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Zinaida Rumleascaia

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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Privatization in Higher Education of Moldova

Zinaida Rumleascaia

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to describe the existing conditions in higher education and de-mystify the appearance of privatization movement in the midst of transition to market economy in Moldova. The author explores the emergence of private sector in higher education of Moldova and proliferation of private sources of funding in public higher education. The paper explains different aspects of operation of both public and private institutions and provides the analysis of the current problems, benefits and advantages, as well as typology of private and public education institutions in Moldova. The data on privatization in higher education of Moldova includes published literature and on-line sources. The key objective of the paper is to assess the impact of privatization movement on the system of higher education in Moldova, in relation to access to education, diversity and flexibility. The conclusions reached in the process of work focus on the importance of diversification of higher education of Moldova, which manifests itself through privatization movement. Private higher education will continue to remain a powerful force in Moldovan education, changing both the mentality of society in the understanding of education delivery and the system of education provision in general.

Privatization in Higher Education of Moldova

In 1991, when Moldova gained its independence after the break-up of the Soviet Union, it became clear that the newly formed state would not be able to restructure itself fully in the given time with scarce finances in its availability. The deteriorating conditions of life in the country demanded urgent and unavoidable reforms. Sadly enough, due to diverse reasons, the reform process in education was not completed and the problems experienced by educators were disregarded by the state. The financial crisis struck all types of educational institutions, and no preventive measures were applied to halt it.

The midst of the so-called “transition period” in Moldova (from 1991 up till now) has, again, placed higher education and the issues surrounding it into the spotlight of public attention. It became evident that, in the words of Benjamin Disraeli: “Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends”. The idea that education has a mission of cultivating a new generation of people, able to re-build the country, ground its progress in democratic principles and help sustain development in this direction became predominant.

At this point, there appeared a different force in the sphere of education – privatization. As anything new, its emergence provoked a wide range of feelings from fear to admiration. Unfortunately, due to the novelty of the phenomenon no ample analysis or research was done about privatization in education.

The present paper aims at examining the private initiative within the sector of higher education in order to de-mystify its appearance and operation. The current state of the public higher education will be assessed to clarify the reasons for the emergence of private institutions and give a hint at possible future development in the sphere of education. The paper attempts to analyze the operation of private institutions, to provide their typology, and to illustrate the

problems experienced by private higher education. The key objective of the paper is to assess the role of privatization movement on the system of higher education in Moldova. The minor objectives include assessing the impact of private higher education on access to education, diversity and flexibility.

The History of Higher Education in Moldova

The system of higher education of the Moldavian SSR was established as a segment of a massive centralized system established in the former Soviet Union. "The system was characterized by tremendous differentiation in types and missions of institutions. Higher education institutions were centrally financed and controlled through the education ministries. They existed to train citizens for all sorts of skilled roles in economic production, science, and culture" (Catterall and McGhee, 1996).

Prior to Moldova's independence, higher education system of the republic made a significant advance in offering free higher education to all citizens of the Republic (Padure, 1999). "At the beginning of the twentieth century, illiteracy had been common among Moldova's rural population. But by 1992, the adult literacy rate had risen to 96%. In 1990 the mean duration of schooling was six years, and 30% of the population aged fifteen and older had completed general secondary education. Enrollment in higher education in Moldova, which stood at 10 students per 10 000 inhabitants in 1940, numbered 125 per 10 000 in 1990 and rose to 162 in 1997 (Padure, 1999).

The Moldavian SSR had parallel systems of Romanian-language and Russian-language instruction starting in primary school and continuing through secondary school. In 1990 a total of 614 preschools were taught in Romanian, 1 333 were taught in Russian, and 373 were taught in both Romanian and Russian. There were 1 025 Romanian language primary and secondary

schools with 399 200 students; 420 Russian-language schools with 239 100 students; and 129 mixed language schools with 82 500 students studying in the Russian and Romanian languages, with more than half of the students studying in Russian (Padure, 1999).

At the level of tertiary education the language of instruction was Russian, partly, due to the state politics of “russification” and to the great influx of professors from Russia and Ukraine. Russian assumed the role of the language of cross-cultural communication, allowing Moldovan students to access diverse graduate and post-graduate institutions in the USSR. The 1997 National Human Development Report states that: “the heritage of the Republic of Moldova in the field of education is really good: the literacy rate of the adult population is 96.4%, 75-83% of the 25-40 year-old people have secondary and higher education”(National Human Development Report, 1998).

Higher Education and Society

The relationship between the economic state of the country and the state of its education was best illustrated by the research conducted by the Head of the Physics Department at the Academy of Science of Moldova, Dr. Alexander Dicusar (*Komsomolskaya Pravda v Moldove*, 2/11/1999). His timely study examined the interdependence of socio-economic and scientific (informational) development of society. According to Dr. Dicusar, the human development index includes the following three components: the longevity of life, education (literacy (%) plus the average of all years of study) and the level of life (GDP). The index for Moldova places it on the 113th place in the world today. This position is not at all stable, as the speed of regression of this index for Moldova is unbelievably high. In average, from 1998 to 1999 Moldova has lost ten points and continues to lose them every day. Right now, the country belongs to the group of countries with non-proportionally balanced relationship between human potential and economic

development, as the number of educated people does not correspond with the level of economic development. As estimated for 1999, the literacy rate in Moldova is 96.4% (NHDR, 1997) and, simultaneously, 75% of Moldovan population is situated below the poverty line (The World Fact Book, 1999).

Dr. Dicusar argues that the dynamics of the non-proportionally balanced relationship between human and economic development may lead to two possible outcomes of the present condition. Either, these categories would even out and Moldova will manifest signs of economic development based on a strong human potential; or, due to the loss of intellectual potential during the transition period, Moldova will never progress economically.

The author stresses the fact that “the danger of destroying the intellectual potential of Moldova is very high. The problems experienced by the education sector such as strikes, closing of faculties due to the lack of finance, payroll and stipend debts and minuscule presence of scientific research, are the first signs of advancing catastrophe. The destruction of the intellectual potential after complete de-industrialization of the country is perilous and will lead to total degradation of the country with ignorance, crime and corruption as its inseparable attributes. Dr. Dicusar expresses his utmost regret that Moldovan political leaders cannot identify correctly priorities for state investments, thus taking away from Moldova a real chance to survive the transition period” (KP v Moldove, 2/11/1999).

Historically in the former Soviet Union education has always been regarded as a key to a higher standing in society, an ultimate pass to a better life. University and two-year college enrollments have been very high and access to free public education led to social mobility. The whole system of education was conceived as a ladder, each step helping the student to advance towards his/her goal. Therefore, the access to prestigious public institution greatly depended on

the primary and secondary school that the future student attended. It was no surprise that parents tried to enroll their children into the schools that were considered to have experienced faculty and at least some level of specialization, for example, foreign languages or mathematics and physics. Simultaneously, the parents hired private tutors to coach the student for future admission examinations or specialization in the same and/or other fields to ensure success with competitive admissions. Needless to say, that the sacrifices on the part of the student and the parents were very high, but the final reward of achieving a certain social status and a stable income in the future was very attractive.

Description of the Public Higher Education system today

Many different higher education institutions, established in the Soviet era, continue to operate in Moldova today. According to the official data posted on the web-site of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Moldova¹, the providers of the higher education in Moldova include short-term higher education institutions (colleges) and university-level education institutions (comprehensive universities, institutes and academies). In the late 90's many higher education institutions were re-classified either as universities or institutes, depending on their size and the number of specialties offered, with the inauguration of the new faculties and departments.²

According to the data presented during the meeting with the Prime-Minister of the Republic of Moldova P. Braghis with the Association of Private Educational Institutions "Univers- Moldova", in October 1999 there were 76 291 students enrolled in higher education

¹ There is no clear indication of when the data was collected, but most probably, for the period of 1998-1999)

² The data on the numbers of institutions is very conflicting, and since it was impossible to cross-examine it, the data that is presented will reflect the official statistics of the Ministry of Education and Science. In other cases, the data source will be specifically mentioned.

institutions of all types (private and public)³ (Association of Private Educational Institutions “Univers-Moldova, 2000).

Admission to higher education is based on the presentation of one of the following documents: “Bacalaureat” diploma, Secondary Education Certificate or equivalent education certificate. Besides the required documents (which include partial transcripts and GPA stated in them), most institutions require candidates to pass competitive entrance examinations.

College education – “Short-term higher education”

Short-term higher education in Moldova is provided by colleges. At present there are 53 colleges operating in Moldova (48 public and 5 private), which enroll about 328 000 students (The Ministry of Education and Science, 1998-1999). The duration of studies in the institutions of this type depends on the field of study and the secondary school education received: two-year education is offered to the secondary school graduates who possess the diploma of “Bacalaureat” and three-year education to the graduates of general secondary schools. Upon completion of college education graduates are awarded the diploma of short-term higher education, with qualifications in different specialties, mentioned below. College graduates have the right to continue their studies and have sufficient benefits when enrolling in higher education institutions with the aim of further specialization in the previously studied domain.

Colleges are divided in the following way according to their specialization (The Ministry of Education and Science, 1998-1999).

³ Data for 10/1/99

Table 1. College Specialization

Specialization	Number of Colleges
Agrarian Colleges	10
Pedagogical Colleges	9
Medical and Nursing Colleges	6
Art and Music Colleges	5
Economics and Law Colleges	9
Technical Colleges	8
Technological Colleges	2
Military Colleges	2
Ecological College	1
Foreign Languages College	1

(Also see Appendix 2 for a full list of public colleges)

University-level higher education

Tertiary or so-called “university-level higher education” is offered by 13 public institutions, subordinated to different Ministries and Departments (The Ministry of Education and Science, 1998-1999)⁴. (See Appendix 1 for a full list of public institutions)

Depending on the previous level of education and the diploma received, the duration of studies varies from four to six years, with the application of the same rule as in the case of colleges. Public higher education institutions prepare professionals in 145 domains, such as economics, medicine, law, fine arts, physical education, technology and agriculture and offer education in more than 80 specialties. Although higher education was initially envisioned as a public system, at present private higher institutions outnumber the public ones.

The first stage of University-level education (Undergraduate studies)

⁴ The non-official data “Admissions 2000” mentioned 14 public higher education institutions and 28 private.

Higher education institutions offer full-time courses in all fields of study. An option of extramural education and education by correspondence is also provided with courses in the following disciplines: Engineering, Construction, Economics, Humanities and Agronomy. Education by correspondence and extramural education usually requires an additional year of study compared to the full-time option. Evening courses are only available in Engineering. Successful completion of studies entails satisfactorily passed license examinations in the specialty disciplines and the defense of a diploma paper (“Teza de Licenta”). The diploma awarded states proficiency in a particular field, for example the “Diploma de Licenta in Arhitectura”. The graduates have a choice between a thesis/non-thesis options. The non-thesis option results in the receipt of a diploma, which does not grant the right to teach in higher education institutions and simply states proficiency in a particular specialty, for example the “Diploma de Inginer”. Lately, a lot of higher education institutions require all their graduates to write and defend diploma papers.

