

## **Education in Transition: a Way to Democratic Citizenship and Common Identity in the post-Soviet Moldova**

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**Abstract.** The paper explains the situation when Communist government in Moldova had replaced the existing national history textbook series with integrated history of Moldova in 2003 that collapsed national history and world history into a single course. The paper shows the investigating the textbooks that been met with mass street demonstrations, public opposition and skepticism, and fierce criticism. Building on the special role that Moldovans assign to their history textbooks, this paper analyzes the debates surrounding these textbooks as a means of understanding both the broader controversies related to the writing and teaching of a national history and the role of history education in constructing a cohesive Moldovan citizenry and furthering democratization of Moldovan society. The use of terms “citizenship” and “national identity” are also explained in this paper as well UN, Council of Europe and Ministry of education recommendations for teachers to improve their teaching methods. The paper indicates what needs to be done like international development analysts, economic, political as well democratic citizenship improvement.

**Keywords:** *History, government, textbooks, minority, teachers*

### **Introduction**

“Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army”.

*Edward Everett.*

National history textbooks have become highly controversial in all of the post-Soviet countries, where concepts of the nation and national identity remain contested and Moldova is not an exception here. “Romanization” of history textbooks in Moldova – from the alphabet to the interpretation of major historical events – took a whole decade from 1991 to 2001 until a new government chosen a

new stance. Since coming to power, the Communist<sup>1</sup> government in Moldova has made proposals to replace the existing national history textbook series, *History of the Romanians*<sup>2</sup> with a new series, first *History of Moldova* (proposed in 2002), then *Integrated History* (proposed in 2003). The latter textbook would collapse national history and world history into a single course. The proposals have been met with mass street demonstrations, public opposition and skepticism, and fierce criticism and resistance from the intellectual elite. There have been several approaches to investigating the textbook debate in Moldova<sup>3</sup>. Stefan Ihrig<sup>4</sup> and Wim Van Meurs<sup>5</sup> have done meticulous analyses of the content of the textbooks to reveal their biases and shortcomings. The recent studies by Moldovan scholars are of particular interest for this essay as well<sup>6</sup>. However, they cannot be examined in isolation

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<sup>1</sup>This government (2001–09) was Communist only in the ‘flag color’ of course but liberal-unsuccessful in its political practice

<sup>2</sup>The titles *History of the Romanians* and *Integrated History* often cause confusion because they refer to the school subject and the textbook series. Unlike the curriculum in some Western high schools, Moldovan students take a national history course every year. Although each grade level studies a different historical period, the textbooks are called *History of the Romanians* and subtitled for the particular grade level.

<sup>3</sup>To be more understandable and provable I have strictly minimized the use of sources in Romanian language and concentrated instead on the relevant books and articles written in English.

<sup>4</sup>Ihrig, Stefan *The Hyperreality of the Empty Page: Disappeared Ethnic Minorities in the History Textbooks of Turkey and of the Republic of Moldova*. *Anural Antim* 6 (Journal of the Young Historians Association of Moldova); Ihrig, Stefan *Romanianism vs. Moldovanism – National Identity as Negotiated in History Teaching in Moldova*. Paper presented at *Tenth Annual Meeting for the Association for the Study of Nationalities*. New York: Columbia University, 16 April 2005.

<sup>5</sup>Van Meurs, Wim. *The Bessarabia Question in Communist Historiography: Nationalist and Communist Politics in History Writing*. Boulder: Eastern European Monographs, Columbia University Press, 1995.

<sup>6</sup>Blagodatskikh I.M *Moldova i Transnistria v poeskahsvaeiistorii of "their" stories // Starae I novae obrazi v savrimenahuchebnikahistorii :Rosia I strain Baltiki, Tentralinoi I VostochinoiEvropi, IjnogoKavkaz, TantralinoiAzii: Nauchiniedocladi I soobshenie/ Pod red. F. Bosmsdorfa, Gbardiugova; Fond F. Naumann; a, M: AIRO-XX, 2003 p 192-205; Tvic I. NatanalinaiaistoriaMoldovi: modeliosmiseniiaproslava//Natanalinieistoriinapostsovedskomprastranstve- II/ Pod red. F. Bosmsdorfa G. Bordiugova; M: Fond FridrihaNaumanna AIRO XXI , 2009 s. 51-83*

