the state is one of low expectations and acceptance. They have essentially given up on the state and its governance of schools. They have given up on its ability to change schools and have paid to participate in a school that, according to them, is different from schools of their own experience, is different from other more typical schools in the country, and provides a more positive experience for their children. Most of the parents do want something specific for their children whether physical, cognitive, or emotional. Paying for this is something that they cannot avoid

Nationalizing a School System

During a period characterized by globalization, Moldova rejected the Soviet, Russian dominated school system and attempted to form a national school system. Globalization theory, both World Culture theorists (Ramirez & Boli, 1987a, 1987b) and conflict theorists (Clayton, 1998) suggest that it is difficult for a nation to create a school system unique to its borders. The former believe that there is a voluntary acceptance of ideas, mostly western, that are

used to define schools. Conflict theorists suggest that international aid organizations channel western ideas to non-western countries. Other scholars (Cowan, 2000; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004) suggest that there is a constant borrowing and lending taking place depending on the need, political or educational. Others even suggest that this phenomenon is so influential that the analysis of school systems based on national borders is not sufficient to understand those school systems (Cowan, 2000; Cummings, 1999).

This makes it difficult to define a national school system. Zambeta (2005) defines the national school as one that is used to "contribute to the national, political and cultural differentiation of their attendants" (p. 71). This comes mainly through teaching of a common history and language. Many aspects of the history and language of Besarabia are under debate, complicating the defining of a nationalism to teach in the national school. As I have shown, it is not only state actors that contribute to the national identity through schools. The Open Society Institute of Moldova introduced the Step by Step program, based on American Head Start. The goals of this program are consistent with many of the goals of the national policy.

Defining a national school system presumes the definition of a nation. For Moldova, that would be hard to do. For two centuries Russia/USSR governed Moldova except for a brief period of independence and two decades of Romanian rule. During much of the Russian rule, there was a deliberate attempt to disperse any national identity of this region on the edge of the Russian empire. In addition,

there is some discussion as to whether Bessarabia ever was a nation and its historical relationship with Romania is under debate. Defining a national culture in this context would be a challenging and frustrating task. Perhaps this explains the international path taken to define the national school system. From the first Conception of 1988 through to the new Law of Education in 2008, Moldova has sought to integrate its school system with that of Europe.

Creating a new school system began by borrowing heavily from Romania but included combining ideas from multiple school systems. Authors of the first curricular revisions looked first towards Romania for guidance. Moldova imported its history and its heroes as well as its curricula and textbooks. For a long term solution, scholars looked at various systems and selected what they thought best for Moldova. There is an international presence in terms of the research and theory on which the curriculum draws. There is still a question in Moldova as to whether this method of designing an educational system is to the benefit or detriment of Moldova.

But looking at state documents from the MET or scholars at the pedagogical university or the Institute of Educational Sciences, it is hard to say that they are "Moldovan" in any sense more than the fact that they were assembled in Moldova. That being said, international borrowing of pedagogical practices has a long history in other national school systems. They have certainly not renounced all things Soviet, although they have renounced many of the vestiges of the Soviet past. In conversations with scholars they often mention the

western ideas and inspiration they have received. In the end Moldova compiled a "curriculum," a Law of Education, and Conception choosing ideas from around the world.

Further Study

The present study attempts to outline the sequence of events of the period of transition in Moldova. I have done this on the level of national policy and in the case of a single school. It is however, a first step at understanding this process. Further study will be needed to understand the different experiences in the different types of schools in the country, private, Russian, Gagauzian, and Ukrainian. There is also likely to be a different experience in rural schools compared to urban schools. In addition there are many policies that bear further study. The right to choose a school for one's child has led to a great deal of movement. A study of this policy in Moldova would provide a Moldovan perspective on this global phenomenon. The issue of nationalism and ethnicity is a continuing challenge for the government. The list of possible studies is lengthy corresponding to the tremendous reform that has taken place in the country.