The second stage of University-level education (“Doctorat”)

The first advanced degree at the university-level education is granted after either three years of study (full-time) or four years of study (extramural/education by correspondence) in the chosen field and the defense of a thesis. Upon completion graduates are awarded the “Diploma de Doctor”.

The third stage of University-level education (“Doctor habilitat in...”)

This degree can be granted in all disciplines and represents the second scientific degree that can be received at the university-level. The degree also requires a public thesis defense. To be eligible to enroll candidates must normally hold a “Doctorat”. The degree awarded is the “Doctor habilitat in...” (“Habilitation” Doctorate).

Teacher Education

Teacher education has a particularly differentiated system that deserves to be mentioned separately. Primary school teachers are trained for four years in teacher-training colleges. Lower-secondary level education (“gimnaziu”) teachers are trained for a period of four years at university-level institutions. Upper-secondary level education (“liceu”) teachers are trained for five years in universities and institutes. Higher-education teachers receive their diploma after five or six years of study in a respective university, academy, or institute. The Doctor's degree is mandatory for an associate professor and/or a professor.

Administration of Higher Education

The governing body of public education institutions of Moldova is the Ministry of Education and Science. It provides administration within the sphere of its influence and coordination of its activity with the other Ministries and bodies.

Ministerial department responsible for the accreditation of the higher education institutions is called “Comisia Superioara de Atestare”. It is also vested with the power to recognize studies pursued in a foreign country, diplomas, and academic degrees, as well as to confirm doctoral or academic degrees, received in the home country.

The Education For All (EFA) 2000 Assessment Country Report for Moldova, conducted by UNESCO, mentioned significant changes in the policy and strategy of educational development, in the existing context of government deregulation and territorial-administrative reform. “[The state] it declines step by step monopoly of financing and detailed control of the education. A significant part of competencies will be shifted to regional directions of the education, as well as to local city administrations”(The EFA 2000 Assessment Country Report: Moldova).

The National Council for Educational Reform was created to coordinate general educational reforms, conducted with the help of the World Bank and UNESCO. It comprises representatives from all ministries and involved departments, local public authorities and trade unions and coordinates educational reforms. The intended reforms are designed to improve the delegation of some duties and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Science to local education authorities, enhance academic curriculum, develop evaluation strategies and improve finance strategies.

Initially, reforms will affect only primary and secondary education; then, on the basis of attained expertise, the knowledge and the skills will be applied to higher education. Hopefully, the newly created authority in the realm of education will manifest its powerful and transforming presence in the system of education. Its creation is one of the signs of contravention of the monopoly of the Ministry of Education and Science, which can only produce more diversity, equity and flexibility.

The legal basis of the higher education system in Moldova

Main laws and decrees governing higher education incorporate the Decree “Concepts of the Development of the Educational System” (1994), “The Law on Education” (1995) and “The Law on Evaluation and Accreditation of Educational Institutions of the Republic of Moldova”(1997).

The Law on Education states the principles and goals of the education sector in Moldova, mandating the creation private and the autonomy of the public institutions. It specifies the structure of higher education, assigns administrative roles to the Ministry of Education and Science indicates the sources of financing for education institutions.

Financing higher education

Until recently, the state of Moldova covered all expenditures linked to provision of education integrally. “Today, the state is able to provide free higher education to only about half as many students as it did at the start of the decade”(Engineering Education World, 1998).

According to the Law on Education (last reviewed 7/9/1999, Article 61 (1,2)) “the principal source of financing the state education system is budget funds. The state guarantees annual allocation of budget funds for education of at least 7% of GDP, including currency funds, and it provides with protection expenditures articles from the budget”.

In reality “budget allocations cover only 40% from current expenditures of the education”(Data provided by The EFA 2000 Assessment Country Reports: Moldova).

Table 2. Total Public Expenditures on Education

Years	Million Lei	% from GDP	% from budget
1980	376		
1985	471		
1990	706	5.6	17.2
1994	426	7.4	28.9
1995	583	7.7	22.9
1996	795	9.7	28.1
1997	897.9	10.4	24.9
1998	656.8	7.5	21.7

“The share of capital investments in total sum of public expenditures during last five years (1994-1999) didn’t exceed 4%” (The EFA 2000 Assessment Country Reports: Moldova).

Table 3. Capital Investments in Education

Years	Capital investments	Totally
1980	61	376
1985	74	471
1990	149	706
1994	23	426
1995	28	583
1996	26	795
1997	32	897.9
1998	26.5	656.8

The “sum of public expenditures for education in 1998 was less than in 1996 and 1997 with, respectively, 17% and 27%, which is 7.5% from GDP and 21.7% from the budget, which is much more than in other countries. But, if calculated per pupil/student, this sum amounts only to 752 lei per year (about \$70), which is far from being sufficient for actual demands” (The EFA 2000 Assessment Country Reports: Moldova).

Table 4. The breakdown of the current public expenditures by the educational levels

Years	Total	Preschool /primary	Secondary general	Vocational	Higher	Other	Not distributed
1996	769	24.5%	46.8%	6.2%	13.3%	3%	6.2%
1997	897.9	23.4%	41.7%	6.6%	13.4%	13.4%	1.4%
1998	656.8	23.4%	40.7%	7.1%	13.2%	14.5%	1.1%

“Despite efforts to protect funding for education during times of budget cutbacks, real expenditures in the higher education sector dropped significantly during the political transition period (17% during 1993 and 1996). Salaries, school maintenance, and food expenses account

for close to 90 percent of education expenditures, are leaving minimal amounts for textbooks, teaching materials, and capital repairs.” (Padure, 1999)

Alternative Sources of Financing

At present, Moldova is “no longer able to finance higher education exclusively from the state treasury”, and is “charging tuition to one-third of the students at its 15 public post-secondary institutions” (Engineering Education World, 1998). The public has accepted the introduction of fees as a desperate measure to prevent the collapse of the education system and the number of enrolling the students has remained approximately the same, due to the fact that “about one-third of all places at state institutions are now reserved for tuition-paying students”. (Engineering Education World, 1998) There is a model contract produced by the Ministry of Education and used by the academic institutions, which enter into an annual contractual arrangement with their fee-paying students.⁵

Out of all students enrolled in higher education institutions 62.2 % are funded by the state and 37.8 % are self-supported (The Ministry of Education and Science, 1998-1999). In 1999 tuition fees at public institutions ranged from 1 300 lei to 4 760 lei. According to the rates established by the National Bank of Moldova the exchange rate is 13 lei for \$1. For foreign students admitted to public institutions the minimum fees were \$1 400, the maximum - \$2 000 (World Higher Education Database, 2000).

In order to understand the cost of higher education it is necessary to compare the data on the average salary with tuition payments requested (Data provided in Replies to questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, 1999).

⁵ This category of students is also called “contract-students” or “students studying on the contract basis”.

Table 5. The Cost of Consumer's Basket and the Average Salaries in Moldova

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
The quantitative value of the minimum consumers' basket	-	3.36	49.0	271.0	311	388	440	473
The average nominal salary of a national economy worker	-	3.25	31.2	108.4	143.2	187.1	219.8	252
The available average income per person (according to the family budget) – total (in Moldovan lei)	-	-	-	85.4	88.2	-	135.4	117.8
Including: urban (in Moldovan lei)	-	-	-	114	110.5	-	162.7	144.5
Rural (in Moldovan lei)	-	-	-	60.4	68.8	-	119.9	102.5

The economical situation of the families of the Republic of Moldova can be pictured by looking at the considerable difference between the average salary, which was 252.6 lei in January 1999 and the minimum consumer basket, which was 551 lei in January 1999:

1. Rich families – 0.7%
2. Well provided for – 10.7%
3. Poorly provided for – 54.6%
4. On the poverty line – 25.6%
5. Poor – 8.4%

(Data provided in Replies to questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, 1999).

In March 2000, the Ministry of Education and Science introduced central changes in the “Provision on Education on Contract Basis”. Upon the request of the rectors of public universities, it was decided to raise the percentage of tuition payments that can be retained for the needs of the institution from 30% to 50%. The Ministry has also amended the regulations pertaining to tuition fee determination, taking the cap off tuition fees, hence granting public higher education institutions the right to determine tuition fees in accordance with their standing and needs (KP v Moldove, 3/2/2000).

“According to government regulations, the collected tuition payments must first be used to supplement faculty salaries. Remaining funds go to insure that the student stipends are paid on time, and also are invested in new facilities”. (Engineering Education World, 1998)

The State University of Moldova is an example of an institution that receives half of its budget from the state and the other half from tuition collection. Approximately 40% of the students pay tuition, which ranges from about \$160 per year in the sciences to \$700 in economics, foreign languages, and law. The average monthly salary in Moldova is estimated at \$50 (as of 1998, stated in the Engineering Education World, 1998)⁶. Students applying to public higher education institutions compete for a place in either the tuition-free section or the fee-paying one. “The two sections have the same entrance examination, but the fee-paying section accepts applicants with considerably lower test scores. However, in most subjects, once admitted, paying and non-paying students study together and share the same classes. Officials of Moldova State University say that the dropout rate, about 20 %, is the same for paying and non-paying students”. (Engineering Education World, 1998)

⁶ I would disagree with this number. The data for 1998, presented by the United Nations, indicated that the average salary was 252 lei (about \$20). For additional information see: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/Moldova.htm>

Student expenses and financial aid

Students enrolled into public higher education institutions are entitled to the state stipend, which is based on their scholastic merit (grade point average). Theoretically, the stipend is supposed to cover housing (for those students who were not provided with dormitory housing), board and other expenses related to education, such as purchase of additional books and other educational materials.

In 1999 the average student stipend was 50 lei (about \$5), in 2000 it was raised to 75 lei (\$7), which is about 10 times less than the minimal consumption basket. In 2000 the minimal consumption basket for Moldova amounted to 850 lei (about \$60). (Daily News from Moldova, Basa Press, 2000). Thus the stipend amount is more symbolic than sufficient for survival.