because history textbooks in Moldova are not merely books. For the country's leading historians, the textbooks are the source of a revival and restoration of the country's ethnic Romanian identity. For the government, they are the means to instill patriotism in the country's youth, which will consolidate society and lead the way for future European integration. Education specialists believe the history textbooks will teach young Moldovans important citizenship skills, such as critical thinking. Some history teachers see the textbooks as an aid in the formation of a strong citizenry; others believe the books help correct the wrongs of the Soviet era. The teaching and learning of history has undeniable importance and serves a particular socializing function in Moldovan society. Although their purposes of history education and their concepts of the nation and national identity differ, government officials, historians, education specialists, and teachers alike consider history education to be a cornerstone of societal development. As such, they have endowed it with the weighty purposes of transmitting ideas about the nation and the state, and of creating and maintaining national identity and citizenship. Regardless of the perceived failure of Soviet education to create the idealized "Homo Sovieticus," the belief in the power of public schooling, and specifically the teaching of a national history to imbue a sense of national unity, has not been diminished.

Building on the special role that Moldovans assign to their history textbooks, this study analyzes the debates surrounding these textbooks as a means of understanding both the broader controversies related to the writing and teaching of a national history and the role of history education in constructing a cohesive Moldovan citizenry and furthering democratization of Moldovan society. This traces the complexities of re-writing history after communism<sup>7</sup> and the purpose of history education in society at an institutional level and, more importantly, "from below."

The analysis of the history textbook debate in Moldova has uncovered a crossroads of contested national identities, educational hierarchies, and competing political agendas. The argument of this essay is that these three factors are central to the textbook controversy and have negative implications for the development of a national history in post-Soviet Moldova. These factors, which hinder the reform of history education, also represent substantial challenges to education for

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<sup>7</sup> I prefer the definition of *state socialism* for its analytical clarity but for the methodological purpose will use the term 'communism'.

democratic citizenship and, most importantly, act as impediments to the further democratization of Moldovan society.

The first factor of contested national identities refers to the disagreement between the government and the intellectual elite on the definition of the Moldovan nation and national identity. The government supports the concept that Moldova and Moldovans are ethnically independent, as a nation and a people, from Romania and Romanians. To the government, “Moldovan” is both an ethnic and civic identity. In contrast, a number of ‘privileged’ historians, who also write the history textbooks, believe Moldova to be a part of larger Romanian nation. For them, “Moldovan,” in the ethnic sense, was constructed by the Soviets and is therefore artificial. So they trace the origins of these differing concepts and show how the opposing groups use history to legitimate their positions. Anyway I do not think that these positions adequately reflect how most Moldovans identify themselves. Teachers from this study identified as both Moldovan and Romanian; the former represented a civic and local ethnic identity whereas the latter represents a larger ethnic identity. This local ethnic identity took the form of Moldovan being a regional variation of Romanian. It is undetermined as to how the general populace defines “Moldovan.” The discord over national identity between the government and historians has prevented the creation of a national history, which is an obstacle to the development of a cohesive democratic citizenry.

The Soviet legacy of educational hierarchies is the second factor to be examined in the textbook debate. Although the Soviet education system was perceived as unsuccessful in creating a new Soviet people, it was successful in establishing a pattern of history writing and teaching. Researches show that the development of history education in post-communist Moldova mirrors Soviet-style hierarchical control over the creation and dissemination of historical knowledge. The perpetuation of this hierarchy counteracts the state’s attempts to democratize and reform history education. The interviews with teachers and the classroom observations show that the hierarchies have excluded teachers from the reform process and made them distrustful towards the government. The teachers’ distrust diminishes the state’s role in fostering a civic identity through public schooling and this potential absence of education for citizenship threatens to slow democratization.

The third factor, competing political agendas, refers to the politicization of the textbook debate by the government and the intellectual elite. Both groups have used the sensitive issue of history education as a pretext to further their own agendas. The government insists that the new history textbooks embody a

“patriotic education,” which will form loyal and democratic citizens. The involvement of the Communist party and references to history education in their political rhetoric have created distrust and suspicion among the history teachers, who reject the debate on the grounds that it is “political.” The government’s emphasis on “patriotism” is undemocratic because it calls for an ethnic assimilation and it is reminiscent of Soviet decrees. This politicization undermines the state’s attempts at education for a democratic citizenship and, again, this impedes further democratization.

