



NATIONAL MINORITIES EDUCATION IN MOLDOVA: THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND PRACTICE

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The human right to education is for everyone including members of minorities. In the international acts on minority rights, education is a central aspect of those rights. The virtue of education for individuals, the family, and society is a political and social axiom. Education is viewed increasingly as the key to national prosperity and survival.

Series of provisions in the legislation of the Republic of Moldova take into account the multi-ethnic character of the republic, establishing the protection methods of national identity for this category of citizens.

The existing legislative framework comprises the essential problems of national minorities:

- the use and the preservation of the mother tongue;
- the right to mother tongue education;
- the right to organise ethnic-cultural associations;
- the gratification of religious needs and etc.

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova refers to the "hope to satisfy the interests of persons of different ethnic origin, who, together with Moldovans, constitute the people of the Republic of Moldova."

The fundamental law of the country was built on the concept that " the Republic of Moldova is the single indivisible motherland for all its citizens" (article 10(1)). This provision, followed by the statement " the State acknowledges and guarantees the right of all citizens to keep, develop and express their ethnical, cultural, linguistic and religious identity" (article 10 (2)), is an important factor for identifying the two trend in the development and education of the society: ethnical identity and - based on its development - ensuring the unity of the people.

According to the Law on Citizenship of 1991, the "zero" variant of citizenship was adopted. It granted all the citizens, who at the moment of the adoption of the law were living on permanent bases on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Double citizenship is allowed only in case of regulations stipulated in the international treaties signed by the republic of Moldova.

The Law on Identification Documents in the national system of passports does not contain regulations on the ethnic origin of the person. In this respect, the concept "nationality" refers specifically to citizenship.

The Law on Education and the Law on Functioning of Languages Spoken in Moldova stipulate the

essential principle according to which the state guarantees the right to choose the language of instruction and education at all levels and stages of the education process, giving priority to mono-linguist as the organisation form of the education process.

Article 8 of the Law on Education "The Language of Teaching" stipulates that:

1) "The state ensures, according to the Constitution and articles 18, 19 and 20 of the Law on the functioning of languages at the territory of the Republic of Moldova, the right to chose the language of education and upbringing at all levels of education.

2) The right of citizens to be brought up and educated at their mother tongue is ensured by creation of the necessary quantity of educational institutions, classes, groups, and conditions for their functioning.

3) The studying of the state language of the Republic of Moldova is obligatory in all the educational institutions. The requirements to the studying and teaching of the state language are established by the state educational standard. The responsibility for the insurance of the process of teaching the state language in all educational institutions is borne by the Ministry of Education..."

One of the general provisions of this law mentions, that "the education ...is based on national and common mankind values", that it "is free of race and national discrimination", that some of its goals are "the creation of the respect to human rights and freedoms irrespective of their origin", "the preparation of a child to life ... in the atmosphere of friendship between all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups" (Chapter 1).

The normative acts in the field of education are complying with the conventions, covenants and international treaties signed by the Republic of Moldova.

Traditionally in the territory of Moldova different ethnic groups live for centuries; the most numerous according to the census of 1989 are: Ukrainians 13,8%, Russians 13%, Gagauzians 3,5%, Bulgarians 2,0%, Jews 1,5% and others. Totally ethnic minorities constitute 35,5% of the population, the ethnic Moldovans being 65,4%.

Ethnic Russians and Ukrainians are descendants of Russian and Ukrainian peasants who settled in Bessarabia in 19-th and early 20-th century. Many Russians and Ukrainians also settled here during the Soviet Union.

Bulgarians and Christian Turkic people - Gagauz people - moved from the Balkan area to Bessarabia in the years following the Russian annexation of 1812. The Gagauz people conceived statehood as the only way to cultural autonomy and in 1995 the Gagauz Ery - autonomous gagauz Territory as a component part of Moldova was proclaimed.

Today it is obvious to everybody that education is an extremely important element for the preservation and the deepening of the identity of persons belonging to a national minority. It is of course also clear that mother tongue education is of vital importance for such a minority.