Due to financial difficulties the number of the students who are exempt from tuition payments and are awarded state stipends has drastically declined. In 1998 (66 %) of the so-called “state-budgeted students”(students who are free from tuition payments) received scholarships and stipends. In 1999 the Government of the Republic adopted a decision to pay stipends only to 25% of students, the decision that had to be altered, because of mass student protests. With regard to stipend provision for the year 2000, the quotas established by the state included 5 180 university-level students and 3 235 college students. At the same time, the number stipends offered to foreign students would be increased from 355 to 380 people (KP v Moldove, 6/8/2000)

In 1999 the Parliament of the Republic adopted a law on student loans for those students who are “restricted in their financial possibilities”(KP v Moldove, 12/27/99). Special categories of students entitled to receive them are invalids, orphans, participants of the Trans-Dniester Armed Conflict and some others categories (KP v Moldove, 12/27/99). This decision signified

an appearance of a certain concern with human rights and provided access to higher education for some categories of the population. Simultaneously, it is very unrealistic to expect that the students are going to be financially able to return the loan through monthly payments in five years after graduation, with provided two years of grace period. For other categories of students the system of loans does not exist. At the moment, the Ministry of Education is “preparing legislation to introduce such a system”. (Engineering Education World, 1998)

Differentiation in Higher Education

The anguish of the transition period clearly pointed out multiple deficiencies and impediments of the system of education in Moldova. Simultaneously, existing circumstances allowed for the creation of new mechanisms, which changed the uniformity of higher education and added flexibility to it. “Since the early 1990s, differentiation has been introduced into the higher education system of Moldova along several lines:

- Duration of studies--with colleges offering shorter two- to three-year degrees and universities offering four- to six-year programs, at universities, academies, and institutes”. (Padure, 1999)
- Level of studies--the system includes undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate education.
- “Language of instruction--the proportion of students instructed in Romanian rose from 58 percent in 1992 to 68 percent in 1997. This is related to the introduction of Romanian as a state language in 1989. The number of students whose language of instruction is Russian decreased by the same percentage (10 percent). Several universities have departments that offer instruction in English, French, or German, especially in business, economics, and law.” (Padure, 1999)

- Ownership type--with public, private, “mixed” institutions.
- “Enrollment status--while 73 percent of students are enrolled full time, 27 percent are part-time students”. (Padure, 1999)
- Due to the development of the “international linkages”, Moldova has established student exchange programs in conjunction with the NIS, Romania, Turkey and other countries.”(Padure, 1999)

The Problems of Public Higher Education

Most of the problems experienced by the education sector currently are related to the lack of the governmental and financial support. The maintenance of the institutional infrastructure and the support of the personnel and the students demand urgent and radical measures that will prevent the collapse of the existing system. Unfortunately, the lack of expertise and experience in this domain prevents Moldovan educators from achieving significant results in solving these problems.

Stipend debts

The absence of a comprehensive system of student loans makes student conditions truly intolerable. In their daily existence many students depend on the stipends that are provided by the state on the basis of their scholastic merit. Sadly enough, the state has continually failed to provide state-funded students with their stipends on time. The state’s inability to fulfill obligations towards its dependents result in the constant feeling of uncertainty and fear of complete termination of government support from year to year.

The repeal of almost all students’ privileges and benefits is a measure that does not find acceptance with the population that has greatly enjoyed them in the past. The decision of the Municipal Council of Chisinau (the capital of Moldova, which hosts the highest number of

educational institutions) to annul the student privilege for free public transportation in April 2000 was met with continuous mass demonstrations and protests led by college and university students. The protests made the news in the international media, stressing the excruciating conditions of student existence: “The coordinator of the Higher Education Support Program at Soros Foundation Moldova described Moldovan students’ living conditions as disastrous. “They can't even eat properly”, she added, “The canceling of their free public transportation was the last straw” (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000).

Payroll debts

Low levels of remuneration and constant salary arrears drive educators and administrators to the edge of despair. There are basically no incentives to continue work in the educational sector, the fact that fosters corruption and has a detrimental effect on the overall quality of education. The struggling educators and administrators do not achieve any immediate results by means of strikes and pleas and are forced to take on jobs that do not correspond with their qualifications.

The overall quality of teaching suffers from the poor background of teachers and professors, the lack of adequate library facilities, outdated syllabi for courses, old approaches to learning and the absence of evaluation programs for teachers, courses and student outcomes. (Padure, 1999)

The “ageing of personnel” is a negative phenomenon that has an impact on the quality of education. The fact that education does not provide sufficient financial means for survival makes higher education graduates consider other positions, rather than continue working according to their qualifications.

During the Soviet era, most of the graduates were assigned to different positions, depending on the needs and demands of the state (“man-power planning”). On account of critical situation in education, the government of Moldova has briefly considered the option of position assignment. “In 1998 there were 2 700 graduates with degrees in pedagogy, 2 000 out them were assigned to different schools in the republic. Only 31% reported to the assigned position” (The EFA 2000 Assessment Country Report: Moldova).

Admissions Issues

Enrollment decline

The major source of problems for higher education admissions is complex socio-economic situation and instability, which force high school graduates to seek employment in the job-market instead of entering higher education institutions. Even the most prestigious institutions cannot boast a high number of applicants for several years now (when in the past there was tremendous competition).

Due to the hardships experienced by the population of the Republic in general and “disastrous conditions of doctors in particular”, the most prestigious University in Moldova the State Medical-Pharmaceutical University in 1999 had two and a half times less applicants than in 1998 (KP v Moldove, 7/22/1999).

The reduction of quotas on state-financed students forces students to apply to universities of Russia, Rumania and Turkey, which allocate a certain number of places and stipends for them. In such a way, “1 868 students took special examinations on the basis of which they would be enrolled in Rumanian lyceums. The government of Rumania has allocated 210 stipends for Moldovan citizens for fall admissions in 2000” (KP v Moldove, 7/12/2000).

Specialties: prestigious versus non-prestigious

Certain specialties enjoy more attention from high-school graduates than others, based on the assumption that they will guarantee future employment, preferably in a foreign setting, and a high salary. These are the specialties of lawyer, economist or translator. The infatuation with prestigious faculties has become ridiculous when “out of 77 thousand Moldovan students attending higher education institutions, 70 % will get the diploma of a lawyer or economist (KP v Moldove, 4/4/2000).

Simultaneously, non-popular specialties, prestigious in the past, have become a real problem for public higher education institutions, which have no other choice than to close non-prestigious faculties because of poor student enrollment (KP v Moldove, 7/29/2000). In 2000, even the reputed State University of Moldova had to extend admission dates for some faculties, as enrollment in non-prestigious faculties was extremely low. Such specialties as physicist, chemist, biologist, and mathematician today do not guarantee employment and are paid very little (KP v Moldove, 7/29/2000).

Concerned with the existing situation the Ministry of Education has added 27 new specialties to the existing list of 179. Together with the Ministry of Economics and Reforms and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, it decides on admission quotas for different specialized fields in public institutions”(KP v Moldove, 4/4/2000).

Language politics and admissions

There exists a persistent problem, which is related to the language politics in the Republic. Under the Soviet education system, the Moldavian SSR had parallel systems of Moldovan-language and Russian-language education through secondary school. In 1999, 74 %

from the all students studied in Moldovan, 26 % in Russian, Ukrainian or Gagauz (The EFA 2000 Assessment Country Report: Moldova).

In 1989 Moldovan (the dialect of Rumanian) was introduced as the state language of Moldova. The major shift has occurred in people's perceptions about languages from Russian (seen as the key to advancement during the Soviet era) to Moldovan (becoming an essential language, which guaranteed employment). "Change occurred slowly at the university level, however, and 55 percent of students continued to study in the Russian language as of 1992. The proportion of students instructed in Romanian rose from 58 percent in 1992 to 68 percent in 1997. The number of students whose language of instruction is Russian decreased by the same percentage (10 %)"(Padure, 1999). Approximately in two years, every high school graduate entering a higher education institution had to pass an entrance examination or an interview proving conversational skills in the state language of the Republic.

At the same time, many Russian-speaking graduates (graduation from schools with Russian language instruction) did not possess such fluency in Moldovan, which would enable them to study in higher education institutions. The number of state-financed groups with instruction in Russian started to shrink yearly. The time of admissions gives birth to rumors about the cessation of programs for Russian-speaking youth at the Universities. In 2000, the representatives of public higher education institutions had to address the public with speeches announcing the vacancies for students with Russian (as language of instruction) in the faculty of physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics. Looking at the above-mentioned list of prestigious specialties, one can quickly notice that these specialties have the least prestige at present. The representatives of the public universities have made the following statement: "they believe that the rumors about the reduction of quotas for groups with Russian language instruction are

initiated by private universities in order to recruit Russian-speaking graduates into private institutions and increase private admissions”(KP v Moldova, 8/3/2000).

As far as the students are concerned there is great diversity in views about the state language and the language of instruction, which range from total disrespect towards the Moldovan on the part of non-Moldovan speakers, to the extremely negative attitude towards Russian from Moldovan-speakers, with the acceptance of both languages as means of communication in between. Usually, the choice of the language of instruction is predetermined by secondary school education, which does not offer bilingual education. As far as the Russian speakers are concerned, their access to higher education institutions is hampered, because of the reduction of quotas on groups with Russian as a medium of instruction and simultaneous introduction of tuition fees for the additional groups for Russian-speakers opened at higher education institutions.

Loss of the link between the needs of the country and the goals of higher education

One of the recurrent problems, which represents Moldovan heritage from the Soviet era, is “the ‘wastage’ of graduates who failed to pursue jobs related to their training courses”(Lane, 1990, p. 260). With the excruciating situation on the tight job-market, and the general web of corruption, it is not surprising that knowledge does not really matter. The possession of diploma in many cases is enough for the graduate to be hired especially if he /she is backed up by connections. The atmosphere of general distrust in the fairness of hiring practices is heightening the proliferation protectionism and nepotism.

At the same time, the overpopulation of the job-market with specialists in one particular field denotes the “lack of linkage and coordination between higher education and the needs of industry. As stated by David Lane: “this was due to the large number of independent education

establishments...and inadequate penetration of new disciplines ...in industry [in the Soviet Union]”(Lane, 1990, p. 260). The situation witnessed in Moldova today clearly indicates that the Ministry of Education did not reconsider the mistakes of the Soviet Union. It continues to operate on the assumption that its directives and policies do not have to be accorded with the current economic situation and does not realize the detrimental effect that the overabundance of people with a degree in one field will make in the in the job-market.

Research

Scientific research is the area of higher education, which probably suffered the most during the transition period. Any present evidence of research can only be perceived as the remains of the past glory and might in this area. “The Head of the Department of the Ministry of Research and Development, G. Ciocanu, remarked that in 2000 the state allocated for scientific research 30 million lei, which constitutes 27.4 % of the money received in 1999. Only 7 000 scientists were conducting research in 2000, which is three times less than in 1990”(KP v Moldove, 12/11/99). Unfortunately, the government does nothing to improve the present state of the scientific research; therefore, researches attempt to draw financial contributions from foreign sources, applying for grants and scholarships. The consequence of these strategies is continuous brain drain that accounts for the lack of Moldovan researchers and teaching staff and affects the quality of education.