### ***Terminological digression***

The use of terms “citizenship” and “national identity” need to be clarified for the purpose of this essay. The terms citizenship and national identity are used the manner in which Moldovans employ them. Moldovans maintain the use of Soviet era terminology to refer to their national or ethnic identity. Soviet peoples had Soviet citizenship but they retained a “personal nationality,” which may or may not have corresponded with their place of residence<sup>8</sup>. A man may have been a citizen of the Moldavian SSR but the “nationality” in his passport may have read “Ukrainian.” Today, Moldovans use the term “national identity” [*identitate nationala*] to describe their ethnic identity and not their participation of different ethnic groups. The teachers are rejecting Western notions of multiculturalism because they cannot see how it applies to their environment. Simple questions like “What is a minority?” and “Why do minorities need to be in history books?” are one way to begin this discussion. In addition, if the teachers are distrustful of the government, then minority voices unrelated to the government should be heard. The debate over history textbooks can be de-politicized by opening up the debate to citizens outside of Chisinau, who are not involved in “politics.”

### ***Education for Democratic Citizenship***

Regardless of one’s definition of democracy, public education is both a requirement of democratic participation and a democratic attribute as well. In a broad sense, formal and informal education transmits virtues associated with democratic life, some of which may include: liberty, equality, justice, community, tolerance, and civility. Education also transmits specialized information or knowledge about individual responsibility to a democratic political system, such as electoral processes or tax collection, as well as transmitting skills to participate in

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<sup>8</sup>Brubaker, Rogers. *Nationalism Reframed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

this society. These skills should include “critical thinking, cooperation, initiative, communication, and rational judgment skills” as a minimum basis for democratic participation<sup>9</sup>. Education is both a functional and an essential attribute of democracy. Amy Gutmann explains that education is a “distinctive virtue of a democratic society, [because] it authorizes citizens to influence how their society reproduces itself”<sup>10</sup>.

Although democratic education may occur in all spheres of life from families to civic associations, schools are the primary vehicle for this education because schooling affects almost all citizens. In some cases, such as the United States, there has been a steady decline of democratic participation regardless of widespread public schooling<sup>11</sup>. This does not discount in any way the importance of schooling in preparing democratic citizens. Noel McGinn argues that schools share some but not all of the blame for declining participation in the United States. In schools, there has been an increased emphasis on individual achievement, which reduces social solidarity. In addition, the time devoted to civic education and the quality of civic education has deteriorated. Yet schools do not share all of blame because “other institutions now preach an antidemocratic message and... the decline of political participation is a result of learning from these institutions”<sup>12</sup>. As other institutions may waver in their democratic principles, communities must depend upon schools to provide an education for democracy.

Will Kymlickaelaborates:

“...we cannot rely on the market, the family, or the associations of civil society to teach civic virtue. People will not automatically learn to engage in public discourse, or to question authority, in any of these spheres, since these spheres are often held together by private discourse and respect for authority. This suggests that schools must teach children how to

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<sup>9</sup>Miller, Cynthia L. Rethinking Citizenship Frameworks: Education for Citizenship *Practice*, not Citizenship *Status*. *Education in Russia, the Independent States and Eastern Europe*. Vol. 17, no. 1 (Spring) 1999, p. 30.

<sup>10</sup>Gutmann, Amy. *Democratic Education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup>Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.

<sup>12</sup>McGinn, Noel F. Education, Democratization and Globalization: A Challenge for Comparative Education. *Comparative Education Review* Vol. 40, no. 4 (November), 1996 p. 349.

engage in critical reasoning and moral perspective that defines public reasonableness”<sup>13</sup>.

Kymlicka’s argument that individuals do not “automatically learn” to be democratic, and children must be taught how to engage in critical reasoning will resonate in the discussion of the challenges to education for citizenship in the following sections.

Martin Carnoy and Joel Samoff’s work on education reform projects in the developing world further confirm the singular importance of schooling and its impact on changing a national consciousness. In their study of five developing countries, they show that education movements, such as literacy campaigns and mass education, have been able “to achieve some change in [political] consciousness”<sup>14</sup>. In the concluding paragraph of the book, they comment that “the nature of the state determines the character of education, the schools”<sup>15</sup>. This observation will also resonate in the following discussion of disconnect between what the Moldovan government preaches and what it practices.