APPENDIX A: CLASS SCHEDULES

Table 10: Schedule of lesson for the Step by Step program

Curricular area		Grade and number of hours per week			
Discipline	Language and communication				
	5	5	5	5	
Group Learning Activity[mesa]	5	5	5	5	
Romanian Language and Literature	5	5	5	5	
Foreign Language	-	2	2	2	
Mathematics and Science					
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	
Science	1	1	1	2	
Social Humanistic Education [educatie]					
Thematic Activity (studiu tematic)	3	3	3	3	
History	-	-	-	1	
Art					
Musical Education [educatie]	1	1	1	1	
Plastic Education [art]	1	1	1	1	
Technology					
Technological Education[home economics]	1	1	1	1	
Sport					
Physical Education [educatie]	2	1	1	1	
Total number of hours	23	24	25	26	

(Ministerul Educatiei si Tinereitului al Republicii Moldova, 2007b, p. 18)

Table 11: Schedule of classes for grades 1-4, Moldovan standard elementary school

Curricular area		Grade and number of hours per week			
Discipline		1	2	3	4
Language and communication					
Romanian Language and Literature	8	7	7	7	7
Foreign language	-	2	2	2	2
Optional		0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Mathematics and Science					
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	4
Science	-	1	1	1	1
Optional		0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Social Humanistic Education					
History	-	-	-	-	1
Moral Spiritual Education	1	1	1	1	1
Optional		0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Art					
Musical Education	1	1	1	1	1
Plastic Education	1	1	1	1	1
Optional		0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Technology					
Technological Education	1	1	1	1	1
Optional		0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Sport					
Physical Education	2	2	2	2	2
Optional		0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Maximum number of hours		20	22	22	23
Minimum number of hours		18	20	20	21

(Ministerul Educației și Tineretului al Republicii Moldova, 2007b, pp. 14-15)

Table 12: Schedule of classes for Soviet elementary classes

Area of study		Grade	
		1	2
Reading-writing and speech development (14 weeks)	12		
Reading and speech development	5 (from Jan.)	4	3
Grammar, spelling, and speech development	6(from Jan.)	4	4
Individual reading	1(from Jan.)	1	1
Russian	4	6	6
Mathematics	6	6	6
Science of nature		1	2
Instruction through work [home economics]	1	1	1
Plastic art	1	1	1
Music	1	1	1
Physical education	2	2	2
Rules of road safety (yearly total)	10	10	10
Total number of hours (excludes road safety)	27	27	27

(Ministerul Invatamintului Public al RSS Moldovanei, 1989)

APPENDIX B: EXCERPTS FROM THE CURRICULUM

Table 13: Mathematics grade 3

Objectives plan. Referent objectives. The evaluation made will show if the student is able:	Understanding the numbers and the notations for numbers:	• To write, to read, to compare to order natural numbers to 1000000 • To show by example that the number of elements of a set does not depend on the recognition of the objects, their placement, or the order in which they are counted. • To use the idea of order and period; • To write the factors in base 10 of a natural number with several digits; • To use correctly the terms such as "tens digit," "hundreds digit," "ones digit," "thousands digit," etc. and the relationship among these.
Content(non-obligatory content is note with an asterisk (*))	Numbers from 0-100000. Order and periods	Characteristics of the number system: base ten and positional.
Relationship of order	Representation of natural numbers on an axis or an ordered pair of numbers on two axes (one horizontal and one vertical).	Comparison of natural numbers using and number line.
The determination of a natural number x such as $a < x < b$, $a \leq x < b$ and others with $a \leq 1000$ and $b \leq 1000$.	Read and Write natural numbers from 0 to 1000000.	Representation with objects or drawings of the numbers studied.
Representation of number using the position system or writing digits.	Changing from one form of representation to another.	Number from given first number and by given step increasing and decreasing, with or without support of objects and drawings.
Grouping and regrouping of objects or drawings based on the step.[ie. By fives] Writing a number as a sum of products in which one of the factors is 10, 100, 1000, and so on.	Comparing groups of objects and writing of the results of the location in the	Comparing numbers by the evidence of digits or