Corruption

Due to the cutbacks in quotas of students financed from the state budget the competition during high school graduation exams and entrance exams to the higher education institutions has become unbearable. University officials, as well as concerned parents, have addressed The Ministry of Education and Science with a plea to create a special control group (a monitoring

group), which will include the representatives of the Parliament, police and officials from The Ministry of Education and Science, and other interested parties that will attend all examinations (KP v Moldove, 15/6/2000).

According to Padure (Padure, 1999): “There is a lot of room for patronage and corruption in the prestigious specialties (international economic relations, law, finance and credit, the English language, etc.) at the entry level and later, when bribes may be required for each exam or test ranging in the amount from \$20 to \$100 per student. Young lecturers come under very heavy pressure from higher-ups in the academic hierarchy--they may, for example, be asked to give certain grades to specific students.”

At the exit level, there is much less protectionism now than in centrally planned times because the private sector values the knowledge of young employees over their connections. The situation is different in the field of medicine. An oversupply of doctors, combined with the decline in the number of jobs, makes it difficult for graduates to find positions. Consequently, the bribe for a residency amounts to several thousand U.S. dollars. (Padure, 1999)

It is really hard to find studies with extensive data and research that would back up the information about corruption in education. My personal teaching and student experience clearly demonstrated that the topic remains a taboo, even though the disturbing effects of corruption are powerfully manifesting their presence in education.

Definition of terms

The consulted literary sources present a constructed view on privatization in the United States; the country that stands out due to its complex background and unique experience with privatization. The framework of privatization analysis in the United States provides the reader with an understanding of multiple intricacies of the process, its advantages and disadvantages.

The goal of the literature review was to obtain answers to the following questions: What is privatization, its definition and forms?

The definitions of the term “privatization” do not really vary. “The word privatize first appeared in a dictionary in 1983 and was defined narrowly as “to make private, especially to change (as a business or industry) from public to private control or ownership” (Murphy, 1996, p. 9). Proponents and opponents of privatization come to its analysis “with deep seated beliefs and values about the phenomenon under scrutiny”(Murphy, 1996, p. 3), thus the definition itself does not carry any bias and is not ideological in nature.

The phenomenon of privatization itself is incredibly intricate; it “represents a complex cultural, political, legal and economic equation”, “comes in a myriad of forms” and “is proposed as a strategy to meet an almost limitless set of objectives” (Murphy, 1996, p. 5).

Forms of privatization

The following classification of privatization forms is the most extensive one found and has been provided by Murphy, Gilmer, Weise and Page (Murphy et al., 1998).

Load-shedding

“Privatization via load-shedding occurs when a government unit withdraws from the provision of an existing service. Also referred to as “disestablishment” by Thomson (as cited in Murphy, 1998, p. 9) and “service-shedding” by Clarkson (as cited by Murphy, Gilmer, Weise, Page, 1998, p. 9). As indicated by Murphy, load shedding is the oldest form of privatization, as well as the most insurgent and controversial. It is also, as indicated by Clarkson “most likely to garner significant cost savings” (as cited by Murphy et al., 1998, p. 9). “Examples of load shedding in education include the elimination of transportation services, advanced language classes, and co-curricular activities” (Murphy et al., 1998, p. 9).

Asset Sales

Asset divestiture is another method of privatization where in the words of Dudek and Company “the public sector sells an asset, such as government land holdings, to the private sector to generate revenue and/or to spur private sector development (as cited by Murphy et al., 1998, p. 9). Bailey (as cited by Murphy et al., 1998, p. 9) explains further that what is really being proposed in these “privatizations” is the liquidation of assets for their cash value. Asset divestiture is the most popular form of privatization in the world and the least in the United States, “primarily because many of the functions now being privatized in other countries have traditionally been in the private sector in this country [the USA]”(Butler as cited by Murphy et al., 1998, p. 9). “ In education, the sale of an unused school facility to a corporation or volunteer agency would be an example of an asset sale” (Murphy et al., 1998, p. 9).

Volunteerism

Privatization through volunteerism refers to situations in which government –like services are financed and delivered privately but without the use of traditional market mechanisms. The following explanation of volunteerism is given by Clarkson (as cited by Murphy et al., 1998, pp. 9-10): “As a privatization strategy the use of volunteers generally refers to the recruitment of individuals to work for government without remuneration, thereby reducing the degree of tax-supported involvement by government in the provision of public services.”

Self-help

Self-help strategy is similar to volunteerism in privatization. The major difference between the two strategies is pointed out by Clarkson (as cited by Murphy et al., 1998, p. 10): “with self-help strategies those who provide the services are the direct beneficiaries”. “In

education self-help includes more moderate activities such as parents taking their children to school, as well as more radical ideas such as home schooling”(Murphy et al., 1998, p.10).

User fees

Under the term “user fees” (also known as “charging”⁷) one should understand the imposition of user fees in order to finance public services from private sources. “One of the purpose of user fees is to raise funds...User fees in education are rare, but examples can be found in the levying of charges for co-curricular activities and certain science laboratory classes (Murphy et al., 1998, p. 10).

Contracting

Contracting is the most widespread and the most popular form of privatization in the United States. (Murphy et al., 1998, p. 10) Privatization through contracting means in the words of Donahue (as cited by Murphy et al., 1998, p. 10) “retaining collective financing but delegating delivery to the private sector”. The public sector in this case does not remain the producer, but the “financier”(Murphy et al., 1998, p. 10). In the United States contracting usually dominated the support services, recently starting to address other functions of schooling (Murphy et al., 1998, p. 11).

Franchises

With franchises the “government is the arranger and a private organization is the producer of the service”, “users pay the service providers directly” (Peters, as quoted by Murphy

⁷ The term is used by Bell and Cloke and cited by Murphy et al., 1998, p. 10

et al., 1998, p.11). “Exclusive contracts to provide class rings or caps and gowns to prospective high school graduates are examples of franchises in education” (Murphy et al., 1998, p. 11).

Vouchers

“Another form of privatization is the voucher, whereby certain consumers are authorized to purchase earmarked goods or services from the private market. The government specifies who is eligible to purchase the services and who is eligible to provide them” (Murphy et al., 1998, p.11). The use of the voucher is designed to keep the finances in the public sector and to encourage the consumption of particular good by particular class of consumers”. “Milwaukee initiative to provide funds to low-income parents to send their children to schools of their choice is an example of a voucher program in education” (Murphy et al., 1998, p.11)

Subsidies

“The use of grants and subsidies is another method for fostering privatization of public services. Under this approach, the government provides financial or in-kind contributions to private organizations or individuals to encourage them to provide a service”(Clarkson, as quoted by Murphy et al., 1998, p.12). Subsidies are supposed to encourage the provision of services at reduced price by private institutions. “A variety of measures find a home under this broad construct, including: direct cash payments; in-kind contributions; use of materials, equipment, land, and facilities; low-cost loans; and tax abatement and other taxing powers such as modified depreciation rules (as enumerated by Murphy et al., 1998, p. 12). “A tax program that encourages corporations to donate materials, supplies, and equipment to schools is a good example of privatization via subsidy” (Murphy et al., 1998, p. 12)

Deregulation

The deregulation movement is concerned with privatization of public services through the free market. “The goal is to foster the private provision of activities historically housed in the public sector” (Murphy et al., 1998, p. 12). “The recent debate at the state level in Pennsylvania to change code language to allow districts to purchase teaching and management services from outside sources is a good example of deregulation in education” (Murphy et al., 1998, p.12).

The above-mentioned forms of privatization differ in the extent of privatization, the domain of activity involved – financing or production, and the place in the delivery of the service – policy, administration, or provision. (Murphy et al., 1998)

Overreliance on Western Paradigms and Models

The transformational process occurring in the Eastern European countries and the Newly Independent States, which were once a part of the Soviet Union, adopted many of the terms for the reform strategies and processes from the Western world. Partly, it occurred due to the multitude of consultants and consulting agencies that had inundated the countries after the fall of the communism, each with his/her own remedy for a malady that had not been correctly diagnosed. The symptoms were familiar to westerners and they believed that the treatment should be the same as in the past. The World Bank symposium has remarked on this drawback in the following way: “The task of privatization in Eastern Europe is not widely understood in the West, partly because misleading analogies have been made to privatization in other parts of the world”(Corbo, Coricelli, Bossak, 1991, p.231).

Due to misleading assumptions, lack of time for deliberation and the imperative for faster decision making techniques, the general process of privatization did not go the way it was envisioned by such change-agents as the IMF, the World Bank, the USAID and the Peace Corps. The reason for such a deviation is that “the systemic transformation taking place in several

Central and Eastern European countries, which has few, if any, historical precedents, involves fundamental changes in the basic institutions and workings of both the economy and society”(Corbo et al., 1991, p. 217).

The primary reason for longevity of the privatization process lies in the political instability and frequent changes in the government of Moldova (White, 2000). Even though, while writing his paper White meant absolutely different political changes, his argument remains true. The last elections in Moldova held in February 2001, marked the advent of the Communist Party to power. It is common knowledge that this party was opposed to all privatization initiatives, completely denying the possible benefits of the reform strategies that were undertaken by previous governments. Other additional factors that affect privatization include the “lack of previous experience” and “ambiguities in interpretations of the results from elsewhere” (White, 2000).

Privatization reform in Moldova

Privatization in education is a difficult issue with its opponents and proponents expressing their fears and hopes. It implies a change radical enough to lead to a chain reaction of changes. It also pre-supposes a change in mentality, which is, probably, the hardest change ever to be made and the one that requires a long time to get manifested. In his book “Privatization of Schooling: Problems and Possibilities” Joseph Murphy tells a great story of a shift in attitude towards education that has occurred in the United States: “Not long ago education was regarded as a private good ... In time, however, a new understanding gained ground. The entire society benefited significantly if everyone was educated, much like vaccination. Education was considered to have major, positive effects associated with it, and therefore it was not only made

freely available to all, but its consumption was actually made compulsory, up to a certain age or grade level”(Murphy, 1996, p. 42).

As far as Moldova is concerned, the advent of capitalism with contingent faith in the market as a universal solution for all social problems, as well as socio-economic changes that followed, initiated a reverse change in the system of values, morals and overall mentality. The transition time, where the theory of the “survival of the fittest” is being tested, produces unbelievably harsh competition and transforms the young generation of Moldovans from being collectivist in the past to becoming individualistic at present.