It must first be clarified that “citizenship” refers to a civic identity and a sense of belonging to a state. It does not refer to the assimilation of multiple ethnic groups into a single national category. The concept of citizenship for education has been intentionally reduced to a thin definition that encompasses the minimum yet essential requirements for democratic participation. Moldovan officials have frequently used the terms “education,” “democratic,” and “citizenship” together, but they have yet to define what they mean or desire by education for citizenship. Thus, a broad definition is required as not to impose any culturally particular attributes on the specifically Moldovan context. In establishing the minimum essential requirements for democratic participation, this study draws from Kymlicka’s four virtues of citizenship: “public spiritedness,” “a sense of justice with the capacity to discern and respect the rights of others,” “civility and tolerance, and a shared sense of solidarity or loyalty”. It also draws from Amy Gutmann’s concept of deliberation, which is “the ability to deliberate, and hence to participate in conscious social reproduction”. For the present essay education for democratic

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<sup>13</sup>Kymlicka, Will. *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 303.

<sup>14</sup>Carnoy, Martin and Joel Samoff. *Education and Social Transitions in the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1990, p. 370.

<sup>15</sup>*Op. cit.* p. 380.

citizenship is defined as *the striving of the state to instill democratic virtues, knowledge, and skills in all its youth as a means to form adults who are prepared to participate in a democratic society, and are knowledgeable of their responsibilities as democratic citizens.*

The challenges to education for citizenship also reflect challenges to the further democratization of Moldovan society. Since the end of the Cold War, democratization is a term that has been frequently used by various Western researchers<sup>16</sup> in reference to the transition from communism to democracy in the former Soviet States and Eastern European countries. (Interestingly to note that in 2012 one of these scholars<sup>17</sup> has been appointed as the US ambassador in the Russian Federation – probably in attempt to put his pathetic desk studies into real life). It refers to the development of a democratic political regime, but it may also refer more broadly to the creation of a democratic society. Education is a requirement for democratization just as it is a requirement for the maintenance of a democracy and the content of this education matters. The Soviet experiment proved that high-level and achieving mass schooling could be used to support *any* political system. Education itself does not foster democratization (if this democratization is needed, of course). To develop a democratic regime and civil society, the state must sponsor education for democratic citizenship.

### ***Democracy by Example***

The first step in improving education for citizenship is to recognize and support the link between democracy and education. This essay has shown that Moldovans believe in the socializing power of public schooling to produce citizens. Yet, this belief has to be broadened to encompass the idea that public schooling must produce *democratic* citizens. As noted above, people do not automatically learn to be democratic. The practice of the deliberate teaching of democratic

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<sup>16</sup> Boyer, William Reflections on Democratization. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 25, no. 3 (September) (1992): 517–22; Bunce, Valerie Rethinking Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience. *World Politics* 55 (January) (2003): 167–92; Diamond, Larry Is the Third Wave Over? *Journal of Democracy* (1996) 7.3: 20–37; Fish, Steven M. Postcommunist Subversion: Social Science and Democratization in East Europe and Eurasia. *Slavic Review* 58, no.4 (Winter) (1999): 794–823.

<sup>17</sup> McFaul, Michael The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World. *World Politics* 54, no. 2 (January) 2002 p.: 212–44.



principles must be the driving force for education for democratic citizenship, which fosters broader democratization.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe, democracy was embraced as a panacea for a range of social ills. Democratization, along with free market capitalism, was expected to bring economic prosperity and integration into the developed world. Moldova's history over the past ten years has painfully shown that economic prosperity or even political stability has not been immediately forthcoming. Part of the problem is the weighty expectations that are often associated with the new democratic system, and the assumption that democracy may be adopted with minimal refinement. In the words of the former Czech President, Vaclav Havel, "...democracy is seen as something given, finished and complete as is, something that can be exported like cars or television sets"<sup>18</sup>. Moldova's previous President Voronin (in office 7 April 2001 – 11 September 2009) has acknowledged this disconnection between the expectations associated with democracy and the effort that is required to sustain it:

"...democracy is not a slogan... it entails responsibility and a sincere wish to improve the situation. Democracy, if you like, is a form of political conscience."<sup>19</sup> Regardless of Voronin's proclaimed commitment to democracy, the Communist government has a record of anti-democratic practices, such as the suppression of free speech and intimidation of political opponents<sup>20</sup>.