The annual statistics on different educational institutions before 1989 shows the diversity of national structure of pupils and teachers, but only two languages of instruction. Thus, in 1989 59,4% of scholars were taught in Moldavian, 40,6% in Russian.

In regard to the question of the language of education after 1989, we can also mention only two languages- Moldovan and Russian, in which the teaching is presented at all levels, from pre-school to post graduate education. Other languages, as well as foreign languages and those, which are mother tongue for minority national groups in the Republic of Moldova, in some schools are studied as separate school subjects, in several schools a number of subjects are taught in them, i.e. we can speak about schools with one or other set of languages, which are studied. If we consider the concept "school of

national minority" to be a school, where the language of the majority of the population is obligatory studied, but the subjects are taught at the mother tongue, then there are only several experimental schools (classes) with Ukrainian, Yiddish, Bulgarian, language of instruction, except Russian. Russian remains the primary language of education for national minorities.

For example, while the Gagauz movement for autonomy has resulted in increased attention to the native language in schools and media, it had not yet resulted in a shift from Russian as the primary language of instruction. All of the 36 schools, 16 lyceums, Pedagogical College and the Comrat State University in Gagauzia use Russian as a language of instruction with the exception of a single school in Vulcanesti and a lyceum in Comrat which use Moldovan. Gagauz children, however, typically study their own language (for 3 hours per week) in primary classes and secondary school as a subject. Moldovan is a required school subject in all the classes, though finding qualified teachers who wish to live and work in Gagauzia has been a problem for educational leaders.

Of course, mother tongue education may be organized in different ways depending on several factors.

Currently, there are 4 types of minority schools in the country, from the point of view of minority language position in them:

- Schools with Russian language of instruction, where representatives of different minorities traditionally study;
- Schools with Russian as a medium of instruction, where Mother tongue (Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian) exists as a mandatory school subject, studied with 3 hours per week in grades 1-9; and 2 hours per week in grades 10-11 of a general secondary school and grades 10-12 of lyceum;
- Schools and classes with Russian language of instruction, where Mother tongue is studied as a subject and in addition 1-3 subjects are taught in it;
- Schools and classes with native language (Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Polish, German) as a medium of instruction.

In all those types of schools Moldovan language is obligatory studied in all grades.

Today, from 634.691 pupils 508.954(80.2%) are of Moldovan ethnic origin, 42.790 (6.74%) belong to Ukrainian ethnic group, 34.762(5.47%) are Russians by origin, 31.416(4.95%) belong to Gagauzian minority, 10.834(1.7%) - to Bulgarian ethnic group, 1.055(0.16%) - to Jewish minority, 1.755(0.28%) are representatives of Roma people, 3.125(0.49%) -belong to other minority groups.

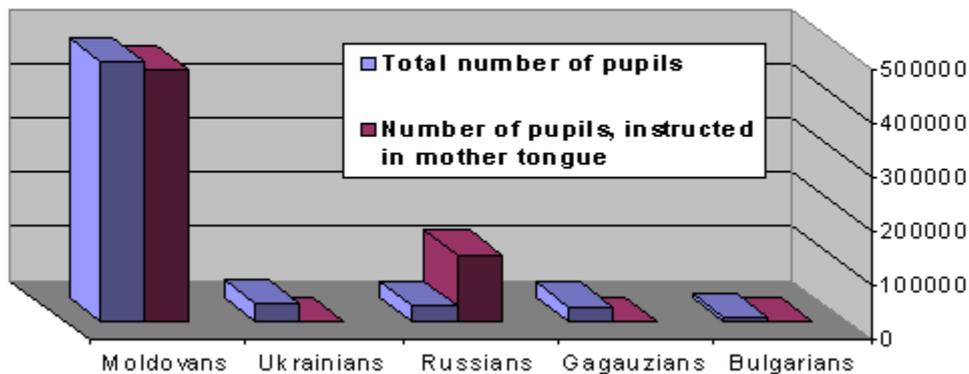
The majority of children belonging to national minorities study at schools with Russian language of instruction. Thus, from 1489 pre-university institutions: primary schools, gymnasiums, general secondary schools and lyceums - 260 (17,4%) are with Russian language of instruction, 114 (7,6%) have separate classes with Russian language of instruction and classes with Moldavian language of instruction. The total number of children instructed through the medium of Moldovan language constitutes 78,0%; 131574 (21.8%) - study through the medium of Russian language; 374 (0,06%) pupils are instructed in Ukrainian and 171 (0,02%) pupils - in Bulgarian language. (Table 5) There are two schools where Jewish history and culture, and languages: Hিবру and Yiddish are studied.