Privatization in Moldova does not merely mean the transfer of ownership, it is based on “complete redefinition of property rights” and, in fact, implies “creation anew”(Corbo et al., p. 231). The role of the government in this process, as well as the level of its involvement is assistance in this creation process. “The first thing to understand about the Eastern Europe is that in contrast to other countries and given the environment in these transitional economies, it does not entail a simple transfer of ownership from the state to private individuals. Rather, it is a process by which the very institution of property, in the sense in which lawyers and economists employ the term, is re-introduced into Central and Eastern European societies”(Corbo et al., 1991, p. 253).

The centralized planning system of higher education in the Soviet Union has deeply influenced the daily governance procedures, which have to be redefined and rethought by Moldovan educators. The habit of reliance on outside structures for basic and global decisions is manifesting its signs even now, as Moldovan educators are struggling with the power that they have acquired.

Privatization in higher education in Moldova is a process, which undoubtedly has its strengths and weaknesses, benefits and advantages that will become perceptible in every sphere of life and the new mentality of establishing different systems of control and functioning on its own is yet to be established.

Conditions for Emergence of Private Education Institutions

In order for the system of private education to be propelled into existence, several key conditions had to be present and be just right. The imperative for privatization in education was prompted by the existing conditions in all spheres of life and impossible without their context. One of the major factors for the emergence of private sector in Moldova was the introduction of diverse reforms with privatization among them, as a means for economic, political and social transformation. By conducting privatization reform in economic sector of Moldova, the Government had established a precedent, which served as an example and inspiration for educators and administrators.

Due to the lack of experience with different models of education, the institutions in the West, as well as European institutions, operating in the private realm have provided models for transformations, admired by Moldovan educators for such a long time. The general interest of some educators and administrators in privatization and the opportunities that it offered, as well as an “once-in-a-lifetime” prospect for conducting such an experiment was another factor for the emergence of private educational institutions. The involvement of the Ministry of Education and Science in every single activity of the institutions and its dictatorial attitude that manifested itself in all aspects of institutional operation were limiting the freedom of experimenting with new models and methods of education. Thus governmental deregulation and disengagement from

financing higher education was regarded as a failure to continue the old-mode of operation in the sector of education and at the same time as challenging opportunity.

The horrendous state of public education, crumbling apart and unable to provide a satisfactory level of education and a stable income for its personnel, was another incentive that encouraged educators to seek alternative methods of providing educational services. The concerns of the parents and students with regard to the access to higher education, due to different limitations on quotas of students financed by the state and groups with Russian as a medium of instruction, did not find proper response from the Ministry of Education. The introduction of tuition fees in public institutions, which allowed average students to receive equivalent quality of education with the state financed students, did not solve the problem. The demands of the job-market have drastically changed with the influx of foreign investments and consulting companies, with the necessity of professionals in different domains speaking foreign languages. The courses offered at most public institutions did not include the areas of law, economics, management and foreign languages, which started to be deemed as the most prestigious.

The founders of the emerging private colleges and universities were able to visualize the confluence of demand and supply in Moldova and organize their institutions to effectively market educational services.

The privatization movement in Moldova was related to the general process of transition to free market economy and other reforms undertaken by the government of the Republic. The failure of public education to re-organize effectively the delivery of its services has unpredictably influenced the emergence of the private sector in higher education, providing necessary motivation and conditions for its activity.

Description of private higher education

Private education institutions in Moldova are also called “commercial institutions”(KP v Moldove, 7/4/2000). There is substantial difficulty in finding data on the quantity of private higher education institutions. Thus, the Ministry of Education and Science states that in 1998-1999 there were 20 private university-level institutions and 9 colleges, enrolling 11 949 students (including 840 foreign students) and offering courses in 60 specialties (The Ministry of Education and Science of Moldova, 1998-1999). “Komsomolskaya Pravda v Moldove”, which is the leading newspaper in the NIS region offers data for the year 2000, with 34 private higher education institutions. The full list on higher education institutions in Moldova hosted by the Soros Foundation in Moldova for the prospective students specifies 28 university-level institutions (See Appendix 1). Unfortunately, the information provided by The Ministry of Education and Science does not clarify the situation.

The available data for 1999 demonstrates the rising number of tuition paying students (including public and private institutions). Out of 76 291 students enrolled in university level institutions, 39 499 (or 51%) were paying for their studies, respectively, out of 26 799 college students 6 940 (26%). (The Materials of the meeting between the Prime Minister of Moldova D. Braghis and the Association of Educational Institutions “Univers–Moldova”, 2000)

Private higher education in the Republic of Moldova is conceived as an alternative to public education. The institutions of private higher education have the status of non-profit entities, which have to abide by educational standards of the Republic. Admission to private higher education institutions is organized according to the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Science. Diplomas or Certificates given by private institutions are considered to have the same validity with the state ones, if graduation examinations have been organized in

accordance with the state educational standards and the Examination Board was appointed by the Ministry of Education and Science (The Ministry of Education and Science of Moldova, 1998-1999).

According to “The Law on Education”(1995) and “The Law on Evaluation and Accreditation of Educational Institutions of the Republic of Moldova”(1997) accreditation of public and private higher education institutions is obligatory. Accreditation process includes two stages:

- a) licensing – the issuance of a permit for organization and temporary operation
- b) evaluation and accreditation, after which the institution is granted all the rights envisioned in the Law on Education

The criteria for accreditation specify certain standards in the area of administrative personnel and teaching staff, study plans and curricula and technical and material basis. Thus, in order to be accredited the institution has to present its charter, registration certificate for private educational institutions, issued by the Ministry of Justice and license granting the right of operational activity, issued by the Ministry of Education and Science. Besides the above-mentioned documents, the institution has to present evidence of the availability of the teaching staff not less than 60% of the established norm for the institution of the respective type, with not less than 30% of its members possessing scientific and pedagogical degrees and awards at the time of accreditation and not less than 45% in during subsequent evaluations. (The Law on Evaluation and Accreditation of Educational Institutions of the Republic of Moldova”, 1997)

The accreditation of higher education institutions takes place after the first graduation examinations, on condition that 50% percent of the students enrolled pass them successfully. The

institution also has to present evidence of using not less than 25% of its income for the development of the technical and material basis during the period of licensed activity.

The accreditation of educational institutions is the domain of the ministerial accreditation board (“Comisia Superioara de Atestare”). The proliferation of private educational institutions has raised some concerns over the quality of these institutions and their programs, thus prompting the Government of the Republic to take additional measures to ensure that certain academic and operational standards are met. In 1997 the Government of the Republic adopted “The Law on Academic Evaluation and Accreditation of the Educational Institutions of the Republic of Moldova”, which mandated the creation of the National Council on Academic Evaluation and Accreditation, in addition to the existing ministerial board. The members of the Council are determined by the state government and are responsible for the organization of specialized committees, who determine the standing of the institution and report to the Council. The Council issues the final decision on accreditation. There is no data on the number of accredited public or private institutions (The Law on Academic Evaluation and Accreditation of the Educational Institutions of the Republic of Moldova, 1997).

There have already been two cases of two private educational institutions having their licenses revoked on account of serious drawbacks in their teaching methodology. After receiving two warnings, the necessary changes still have not been initiated and the Ministry of Education has taken measures to shut down their activity (KP v Moldove, 10/18/2000).

Tuition

The adoption of the “The Law on Academic Evaluation and Accreditation of the Educational Institutions of the Republic of Moldova” granted private and public education institutions the right to determine the amount of tuition fees, in accordance with the standing and

the needs of institutions (The Law on Academic Evaluation and Accreditation of the Educational Institutions of the Republic of Moldova, 1997).

The information acquired through the Office of International Relation at Balti State University, specifies that tuition fees vary, depending on the prestige of the specialty and the institution. Appendix 3 provides information on the range of tuition fees in relation to the location of the University (the institutions located in the capital of the country are considered to be more prestigious), the specialty and the period covered (tuition fee for the first year of studies is always lower than the subsequent). In most private institutions tuition fees cover only the courses offered and rarely the library fees or the cost of books. Any additional service or item requires additional payments.

Tuition fees have a tendency to rise year to year, due to the inflation rate and growing institutional operating costs. George Rusnak, the rector of the State University, affirms that “as a rule the students receiving education on contract basis usually drop out of universities in their third year of studies”(KP v Moldove, 6/8/2000). These circumstances make a lot of students and parents fear that they are not going to be able to collect the necessary amount for the coming years of study and in this case all the money and the time already spent on education will be lost.

Types of private higher education institutions

Private higher education institutions include private universities, colleges and branches of foreign universities opened in Moldova. (For a full list of private higher education institutions, please, refer to Appendix 1 and Table 5)

Private university-level education

The example of a private accredited university is ULIM (“Universitatea Libera Internationala din Moldova” or the Free International University of Moldova). ULIM was the

first private higher education institution, founded in 1992 as a “self-financed and self-governing organization”(The official homepage of ULIM, 1999). The first graduation was conducted in 1997. The Free International University of Moldova functions under the auspices of CIFE (Centre International de Formation Européenne) at the European Council.

“Today, ULIM comprises six departments: Law Department, Foreign Languages Department, Economics Department, Medicine Department, History and International Relations Department, University Preparatory Courses; there are 47 general and specialized university chairs. Law Department embodies the following specialties: International Law, Economic Law, and Public Administration. Department of Economics has six specialties: International Economic Relations, Management, Marketing, Accounting and Audit, Banks and Stock Exchange, Trade, Tourism and Services. Five languages are taught at the Department of Foreign Languages: French, English, German, Spanish, and Italian” (The official home-page of ULIM, 1999).

ULIM has designed its own academic program that was approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Moldova. It envisions two stages: the first stage lasts from two to three years, allowing students to acquire general university education and the second deals with profound specialization in the chosen field. ULIM also offers extramural education in the Department of Law. “The majority of the tests and exams are taken in written form, according to American Code System”(The official home-page of ULIM, 1999).

As stated, the goals of the academic process comprise:

- Professional training that corresponds to the European standards.
- Required knowledge of a foreign language.
- Computer skills

In order to attain desired results ULIM provides its students with computer labs, language labs and library amenities.

Upon completion of studies, state examinations and defense of a diploma paper, ULIM graduates receive the “Diploma de Licenta”. ULIM offers its graduates, as well as graduates of other institutions based in Moldova, Romania and Ukraine, an opportunity to continue their education in the Newport University (California, USA) that has its branch at ULIM. It is organized as two-year extramural education for all specialties with instruction in English. The graduates of Newport University are awarded Master’s Degree in the field of Business Administration and Human Resources (The official home-page of ULIM, 1999).

Doctoral studies are offered in the following specialties: World Economics and International Economic Relations; Constitutional Law, State Administration, Administrative Law, Municipal Law; Theory of State and Law, History of State and Law, History of Political and Law Doctrines; Criminal Law and Criminology, Penitentiary Law; Penal Procedure, Criminalistics, Theory of Investigation and Operation Activity, Economy and Management, Economic Mathematical Methods, Organization of the Production, Romance Languages, Germanic Languages, Surgery, Inner Illnesses. Specialized scientific councils award doctoral degrees.