Like the Communist party, the Ministry of Education readily adopts the language associated with democratization, but does not embody it. Officials from the Ministry have attended foreign seminars and met with Western European specialists. From these interactions, they have decided that *Integrated History* is the best alternative to *History of the Romanians* because it will present a multicultural history that is more reflective of present-day Moldova, it will

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<sup>18</sup> Havel, Vaclav. Democracy's Forgotten Dimension. *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 2, (1995) p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> Voronin, Vladimir.. Address by Vladimir Voronin, President of the Republic of Moldova, at IV Part Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/PA-Sessions/Sept-2003/disc\\_Voronin.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/PA-Sessions/Sept-2003/disc_Voronin.asp) (2003) (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Gribincea, Argentia, and Mihai Grecu.. Moldova: Situation Analysis and Trend Assessment. (2004). Report commissioned by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Protection of Information Section (DIP), <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/418f804a.pdf> (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2012).

“consolidate society” to form a strong democratic citizenry, and it will teach children to “think critically” and “independently.” They pepper their speeches and decrees with these concepts but fail to demonstrate a commitment to implementing them. Government officials claim that *Integrated History* will teach students to think critically and independently, which is important to education for citizenship because these learned characteristics enable deliberation. The officials have failed to grasp the larger picture. *Integrated History* alone will not create a young democratic generation who will one day become members of the European Union. Democratic schools will prepare democratic citizens who think critically and independently. Citizens who are prepared to participate in a democratic society will further democratization.

The state can take several steps towards creating democratic schools.

First, the Ministry of Education must become transparent; they must formulate consistent and comprehensive explanations for proposed education reform, such as *Integrated History*, and include local school officials, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in the reform process. This should be done proactively rather than defensively. The state could have prevented much of the criticism of *Integrated History* by making the process more open and inclusive from the start of the project, instead of responding defensively to later criticism. They could have done this easily by sponsoring public forums and workshops for teachers to answer questions and to clarify the purpose of their reform. These public forums could also have been an opportunity for citizens to articulate their concerns and needs for their schools. Including more voices in the development of public education does not only model democratic debate and consensus building but, as Amy Gutmann argues, it is an essential democratic virtue.

The Ministry of Education should also consider establishing parent and teacher’s associations to encourage public involvement in schooling. Parents are involved in the care and maintenance of the child’s school but have little involvement in educational decisions, such as school discipline, curriculum, textbooks, and student assessment. Parent teacher associations may be viewed as adult education because, just as children are not born democratic citizens, adults who were raised in the Soviet era do not become democratic citizens overnight. Adults, who become more involved in their children’s schools, may become more involved in their communities, and thus more involved in national politics. With a

literacy rate of over ninety-nine percent<sup>21</sup> (data on 2007), schooling is a common denominator in Moldovan society. Almost all Moldovans have participated as either students or parents. Schools are an ideal institution to encourage democratic participation. Creating parent and teacher associations is not a simple task and it would be an entirely new endeavor for this society, which would require a commitment on the part of the Ministry and local school authorities.

But if the government is sincerely committed to democratization, then it must undertake these challenging yet important steps.

Patriotism and citizenship education are two prominent themes in the government's rationale for adopting *Integrated History*. Some proponents of *Integrated History* insist that history education must be directed at forming patriotic citizens. Iulian, one of the *Integrated* authors, wished to teach children "to love the land from where he was born." Iulian is disconnected from the Moldovan classroom and does not realize that teaching *History of the Romanians* does not make an individual un-patriotic but rather, as some teachers suggest, it is a constellation of other factors that influences a young person's feelings towards their country. If the Ministry of Education is concerned about improving the teaching and learning of history, they should be implementing more of the Council of Europe's recommendations. Changing the title of the textbook was the first but not the only recommendation. Other recommendations include: the publication of alternative textbooks; the reform of university entrance examinations; the establishment of a network of history educators, which includes increased and improved in-service teacher training and workshops; the development of teacher resources, such as teacher manuals; and increased contact with other foreign agencies to assist in advising and supporting the education initiatives<sup>22</sup>. The Ministry of Education officials talked about teaching students to think critically and independently. Students do not learn from the textbooks alone, the classroom teacher is the intermediary between the book and the pupil.