Table 13 (cont'd)

significant digits by the position. Ordering numbers using significant modes (geometric figures of positioning, abacus, etc.) Gaming of counting with objects in which groups of 10, 100, 1000 are replaced by other objects, Games in which equivalent exchanges are made. Finally to use money.		
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(Ministerul Educatiei si Stiintei al Republicii Moldova, 1998, pp. 98-99)

Table 14: Grade 3 listening and speaking

Referent objectives	Contents of study	Activities of study	Evaluation objectives
The student will learn: • to receive a message in terms of specific codes of communication • to understand the word sense in context • to internalize the relation between parts of speech (word, sentence, text)	I. Verbal communication 1. Verbal, oral and written communication. Level indications • Oral system (made up of sounds through a succession of phonemes) • Written system (made up of set of graphemes) • Internal system (thought) 2. Nonverbal communication is realized through • Semantic language (gestures, mimicry, pantomime)	Exercises for oral education and understanding of the spoken, read, heard, illustrated message, retaining relevant information, writing notes while listening, to reproduce a message in one's own words. Vocabulary exercises with phonetic elements. Exercises of understanding (of communicating and explaining) of new words in context and paraphrasing. Activity of direct perception of an object or an	The student will be able: • To summarize an oral message and list the principle ideas; • To explain correctly the meaning of a word from in context; • To form orally sentences with each of the new words; - To list orally at least two words with similar understanding for

Table 14 (cont'd)	• Conventional signs • Symbols	action named by word. Exercises of understanding of the most frequent synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms	• each word given;
	II. Oral communication(hearing and speech) 1. Oral expression 1.1 types of message • narrative • descriptive • persuasive • justifying • conclusive	Exercises of understanding and discrimination of grammatical structure of a hear text.	To recognize on the basis of given text the type of message, listing at least two reasons;

APPENDIX C: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collection and analysis

As I began this research in 2006, I soon realized that to understand what teachers were doing in relation to what they had done in the past, I needed to understand the policy field in which they were working; this would require some historical analysis. The educational policy field had changed numerous times during the careers of many practicing teachers. Part of this policy stemmed from the MET. There was also much international influence through the various aid organizations such as Unicef and the World Bank. That was expected. I did not expect the widespread influence of the PCP in Moldova. This became a second source of policy that reached teachers and became a focus of my dissertation. This study attempts to understand the broad changes that have taken place in the Moldova education system over the past two decades. I examine these changes on two levels. One level is that of policy and system wide change. The second is at the level of the school and classroom. I investigate the policy and system wide changes through an analysis of documents supplemented by interviews and history books. At the school level, I use a qualitative and ethnographic approach to allow for the investigation of themes emerging from the data collected.

There is much more to a school system than a school, a school model, and educational policy. For part of this background and insight I rely on my experience as a volunteer. But I also took advantage of opportunities that arose

during the course of my research. I worked with the inspector of schools, I attended open lessons and seminars in Chisinau, and in rural areas. I discussed my findings with friends to learn if my interpretation was based on a clear understanding of Moldovan schools. I also discussed with teachers what I had seen in other schools to contrast differences between schools.

Limitations

I was a foreigner in the schools I visited. I worked in a second language. At times I was in schools that seldom have visitors, let alone American visitors. I was a male working in a field dominated by women. I was also a teacher with a clear idea of what I thought was good teaching. I also have a great deal of sympathy for Moldovans, especially Moldovan teachers, and a great deal of antipathy towards the communist government. I try to keep in mind all of these areas of potential bias.

More insidious are the biases that I do not realize. What these are, I do not know. If I did, I could reflect on them.

I am also aware that I am constantly looking for explanations. Some of these explanations might make sense, even within the frame I was working. But that does not mean that these explanations are accurate. During the year I was able to develop relationships with many teachers in Moldova. I relied on them, as much as possible, to vet my ideas and interpretations.