ULIM enrolls more than 5 000 students, including foreign students from 50 countries of the world, such as Romania, Israel, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Russia, Pakistan, India and China. The languages of instruction comprise Romanian, Russian, English and French. It is typical for the graduates of the secondary schools, which specialize in particular language training to study at ULIM in the language that was acquired at school. Students are grouped according to the language of study.

“The education at ULIM requires payment, but not all students have to pay. Quite a big number of students is exempt either partially or completely from the tuition-fee. They are: orphans, students from families with many children, invalids, high -gifted students, people that suffered from nature calamities, young people with scholar-ships from Ministries and other institutions. This contingent constitutes 52% of the total number of students”(The official home-page of ULIM, 1999)

More than 600 teachers and professors, administrators and technical personnel, including 20 academicians and correspondent members of the various academies from the Republic of Moldova and other countries, are working at ULIM today. Over 80% of employees are from Moldova. Teaching staff also includes professors from the USA, France, Great Britain, Russia, Romania, Italy and international organizations such as World Bank⁸, for example (The official home-page of ULIM, 1999).

International relations, established with multiple higher education institutions abroad, are the pride and joy of ULIM. ULIM signed collaboration agreements with such institutions as Lyon University (France), the Academy of Diplomacy (Russia), Liege University (Belgium), Newport University (USA), the Bucharest University (Romania) and many other higher education institutions.

ULIM is also trying to participate in scientific research: “during the period of 1996-1997, the scientists from ULIM have published 25 monographs and handbooks, more than 120 articles and presented approximately 230 research works...ULIM is one of the organizers of the Scientific Academy Congress of Moldova and the American-Romanian Academy, as well as the International Scientific Conference that deals with present problems of higher education in different countries. The undergraduates are also involved in research through contests and

Olympiads between Moldovan and foreign universities. In addition, they participate in the Students Scientific Societies”(The official home-page of ULIM, 1999).

Analyzing the activity of ULIM on the basis of its mission statement one can easily spot the statements that are dubious, as well as statements that are supposed to attract the clientele for ULIM. It is stated that ULIM “was planned to be an alternative institution of higher education, that would differ from the state institutions, which had previously monopolized the whole domain”(The official home-page of ULIM, 1999). From the above-presented information, it is not clear what the difference between ULIM and other institutions really is. It is worth mentioning that at the time of its foundation, ULIM was the first institution to introduce tuition fees and to offer instruction in Russian, as opposed to public institutions, which under the Law on Education were required to introduce obligatory Rumanian classes for Russian speakers. By doing so, ULIM has immediately secured itself a niche in the sector of higher education and an initial number of students. Later on, the University was able to differentiate its curriculum with courses in the specialties that were not offered so extensively in other higher education institutions, such as Management, Business and International Law, for example.

ULIM is not the only private education institutions, which has incorporated the word “international” in its name. While investigating the essence of the term and its propagation by private universities, one has to keep in mind that none of the public universities have it. The notion “international” cannot refer to the origin of students, as there are foreign students enrolled both in private and public institutions. It does not refer to the international relations developed by the institution, because both private and public institutions have rather extensive international relations. The word “international” is introduced to imply the idea that academic methods and standards at ULIM (and other private institutions) differ from those used in public institutions.

⁸ It will be interesting to see the qualifications of professors from international organizations.

ULIM affirms that its “plans and didactic programs are analogous to those from the USA and Western Europe. ULIM has accumulated the knowledge and experience of the universities from Europe, the USA, the ex-Soviet Union and Moldova. Its examinations are organized according to the “American Code System”⁹ (The official home-page of ULIM, 1999). This claim has to be further explored in order to discover its true meaning.

“Due to the successful inter-university collaboration, Free International University of Moldova (ULIM) provides its graduates with a diploma that is recognized not only in Moldova but also in more than 50 countries of Europe” (The official home-page of ULIM, 1999) Many ULIM graduates and students proudly declare that their diploma is “international”, meaning that it is recognized abroad. The question asked in the mission statement asserts the above-mentioned belief: “Who can study at ULIM? Anyone who is able to assimilate the study program and who wishes to become an international specialist”(The official home-page of ULIM, 1999). It is quite possible that this qualification of an “international specialist” is as unique as the other claims made by this institution or the education provided. It is not very hard to envision what is meant by the claims once the context is known. ULIM’s students continue to remain under the delusion that ULIM diploma is somehow different, granting them special privileges while applying for jobs or continuing education abroad. In reality, every diploma issued by the state-accredited institutions will be recognized abroad, after extensive examination and evaluation. The insertion of the term “international” is a clever marketing technique, which successfully works for Moldovans who have lack of sufficient knowledge of foreign systems of education.

As it was already mentioned, ULIM prides itself on the development of extensive international relations: “The results of ULIM activity can be shown through the development of the international relations”(The official home-page of ULIM, 1999) The number of agreements

⁹ The desperate search to discover the meaning of the “American Code System” has failed. It remains a mystery.

between universities is cited as a huge success and a unique feature of ULIM, but the true nature of agreements remains a mystery. There is no data about exchange programs, internships being implemented abroad, or graduate and post-graduate studies offered exclusively to the graduates of ULIM. The long list of institutions that have signed agreements with ULIM is supposed to validate its “international status” and attract students. The collaboration between universities does not necessarily mean that the standards or the academic programs used are similar to those of the mentioned universities and institutes, or that students enjoy the benefits of international inter-institutional contracts. The students enrolled in ULIM, are most probably just going to study in ULIM.

“Due to the unique Teaching Staff, ULIM has obtained the highest position among the universities of Moldova and on the whole area of Central and Eastern Europe”(The official homepage of ULIM, 1999). Although, it is hard to deny that ULIM is one of the most prestigious and successful higher education institutions at present, the above-cited statement is merely an exaggeration. The Ministry of Education of Moldova does not produce any ranking, nor do any other official or unofficial sources. This statement demonstrates how careful one has to be while choosing a higher education institution in Moldova. It also highlights the necessity in some form of control structures (possibly, the media), which would inform the client about the services at a particular institution and help him/her make the right choice.

Private colleges

In 1998-1999 there were 53 colleges operating in Moldova (48 public and 5 private), which enrolled about 328 000 students (The Ministry of Education and Science, 1998-1999). According to the latest information available on the web site, supported by the Soros Foundation in Moldova the number of private colleges has increased to 12.

Table 5. Private colleges in Moldova

Name in English	Name in Rumanian	Location	Specialties offered
The Jewish College for Girls	Colegiul Evreesc de Fete	Chisinau	Pedagogy of primary education Pre-school pedagogy
The International College of Entrepreneurial Activity "Mecopred"	Colegiul International de Activitate Antreprenoriala "Mecopred"	Chisinau	Management Accounting and Audit Marketing Banks and Stock Exchanges Law
The College of the Institute of Scientific Research, Education and Production in Management	Colegiul Institutului de Cercetari Stiintifice, Instruire si Productie in domeniul Managementului	Chisinau	Accounting and Audit Marketing
Independent College of Finance and Law	Colegiul Independent de Finante si Drept	Chisinau	Accounting and Audit Securities Banks and Stock Exchanges Law
The College of Criminology	Colegiu de Criminologie	Chisinau	Law
The Agrobusiness College	Colegiul de Agrobusiness	Chisinau	Customs Activity Accounting and Audit Management Law
The Cooperative College of Moldova	Colegiul Cooperatist din Moldova	Chisinau	Law Customs Activity Management Accounting and Audit
The College "International Business School"	Colegiul "Scoala Internationala de Business"	Chisinau	Customs Activity Management Accounting and audit Finances and Accounting Tourism and hotel business
The College of the Telecommunications Academy	Colegiul Academiei de Telecomunicatii	Chisinau	Telecommunications Optoelectronic Systems Postal Communications Calculations
The College of Modern Languages and International Business	Colegiul de Limbi Moderne si Business International	Chisinau	Applied Modern Languages Management Tourism and Hotel Business Accounting and Audit Calculations Interior Design

			Law
The College of Economics and Law "Socrate"()	Colegiul de Economie si Drept "Socrate"	Chisinau	Accounting and Audit Banks and Stock Exchanges Law
The College of Economics and Rural Development	Colegiul de Economie si Dezvoltare Rurala	Chisinau	Marketing Management Accounting and Audit Banks and Stock Exchanges Cadastre and Territorial Organization Agronomy

The above-presented list of private colleges demonstrates the homogeneity of college education in Moldova in terms of the specialties offered. As in the case of universities and institutes this constitutes a great problem for Moldovan job-market, which cannot handle such a number of graduates in certain domains, like Law, Management and Economics, for example.

Private colleges in their basic operation and regulations resemble university level private education. Usually they are opened on the campuses of higher education institutions or are affiliated with them. The affiliation with major domestic or foreign higher education institutions is a big benefit for the students, who can enroll in the affiliated higher education institutions and continue their education starting it in the third year of study.

While marketing their services they usually follow the familiar patterns established by private university institutions, for example, offering instruction in Russian and Rumanian, additional courses in foreign languages or even part-time instruction in English, internships abroad and the so-called "Eurodiploma". The major difference between private college and university-level institutions is in the clientele that colleges are trying to attract. Colleges are enrolling a more vulnerable group of population, which mainly consists of secondary school graduates without the "Diploma de Bacalaureat". Those people are making a choice between an additional year to two years of study in a lyceum, which offers free education resulting in the

“Baccalaureat”, and three years of college instruction. Colleges are claiming to provide a more personalized approach, due to the small number of students, and a more-in-depth specialization that will allow students to have privileges during university–admissions. Due to these circumstances colleges seem to be more susceptible to the financial problems of the students, offering them special tuition payment plans, significant reductions based on specific criteria and even the possibility of paying tuition by credit payments.

A common example of a private college is the College of Economics and Law “Socrate”, affiliated with ULIM. It was founded in 1995 and was immediately licensed by the Ministry of Education. At present the college is able to enroll 485 students, which make up a student body of 23 groups. The College incorporates two departments: the Department of Economics and the Department of Law and four Chairs: the Chair of Humanitarian and Social Education, Basic Scientific Education, Foreign Languages, Specialty Disciplines. Proficiency in four specialties can be attained at “Socrate”: Accounting and Audit, Banks and Stock Exchanges, International Economic Relations and Law. Admission on the basis of incomplete secondary education (9 years of study) requires 5 years of study; three years of general education and then specialization on the chosen domain. On the basis of completed secondary education the duration of studies is 3 years. On the basis of “Bacalaureat” the duration of studies comes to two years. Upon completion of their studies, the students can be enrolled in ULIM and start their education in the third year in the chosen specialty. Tuition payments vary and constitute from 250 up to 500 US dollars a year, depending on the specialty.