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<sup>21</sup>World Bank *Moldova at a*

*Glance* [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/MOLDOVAEXTN/Resources/302250-1240416092762/CPS\\_ML\\_tech.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/MOLDOVAEXTN/Resources/302250-1240416092762/CPS_ML_tech.pdf) (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2012).

<sup>22</sup>Van der Leeuw-Roord, Joke, and Crijns Hiubert. *Raport [si Recomandarile] Asupra Vizitei de Lucru in Moldova a Delegatiei Asociatiei Profesorilor de Istorie din Europa* Hague: EUROCLIO. (2002) p. 31–34.

If they want to teach children how to evaluate multiple sources and to formulate debate and discussion, they must train the teachers to do so as well. One of the problems with *History of the Romanians* was that teachers had to learn a new subject overnight after years of forming a Soviet mentality during the USSR. One of the NGOs once held a special summer workshop about *Integrated History* with invited foreign experts and 100 teachers, but there are 2000 history teachers in Moldova and it was not possible to invite more. I hope that they would be able to include more teachers in the future.

If *Integrated History* is to be an effective teaching tool, which encourages children to think independently, teachers must be instructed to teach differently. Otherwise, teachers will continue to teach in their traditional method with an emphasis on rote memorization and little or no room for discussion and critical thinking.

The government and specifically the Ministry of Education underestimate the capabilities, talent, and flexibility of their teachers. This study found teachers that are willing and eager for opportunities to improve their teaching methods.

The Ministry and local NGOs should sponsor fewer seminars that merely generate ideas for educational change and more activities that actually implement educational change. There are numerous ways to create change with limited resources. Teacher newsletters or peer-training workshops are two techniques that help transmit new ideas.

Extra-curricular activities are another form of teaching and modeling democratic principles. One school has a “Model UN team,” which travels around the country to compete with several other schools. This was a popular after-school club and helped its members learn about the structures and procedures of a democratic institution. A few innovations in the field of legal education were implemented by US teachers<sup>23</sup>.

The Council of Europe also recommended that university entrance exams be reformed. Bribery and corruption are widespread throughout the Moldovan education system despite the fact that the proportion of “contractual” students who pay their own tuition fees in full (both in public and private higher education

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<sup>23</sup>McCaffrey, Angela Roleplays as Rehearsals for 'Doing the Right Thing:' – Adding Practice in Professional Values to Moldovan and United States Legal Education *Washington University Journal of Law and Policy*, Vol. 28, 2008 p.141–94.

establishments) by 2011 was estimated as high as seventy-one percent<sup>24</sup>. Buying a high mark for one's university entrance exams is a commonly known but infrequently discussed practice. Steps towards reform have been made and it has been reported recently that teachers and administrators have been caught accepting bribes. Bribery is prevalent in all levels of education from the primary school to the high school. If the state is concerned with creating a civically minded generation, they must rid the schools of corruption, make grade evaluations transparent, and teach students to be democratic citizens by example.

It will be difficult to eliminate corruption because the low teacher salary is used as an excuse. "They have to make a living too," is a common explanation as to why parents continue to pay for their children's marks. If the government cannot afford to raise teacher salaries, then they must make corruption unlawful and socially unacceptable. Not all Moldovan families can afford to buy their children's grades and university entrance exams. In fact, some migrant workers claim that they work abroad specifically to pay for their children's schooling. If this practice continues, it threatens to undermine educational equality, assessment, and the increasing number of parents who work abroad may threaten family structures.

Not only general system of education was damaged – in Moldova half of the vocational schools were closed, mainly in smaller towns, while in Chisinau, the number of primary vocational education students declined threefold by 2010<sup>25</sup>.

Lastly, there is an inherent contradiction in teaching "a love for one's country" and teaching a child to think critically and independently. If a student learns to think critically, he or she may love the country, or not, and both feelings have to be permitted in a democratic society. Education for citizenship has undeniable importance in a democratic society. Yet, it must not be burdened with the goal of teaching patriotism. The concerns of teachers that their students have neither loyalty nor love for Moldova are real and understandable. As Moldova's population steadily decreases due to migration abroad, there is a pressing need to keep young people in the country. However, the current emphasis on patriotism is ideological, reminiscent of Soviet decrees, and sends undemocratic messages.