I was a single researcher and independently analyzed my data with a

limited amount of time for research and writing.

Interviews

I interviewed Moldovans on three levels, at the school level, at the administrative level including the MET, and then in the field of research. I discuss the three levels in turn.

Teachers.

Interviews with teachers had two components. My goal was to learn how they taught and what choices they made in their work. I interviewed individual teachers after observing them for a full day in the classroom. During the interviews, I first asked about what I saw in the classroom. It is not possible to create list of questions because they were so closely connected with the events of the classroom. During the interviews I asked about the goals of the lessons, the teaching methods, the origins of the content and the methods, the use of classroom materials, the arrangement of the classroom, reasons for teaching the material, and the management and discipline practices.

During the second part of the interview I asked about the teachers' background and perspective on PCP and schooling. I often asked for examples from the day's lessons to support the answers provided. Questions during this part of the interview included:

How did you become a teacher? When/where did you study?
How did you come to teach at Primavara?
How do you work with colleagues?
How do you work with parents? In class? regarding discipline problems?
homework?
Why do you use the PCP program?
If they mention 'traditional' or 'Soviet' practices, What is the difference between Soviet practices and PCP?

Is PCP a good program for Moldova? For children? For teachers? Explain.
What is your relationship with the MET?
What opportunities do you have for professional development?
How is PCP related to the national curriculum?
How have your practices changed?
How has the PCP program changed?
What does "child-centered" mean?

I conducted fourteen formal interviews, one with each teacher in the school.
These formal interviews represent only a portion of what I learned from teachers.
Some of the most interesting conversations were conversations with small
groups of teachers over a cup of tea at the end of the day. During these sessions
I could ask questions and hear responses from several teachers, then hear them
discuss the topic among themselves. During these conversations I asked about
events I had seen at the school or in classes, as well as what I had seen in other
schools. Again the focus was on learning how teachers worked in their present
circumstances, what constituted good teaching in their eyes, and why it was
good.
Five veteran teachers also discussed among themselves and with me
about their experience through the 1990's. I showed them a number of older
textbooks that they would have used, and asked them about the early period of
independence. After my initial prompt, teachers mostly responded to each others'
anecdotes.
I interviewed three retired teachers, who had taught only in Soviet era
schools. I asked similar questions related to their teaching.

Administrators

I interviewed the assistant superintendent of the Botanica Sector in

Chisinau, the national director of PCP, the municipal school inspector, and the

MET director of pre-university education.

With the national director of PCP my questions focused on the history of

PCP, the evolution of the program, the relationship with the MET, the relationship

between PCP and the larger society, the work of training teachers for PCP, and

the philosophy of the program. I would also refer to specific comments or events

from parents and teachers at the school to see how she understood the situation.

The assistant superintendent and the director of pre-university education

provided answer to the following categories of questions:

What is the role of the ministry in education?

How are schools financed?

What are the issues facing schools?

How has the new curriculum been implemented?

Where did the ideas come from for the curriculum?

How has educational policy evolved?

How can officials promote school change?

What has replaced Soviet ideology?

What is the role of PCP in Moldova? Has it influenced the school system?

What is the direction of future change in Moldovan schools?

What happens if teachers do not respect the new curriculum?

What is the role of parents and parent committees?

Parents

While working at Primavara, I met a number of parents whom I asked to

interviews. To complement this group of parents who were among the more

active at the school, I asked teachers for names and phone number of parents in

their classes who were both active and not so active. I made an effort to accommodate parents who could not come to the school during regular hours by meeting them in the evenings when they picked up their children, by meeting them at their place of work, and meeting them in my apartment. The sample is likely weighted towards parents who were more active, but I am confident of representation of the diversity of the parent population.