The college market in Moldova is not as big as the market for higher education and college education is regarded as an unnecessary step, which is taken only by those secondary school graduates whose GPA does not allow them to enter higher education institutions on

competitive basis. To ensure admission to higher education institutions such students prefer to enroll in colleges, to have substantial benefits in admissions. It is possible that with introduction of the “Bacalaureat” as an obligatory prerequisite for higher education, the market for private college education will shrink.

Branches of foreign universities in Moldova

Among private higher education institutions in Moldova there are several branches that are opened by Russian Universities. The following include: the branch of the Baltic University of Ecology, Politics and Law, located in Balti, and the branch of the Modern Humanitarian University, located in Chisinau.

“The Baltic University of Ecology, Politics and Law (BUEPL) is an accredited¹⁰ private university that was founded in 1993 by the International Independent University of Environmental and Political Sciences (Moscow). It has established ties with a number of national and foreign institutions, among them The George Washington University, The Catholic University of America, the International Institute of Ecology and Law. In Moldova it offers instruction in the following specialties: Law, Management, Economics, and Ecology.

The Modern Humanitarian University, located in Moscow, Russia, is one of the biggest educational institutions in Russia and the NIS, with more than 150 branches on the territory of the former Soviet Union and 80 000 students. It was founded in 1992 and made sufficient progress to be recognized by many foreign and domestic institutions and participate in congresses organized by UNESCO. Moldovan branch of MHU was the first foreign educational institution licensed by the Ministry on Education of Moldova (1998) and to receive Russian and British accreditation. Currently, five domains can be can be studied in MHU: Law, Economics, Management, Psychology and Computer Science.

The activity of branch campuses of the above-mentioned Russian universities in Moldova was initiated as a result of the overnight change in language politics, which had provided very favorable conditions for many newly created higher education institutions. Among them the Russian universities proceeded to open branch campuses in Moldova, aware of the increased need in institutions with Russian as a medium of instruction. The realization that a great number of secondary school graduates would not be able to study using Moldovan language led to secure and stable enrollments for the Russian institutions for an indefinite period of time. The negative sentiment towards the introduction of Moldovan language from the Russian-speakers and the atmosphere of general unrest between Moldovans and Russians was also taken into account.¹¹ The percentage of Russians who have applied for Russian citizenship was not very high and the tendency to relocation started to manifest itself only during the last couple of years. Therefore, the primary goal of the Russian universities was to provide tuition-based instruction in Russian for the citizens of Moldova, and not to attract educated students to relocate to Russia.

A totally opposite politics was employed by Rumania, which preferred to reserve a certain number places for Moldovan secondary schools graduates in Rumanian lyceums and universities. Secondary school graduates were assured that after graduation from Rumanian lyceums they would be able to enter any higher education institution of their choice in Rumania. Moldovan students are also provided with housing and a state stipend, which is sufficient to cover all their basic needs. In order to ensure that Rumanian investments are distributed wisely, the admission process is conceived in such a way that only the cream of the crop of the Republic is selected. Needless to say, that a very small fraction of graduates returns home.

¹⁰ In Russia, but only licensed in Moldova.

¹¹ One of the reasons for Trans-Dniester Conflict and the informal separation of the Trans-Dniester Republic was the introduction of Moldovan as a state language. As the population of the region is mainly Russian-speaking, it believed that such a change could only result in injustice and discrimination of Russians.

The aims and goals of the private higher education institutions

The aims and goals of private higher education are as stated during the meeting of Moldovan Prime-Minister Braghis with the representatives and members of the Association “Univers – Moldova” are very diverse in their nature and scope. Private education institutions in Moldova are striving to:

- “to promote diversity and freedom of choice”
- “provide alternative education, with all its flexibility in choosing methods and strategies”
- “create new economic and political structure, new technologies for production, renew and develop informational systems”
- “form the new mentality in Moldova”
- “ensure the employment of the graduates”
- “character education and development”

For colleges, the list is expanded with a goal to provide “social adaptation skills”. (The Materials of the meeting between the Prime Minister of Moldova D. Braghis and Association of Educational Institutions “Univers –Moldova”)

The analysis of the above-mentioned goals clearly demonstrates the similarity of the goals of private education institutions with the public ones, which signifies the desire of the private higher education system to operate in close partnership with the public system.

The claims made in the last three goals, however, call for special attention. It is not clear what kind of mentality private institutions are going to form. Hopefully, it will be democratic mentality, where diversity is celebrated. The danger lies in the fact that, potentially, a private institution enjoys a certain degree of freedom and thus its ideology cannot be controlled. In case of Moldovan private higher education, it is The Ministry of Education and Science that exercises

control and exhibits its influence over private institutions. If a private institution does not comply with the rules and standards enforced by the Ministry, it has to confront the danger of being shut down. The dilemma of the degree of freedom that can be enjoyed without major consequences will have to be faced by Moldovan educators in the future, as well as the dilemma of control and authority.

Another goal, stated by the private sector, is to ensure employment for all its graduates. This is a goal that demonstrates skillful marketing strategies of private institutions. Unfortunately, on Moldovan job-market, which is incredibly small at the moment, the possession of higher education or a degree does not guarantee employment. Taking into consideration the number of graduates in one field, for example, law (70% of Moldovan graduates in 2000 received their education in the field of law), and other numerous factors that come into play, it is evident that this goal is unrealistic and will never be attained.

The last goal of the private sector is to provide character education and development, as well as offer social adaptation skills. In the past, character and civic education was a major goal of the higher education institutions and the so-called “moral appearance” of students was of primary importance. The brain damage that was caused by the ideological thrust and the “propagation of uniformity in the only right way of thought formation in the mind of truly Soviet patriot” makes one, who has survived the process masked under implementation of this goal, very cautious of such statements. It is common knowledge that implementation of this goal does not rely on the education sector alone. It should be the concern of the state, which should bestow favorable conditions on the graduates of higher education institutions, so that the knowledge acquired is put into practice and service.

The attempt undertaken by colleges to provide their students with social adaptation skills arises from the fact that many colleges enroll jobless people, who hope to receive a second degree in a specialty that has more prestige than the one that they already possess. This is probably the hardest goal of all, as the socio-economic situation in Moldova does not improve. College graduates will still have to face the cruelty of the free market system and the harsh laws of the job-market in Moldova, as well as the inability of the government to provide favorable conditions for employment. It is also unclear what will be the means of providing social adaptation skills and the utilized methods. The implementation of this goal requires a staff of qualified social workers that are not completely aware of the enormity of the endeavor.

The problems experienced by private education

The problems in the sphere of private higher education can be classified as numerous and diverse in nature, partly, because of the lack of experience of Moldovan educators in this realm and partly because of the existing financial and social conditions.

Interaction of private institutions with The Ministry of Education and Science

The biggest problem experienced by the private education sector is its inability to function alone and at the same time insufficient support of the private initiative from the Ministry of Education and Science. The participants of the meeting of the Association of Educational Enterprises “Univers-Moldova” with the Prime Minister of Moldova D. P. Braghis sadly acknowledged their mental, financial and legal bond to the Ministry of Education and Science. The Ministry of Education, on the other hand, was unprepared to recognize the emergence and proliferation of the private institutions in the realm that has traditionally been occupied by a single provider of services.

The appearance of the private movement in education signified the present deficiency of the public system of education and its total inability to function in the conditions of market economy. The public system failed in re-organizing its services so that they meet the demands of consumers and become more efficient. This failure also meant the dis-establishment of the Ministerial monopoly and control, which was not easy to accept. In the existing situation private education may and should become a full-fledged partner of the public education in preparing highly qualified professionals. The emergence of the private educational system in the Republic demands a complete reconstruction (change) of educational activity, a new definition of economic and legal basis of interrelations of the state with educational institutions in general and private institutions in particular.

The position assumed by the Ministry can be called “purposeful neglect”. The attitude towards private education is demeaning and it is revealed in superficiality of episodic contacts, lack of understanding and collaboration between the Ministry and the private sector (The materials of the meeting between the teaching staff of the Association of Educational Institutions “Univers-Moldova” and the Prime-Minister of the Republic of Moldova D. P. Braghis, 2000).

One of the areas for collaboration can be the procedure of accreditation and licensing, which needs some restructuring in order to ensure that certain education standards are met. The procedure is performed by the committee, which is familiar with accrediting public institutions and applies the same standards to newly founded private institutions. Not only should the members of the committee work in close collaboration with the representatives of private institutions, but also they should have specific training in order to appropriately apply the concepts that have been developed to the new context of private education.

The second sphere where The Ministry of Education and Science can provide assistance and guidance to private institutions is the quality of education. If the Ministry is judging institutions according to some standards, it should also be willing to help the private sector achieve them. The standards and the policies, that have been created in the past, should be used selectively, when applied to private institutions, with proper respect and understanding of the existing difficulties, as well as with acknowledgement of the particular role and place of private institutions within the system of education in general. Moreover, the future of education demands the creation of new standards and policies that can be applied in the changed environment and will sustain the operation of the education sector in the Republic. This process of creation should involve the representatives of all members of the sector, regardless of their prestige and standing at the moment.

Financially, the private education sector in Moldova solely depends on tuition; there are no state grants, subsidies or financial allocations. Government non-involvement and deregulation has created a particular context around private institutions, forcing them to find alternative ways of financing their operation. At the same time, operating as non-profit enterprises, they are responsible for returning the state a portion of their revenues, reserving only a limited amount of money for their personal needs. The revenues received from tuition fees are expected to cover all arising operational costs, which fluctuate almost daily. Those difficulties for private institutions are not taken into account when private institutions are envied for being successful and actually accused of earning money.

Private institutions believe that the state should be interested in fostering private education and should provide it with some financial support. Right now, any financial allocations are out of the question and later on they will primarily be distributed to alleviate the conditions in

the public sector. If the state government of Moldova agrees that there are benefits in private education, then it should provide some tax benefits and reduce certain costs for these institutions. The costs for renting facilities, electricity, water, and gas have been rising yearly, which makes the operation of the private institutions heavily depend on tuition payments. The government should first of all increase communication with the private sector in order to make both parties aware of the existing problems, opportunities and solutions.

One might ask the following question then: Is private education really private in Moldova, if the founders and workers of private institutions do not enjoy the necessary freedom that entails the meaning of “private”? Is private education in Moldova truly private, if the Ministry of Education controls the operation of private institutions and applies the same standards and policies to both, private and public, sectors?