Table 5



CONGRÉS MUNDIAL SOBRE POLÍTICAS LINGÜÍSTICAS
CONGRÈS MONDIAL SUR LES POLITIQUES LINGUISTIQUES
CONGRESO MUNDIAL SOBRE POLITICAS LINGÜÍSTICAS
WORLD CONGRESS ON LANGUAGE POLICIES Barcelona, 16-20 d'abril de 2002

Proportion between number of pupils, belonging to an ethnic minority and those instructed in mother tongue

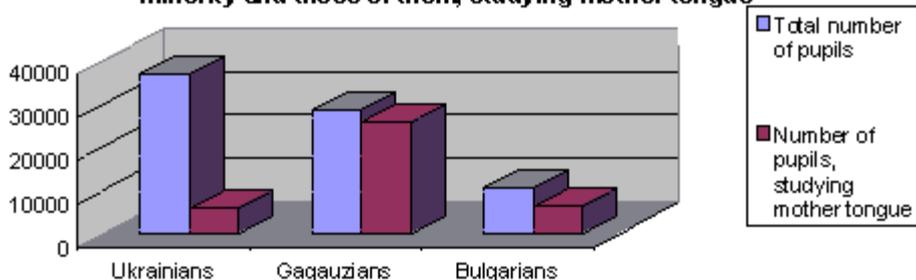


Currently most of Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian children learn their mother tongue as a school subject. (Table 6) Actually:

- Ukrainian language is studied in 34 schools and 3 lyceums (5984 pupils) (Transnistrian area is not included);
- Gagauz language is studied in 36 schools and 16 lyceums (29483 pupils);
- Bulgarian language is studied in 27 schools and 3 lyceums (7925 pupils);

Table 6

Proportion between the number of pupils, belonging to a national minority and those of them, studying mother tongue



One of the realities of minority's school is the need to learn 4 languages: mother tongue, State language, Russian language and one foreign language. Doubt is often cast on this fact and it is on the bottom on the lively discussions. Profound analysis of this problem, study of the experience of other countries, evaluation of personal experimental results has drawn us to the conclusion that:

- Each of the languages studied has its own special function; expulsion of either of them from the program will have negative consequences;
- Basic conditions determining the success are: stages of introduction of each language, number of hours per week necessary for their study, application of modern technologies of language studies.

Priorities are defined by functions of each language studied. Mother tongue has an advantage in this hierarchy. This is not a mere declaration; the results of several disciplines justify this claim:

- The development of the personality starts within the family, and it continues in nursery school and subsequent schooling. The medium of personalisation is the mother tongue;
- Primary socialisation within successive circles of the family, nursery school, elementary school (and peer groups) requires facility in the mother tongue; furthermore, the acquisition of the standardised variety of mother tongue is required;
- The acquisition of cultural techniques (first of all literacy) are all facilitated by the mother tongue;
- The acquisition of the State language and other languages is better achieved if the starting point is the mother tongue.

Thus, mother tongue education for ethnic minorities is a basis for the development of personality, preservation of national identity, preservation and development of national minorities' culture and national minorities' social integration.

Therefore, respect for the principle of mother tongue education is an absolute must: this is the basis of non-discrimination of minority children.