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<sup>24</sup> Chubrik, Alexander et al. *The Impact of the Global Financial Crisis on Public Expenditures on Education and Health in the Economies of the Former Soviet Union* / Center for Social and Economic Research, Warsaw, 2011, p. 48.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

After the disastrous fall of the Soviet Union, the entire fabric of society changed in the Republic of Moldova. Statues of Lenin were torn down from the town centers, the Moldovan lei replaced the Soviet ruble, streets named after Soviet heroes were changed to celebrate Romanian heroes, the economy opened to outside trade, imported goods became available in even the most remote villages, political systems changed overnight, and in schools pupils took off their red pioneer kerchiefs and Soviet history textbooks were replaced with *History of the Romanians*. But educating young Moldovans to be part of this new society and political system is a far greater challenge than changing the street names and the history textbooks. Despite this, with their statements about patriotic education and changing the history curriculum, the government implies that it is possible to educate for democratic citizenship without modeling democracy themselves, and without radically changing the teaching and learning of history. They blame a textbook entitled *History of the Romanians* for their failure to create loyal, national subjects. The Moldovan government, the academy, education specialists, and teachers can work together to meet the challenges to education for democratic citizenship and democratization by acknowledging that democratic schooling is not a superficial endeavor restricted to a textbook. They must begin a new endeavor with a stern commitment to inclusive, transparent, and thoughtful educational practices at all levels of the hierarchy from the Ministry of Education in the capital city to the classrooms in the most remote villages.

### ***Concluding Remarks and Further Study beyond Moldova***

The discussion of national identity was an important component of this research because the disagreement between the government and the intellectual elite over the definition of national identity is at the heart of the textbook controversy. The introduction of this echoed Rogers Brubaker<sup>26</sup> by discouraging an over-emphasis on national identity because it may artificially magnify a phenomenon that does not represent a populace. This is a call for international development analysts, in particular representatives from Western agencies, to move beyond the issues of national identity in diagnosing Moldova's and the region's political and economic problems. Teachers from this study demonstrate that "being Moldovan is a good and noble thing." These teachers may hold onto a

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<sup>26</sup> Brubaker, Rogers. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Romanian ethnic identity in addition to their Moldovan identity but it does not mean that are experiencing an identity crisis.

In discussing the current research with Western aid workers and political analysts, they frequently contribute Moldova's economic and political woes to the lack of a strong identity. An American aid worker involved in an economic development project said, "Moldova is lacking a brand... they need an identity in order to distinguish themselves in the global market." A political consultant who was working on political party development believed that "the Moldovan identity crisis" contributed to a general apathy, which resulted in low voter turnout. Although issues related to the definitions of national identity may contribute significantly to Moldova's slow societal development or consolidation of society, this essay has shown that the absence of effective education for citizenship is also a contributing factor. Just as there are deep underlying structures in Moldova's educational system that hinder reform, there are deep underlying structures in other social and political systems of Moldova. Just as schools must model democracy to teach it, the government must model democratic principles to build a democratic society. By shedding the focus on defining Moldova's elusive national identity, more attention can be given to the actual practices of the government and their role in the democratization. It is time to broaden the research questions about Moldova and place national identity in the context of a constellation of other factors that have hindered the development of the post-Soviet Moldovan state and its people.

The call to end the over-emphasis on national identity in Moldova must be extended to the larger region of the former Soviet Union. Following Eric Hobsbawm's call for research "from below," research in Moldova produced unexpected results and revealed the gap between the great weight that scholars place on identity and the actual role that identity plays in the everyday life of the Moldovans. This study is a marked departure from previous research because it included the citizens' voices in its analysis of national identity. For the teachers in this study, their national identity was not in "crisis." Citizens from other post-Soviet and post-socialist countries may hold similar perspectives and, if so, these findings would further question the way in which Western scholars approach identity in the region and may open new research avenues. Additionally, further study from below may aid Western policy-makers in creating more nuanced development initiatives for the region.

The brief study of the history textbook debate was a lens in which to better understand the obstacles to the further democratization of post-Soviet Moldova.

These impediments may be found in other newly forming democracies or democracy-like states. The lessons learned from the Moldovan case may be applied to other new states that are confronting and shedding any lingering structural and ideological frameworks of a previous political regime. The Moldovan example highlights the complexities involved in the liberalization of post-Soviet states and proves that well thought-out education for democratic citizenship is an essential element in the transition to democracy.

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