Parent questions include:

How did you choose this school?
 What do you like and dislike about the school?
 Do your children participate in the after school program? What activities?
 How do you work with your children?
 What is your relationship with your child's teacher?
 How often do you meet with your children's teacher?
 How do you participate in the school? In the classroom?
 What have you learned from the parent-teacher meetings?
 What do you want from the school?
 Is the school expensive for you?
 How do you feel that the state does not fully pay for schooling?
 Is the PCP a good program for Moldova? Explain.
 If you wanted to, could you influence the school? In terms of management? In terms of pedagogy?
 Have you visited other schools? How do they compare?
 How do you feel about the lack of grades and use of portfolios?

Not having an ongoing relationship with parents, I adhered closely to the questions listed above.

Table 15: List of parents interviewed

Name	Grades of child.	gender
Sylva	4, 1	f
Iulian	3	m
Mihai	1,3, 6	m
Galusca	2	m
Dana	2, 4	f
Fanta	3	f
Maria	2	f
Natalia	1	f
Vicol	1	f
Midoni	3	m
Junca	1	m
Vitalie	3	f
Gheorge	1	f
Vita	4	m
Filat	3	m
Victor	1	m
Bulat	3, 3	f

All names are pseudonyms

I spent all or part of 62 days at the school, not including the interviews with parents. I observed every teacher for a full day, and then observed specific lessons that I may not have seen the first time through, or for special occasions such as a guest, or special project. I observed teachers and their classes to learn what they did and how they taught. My notes focused on actions of the teachers,

Observations

I made copies of a number of books, laws, MET directives, and MET reports during my research. I spent several weeks looking through MET directives in the MET archive related to school reform and school management. I spent time at a Museum of Pedagogy that had a small archive with textbooks and books on educational history of Moldova. I spent time at the Chisinau school district library. I was able to find reports and evaluations of the school system written by MET officials and analysts at the Institute for Public Policy. At times there was overlap between MET officials and IPP analysts. The MET also published pamphlets regarding guidelines for school management that I found. I spent time in the National Library looking at some textbooks and periodicals. There was no bookshop where I could find or order books. Except for the directives at the MET archives, there was no comprehensive source of documents issued by the MET. I tried to copy as many as I could find that were relevant to my research. There are certainly gaps in my documentation.

Documents

the tasks for students, the materials used, and topics of study. During my time at the school I was also able to see faculty meetings, parent-teacher meetings, school council meetings, parent association meetings, disciplinary action for children, director teacher evaluation meetings.

Notes from observations were entered into Journaler, software that allows for daily entries of text and pictures. The software allows for searching for words not codes, per se. I could search for any term I entered such as teacher meeting, parent meeting, different classes by subjects, names of teachers, or any other word I entered.

Analysis

A Moldovan colleague transcribed most of the interviews; I transcribed some of them. I listened to each interview I did not transcribe and corrected and annotated the transcription, and coded them using TAMS qualitative analysis software. My original attempts at coding included numerous codes. I started coding a second time using only a few codes. These included:

Parents: the role of parents.
 Teachers/personal: the personal background of the teacher or the interviewee.
 Teaching: teaching methods.
 School: events involving the school at large
 Ministry: issues concerning the MET and its policy including the curriculum and textbooks
 Society: changes in society
 PCP: comments regarding the PCP

Each of these categories, except the final category, had two codes, one for independent Moldova and one for events and information dating from Soviet times.

Once the interviews were coded I could then search through the above categories and investigate themes within them, such as past practices of the PCP, or teacher attitudes towards the MET, how teachers selected topics of instruction.

For parents I used much of the above categories and in addition I created several categories for their interviews including:

- Wants: what do parents want from the school
- Choice: how and why parents chose this school
- Cost: is the school expensive
- Parent involvement: comments about parent involvement
- Parent meetings: comments about parent meetings.

The coding and analysis was not a straightforward process. I continually referred to field notes, documents, full transcriptions of the interviews, and the literature. The final stage of the analysis process was writing the dissertation itself and discussing the drafts with my advisor.

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