State language must be the second one for study because it is one of the main conditions of integrating a person in socio-political, economic and cultural life of the republic.

Russian should be also obligatory learned, taking into account the long-lasting cultural tradition, geopolitical and economic situation of the country.

Alteration of political chart of the world, democratisation of Moldovan society favoured conscious study of foreign languages as a way of expansion of personal possibilities and a tool of European integration.

Mother tongue medium schools or bilingual schools are optimum educational means for implementing this difficult task.

Bilingualism is certainly an ideal way of attaining both the goals of language maintenance of the minority and their political integration. That's why bilingual education and bilingual schools have to be situated in its proper context in our country.

Of course, the training of minority teachers is another very important issue in the field. In the Republic of Moldova are created conditions for training of teaching personnel for pre-school establishments and primary schools with Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz and Bulgarian Languages of instruction. Specialists in Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian philology are trained at 4 state universities: Moldovan State University, Pedagogical State University "Ion Creanga"(Chisinau), Pedagogical State University "Aleco Ruso" (Balti), Comrat State University (Comrat, Gagauzia) and 1 private university - Slavic University (Chisinau).

Personnel for kindergartens and primary schools with Russian language of study is being trained in Pedagogical college "Alexei Mateevich" (Chisinau), Bendery Pedagogical College, Pedagogical University "Ion Creanga". Moldovan State University and Slavic Private University train specialists of Russian philology. Balti State Pedagogical University trains teachers with double qualification "Rumanian and Russian Languages".

Teachers for kindergartens and primary schools with Ukrainian Language of instruction and specialists with qualification "Rumanian and Ukrainian languages" are prepared at Lipcani Pedagogical College and Balti Pedagogical University.

Training of teachers with qualification "Rumanian and Gagauz Philology" is carried out in Comrat State University and Pedagogical University "Ion Creanga"(Chisinau); teachers for kindergartens and primary

schools with Gagauz language of instruction are trained at Comrat Pedagogical College "Mihail Ciakir".

Pedagogical personnel for pre-school institutions and primary schools with Bulgarian language of teaching are trained at Taraclia Pedagogical College - Lyceum "Saint Kiril and Metody", Teachers with double qualification "Rumanian and Bulgarian philology" are prepared at Pedagogical State University "Ion Creanga" and Comrat State University. Students' language and pedagogical practice is organized at Moldovan educational institutions as well as in the institutions of Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria.

Besides that, according to bi-lateral agreements between the Ministry of Education of Moldova and Ministries of the respective countries graduates from minority school of Moldova study at higher educational institutions of Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Turkey and Romania.

In order to improve and develop minorities' education in the country it is necessary:

- To elaborate a State program on minorities education and the mechanism of its implementation;
- To organise pre-school mandatory mother tongue education;
- To introduce teaching of Minorities' history and culture at schools;
- To elaborate a clear mechanism of enrolment of graduates from the schools and lyceums with minority language of instruction in colleges and universities with Moldovan language of instruction;
- To review the curriculum on history in regard of minorities' history reflection;
- To elaborate the mechanism of real choice of the language of instruction by parents;
- To equalise the cost of text-books in minority languages with that of the text-books in Moldovan and Russian languages;
- To elaborate and adopt a law on higher education;
- To establish vocational schools with minorities languages of instruction.
- To organise training of teachers of different subjects for minority's school, by introducing special courses in minorities' languages at pedagogical faculties of higher institutions;
- To establish in Moldova a regional center for Balkan Studies. To elaborate curriculum and text-books on History and Culture of Balkan People and to propose it as an optional subject for secondary education institutions, having in mind the objectives of Moldova's Stability Pact partnership and European integration.
- To organise professional perfection courses for teachers of minorities mother tongues and those teaching in minorities languages and working in bilingual schools.

The fullest and widest incorporation of internationally recognised standards relating to minority education in Moldova will help shape and mold a new generation confident in their own identity and rich in diversity. Such a generation will constitute the essential ingredient for a stable, secure and prosperous society.