The Ministry of Education, used to its hegemony in the education sector, is not going to surrender in its battle for control. Even now, the desire to pervade all spheres of educational activity manifests itself in its rejection to accept changes that occur daily and influence its activity. Although the bureaucratic machine is rusty, it was well constructed and its mechanisms are ready to reject any foreign body and crumble it to pieces with the help of deliberation over the necessary changes. Besides the evident deficiencies, there are other reasons why the Ministry is so slow in reaction to change. One of them is “adding oil” to the parts so that they function faster and more smoothly, the corrupt practices of bribery that are deeply rooted in the operation the Ministry of Education and Science.

The issue of control and consumer protection is not a very easy one to resolve. Complete elimination of control at this stage will only reap chaos and havoc that will be difficult to deal with in the future and have detrimental outcomes for the operation of private institutions and for

the system of education as a whole. There are two possible alternative solutions to this problem. The first one envisions control still coming from the Ministry of Education, but to a much smaller extent and with laws and regulations in place which limit it. The other one is the creation of other control mechanism, on the local or governmental level. This decision is less favorable, as first of all the people who know the intricacies of the system of education and the have experience in its operation are the employees of the ministry. They are more prepared to notice the problems and to address them, than anyone else. The creation of a different mechanism will necessitate specialized training and experience that demands time.

Moldovan private education is a peculiar type of privatization in higher education, due to the background of the education system in the Republic, the context that shaped its emergence and the conditions in which it is operating at present. The dilemma of control over the private education will not be resolved in the nearest future, not until private educational institutions acquire enough power to voice their opinion and their structures are so well established that they can become truly independent and they have created an identity for themselves.

Legal framework

The problem of insufficient and inflexible legal framework is similar in nature to the problems experienced with the Ministry of Education. The inability of the government to foresee certain changes and create substantial legal basis for the operation of the private sector is incredibly frustrating for the founders of private institutions. The vagueness of some policies and directions, which are as changeable as the wind, and the durability of others that seem to be written in stone, is a constant dilemma that gives birth to multiple discrepancies.

One of such discrepancies concerns the legal definition of the status of the private institutions. According to the Law on Education, private educational institutions are considered

to be “non-profit entities”. However, the Registration Chamber of the Ministry of Justice registers them as “limited liability companies” and “joint stock companies”, which means that by that definition they are considered to be “commercial (read business) enterprises”. This discrepancy hinders the financial activity of private institutions and does not allow them to exercise full powers of either one of the registered entities, as stated in the definitions (The materials of the meeting between the teaching staff of the Association of Educational Institutions “Univers-Moldova” and the Prime-Minister of the Republic of Moldova D. P. Braghis, 2000).

The Ministry of Education and Science produces a registry of specialties offered in higher education institutions of Moldova and their definitions. Many private educators are willing and competent enough to introduce new specialties in their curriculum, which will benefit the students by expanding their choice. They believe that the registry and the definitions are constraining and demand an evaluation, on the basis of which, the number of specialties offered can be increased.

Other legal deficiencies include the absence of a comprehensive loan system, which significantly limits the access of students to private higher education. The mechanisms intended to protect consumers should also be introduced to eradicate the possibility of corruption and fraud.

However illogical it may seem, the absence of laws and regulations may be beneficial for private education today. Up to now, the private sector still enjoys a certain flexibility, which allows it to test different approaches and methods. Following the theory of the survival of the fittest, this experiment will eliminate ill-functioning mechanisms and leave only those that are doomed to succeed. It may also allow for the creation of new control mechanisms, which are

different from the Ministry of Education and Science and declare the support of the private initiative on their agenda.

Social acceptance

Although it is clear that privatization may offer an effective alternative solution for the problems experienced today by higher education, the attitude towards privatization in general and privatization of education remains ambivalent.

Transition to free market economy with all its attributes and outcomes was not a joint decision of the population of the country adopted by means of votes. It was a prompted solution, presented by the outsiders, unavoidable in the existing conditions and administered at a high speed. To a rather large group of people privatization was and still is a wave in the vast sea of hard-to-understand, accept and live-by transformations, the sea - in which they are drowning. "The people of Central and Eastern Europe also have a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the privatization program and the concept of market economy as a whole. On the one hand, nearly everyone understands that a move in the direction of capitalism is necessary and can be expected to yield, in the long run, significant improvements in living standards. On the other hand, it is also clear that, in the short run, the move towards market economy means further sacrifices in the form of potentially high rates of unemployment, something the people of the Central and Eastern Europe are not familiar with." (Corbo et al., 1991, p. 255)

One of the general principals of privatization is social acceptability (Corbo et al., 1999, p. 255). While undertaking privatization reforms one has to exhibit extreme caution because "popular opinion might turn against the privatization program". (Corbo et al., 1991, p. 255). "Great attention therefore must be paid to choosing a strategy of privatization that does not

exacerbate the anxieties of the population, but rather gives it some tangible stakes in the success of the undertaking”. (Corbo et al., 1991, p. 255)

The process of privatization in spheres other than education, for example, vouchers or sales of assets, the population of Moldova was disgusted to see people with the reputation of crooks (or mafia) acquire state-owned industries and facilities at a great speed and the lowest price possible. Privatization was popularly dubbed “prihvatizatsia”, the word which has as its root a Russian verb “prihvatit” which means taking without permission and with aplomb, stealing. Unfortunately, in too many cases, corruption dominated the process of privatization. The process itself was not fully transparent and its steps and outcomes were never fully explained, which led to a multitude of mistakes and oversights in all spheres, but most of all in legal with dereliction of duty.

As for Moldova, the advent of capitalism with contingent faith in the market as a universal solution for all social problems, as well as socio-economic changes that followed, initiated a reverse change in the system of values, morals and overall mentality. The transition time, where the theory of the “survival of the fittest” is being tested, produces unbelievably harsh competition and transforms the young generation of Moldovans from being collectivist in the past to becoming individualistic at present.

For many people privatization in education means the loss of privileges, however small they are, as well as the loss of hopes and dreams. The existence of the public free education for all citizens of the country is still one of the things that the communist regime is praised for, while the strengths of the former education system are probably the only thing that keeps the countries, former members of the Soviet Union, alive. That is why one can denote immediate signs of opposition and reluctance when private education is concerned. Even though private educational

institutions have a certain appeal for the general public due to their accessibility and novelty, one cannot deny a strong inclination towards public education. Traditionally, education received in the biggest and strongest public education institutions in the country enjoys fame and recognition. The prestige of certain public institutions is often the only reason why a certain educational choice is made. The success of an institution is determined by the number of years in operation and general reputation. It is also without doubt more prestigious for the students to receive a state scholarship and study for free, thus being less of a burden for their parents. In the light of worsening economic situation, the fear of not being able to provide children with solid and the best education is the main reason for opposition of privatization in education.

The existing difficulties in communication and successful collaboration of private higher education institutions with different agents remain a persisting problem. One of the difficulties is the communication with the Ministry of Education and Science was mentioned earlier. Business enterprises do not seem to exhibit any particular interest towards the fate of the private higher education institutions and continue to remain indifferent to the problems that they are experiencing. The Tax Code of Moldova grants them substantial tax deductions, in the case when their activity involves sponsoring educational activities or supporting educational institutions through gifts and donations. Unfortunately, the cultural values and morals of these economic agents do not comprise charity and sponsorship, which is understandable, as there is no system of public appreciation in place. Not only need they to be reminded of their benefits, but also be given further sufficient tax benefits when they sponsor the activities of the private sector or donate equipment for them. Their role in the development of education has to be acknowledged and the new values disseminated.

The media can play a special role in disseminating new cultural values and promoting private higher education. With the almost infinite power that it possesses at present, it can become an informal institution of public control. By informing the customers about the present options in the sphere of education and educating them how to make the right choices, the media can influence the population to be more receptive of the changes. The critical analysis of the system of public and private education, with their advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses, with its further circulation, will be beneficial for the higher education and its customers.

Operational problems: What makes a campus?

Faculty

Private institutions can afford to hire administrative staff, but it is extremely hard to find professors, who can offer modern courses in the most prestigious areas. The institutions located in the capital of the Republic usually benefit from the academic diversity in the city, which allows them to invite visiting professors or hire them as part-time staff. The other institutions usually do with the means that they have, which explains the low quality of education. Inviting visiting professors is expensive and will greatly increase tuition fees.

Private institutions are compelled to employ educators who work in the public sector full time. Usually, they are employed as part-time staff and have a decent level of training. One must admit though, that the task of juggling both jobs at the same time and maintaining high quality is next to impossible. The consequence of such an effort is a decrease in the quality of teaching both in private and public universities.

Besides staffing of private institutions, Moldovan educators who have ventured to open private institutions are faced with a multitude of operational problems, which affect the way private education is perceived, and influence its daily operations.

In order to open a private educational institution there is a necessity for a building, where educational activities can be conducted. At present the construction of a system of buildings - a campus - is impossible to undertake, as it demands constant financial contributions for the period of construction. The only way out is to rent space in a building that belongs to someone else. Many private institutions are renting public school grounds where they conduct evening classes. Consecutively, having rented the building, one has to realize that everything depends on a whim of a building owner and the general state of economics: the lease payments may go up, there will be no renovations or expansions, the cost of the electricity and gas may go up. A limited number of private institutions have buildings of their own, which have been sold by the state and privatized by the founders of the private institution. The problem of equipment is directly linked to the issue of buildings. Without modern equipment that allows them to maintain the proper level of technical support and informs the students about information technology, the quality of the academic programs is never going to be increased. It is also clear that library facilities and book funds represent one of the biggest treasures of education institutions, without which it is impossible to implement any academic process and research. Moldovan private institutions, for the most part, do not have either enough books or library facilities. It takes decades to build up a good university library, thus private institutions resort to using public libraries and the students are held responsible for finding books they need for their classes.

Conclusions and suggestions

This paper initially envisioned its objective as bashing the private institutions, denouncing their mistakes and harshly criticizing them. As data was being gathered and the role of private sector assessed, there appeared a strange feeling of respect and appreciation. It became really interesting to follow the strategies used by private institutions to sustain their activity, the reasons for establishment and interaction with the public system of education. Little by little, a feeling of empathy and pride for their emergence, as well as appreciation of taking the risks and experimenting with the different models of education was guiding the writing process. The claims and the marketing techniques of private institutions were laughable and provided a constant source of amusement, which led to the realization that an amazing learning process is taking place in the life Moldovan educators and administrators. And there is no better teacher than personal hands-on experience. The shift in the author's attitude towards private education was so radical that it led to a deep-seeded belief in the promising role of the private sector in higher education and development of Moldova as a democratic country.

The benefits of the private initiative in higher education include satisfying the customer demand for prestigious specialties and courses unavailable or non-existent in public institutions until recently, for example marketing, management, finances and stock exchanges. It is worth mentioning that private education offers more diversity and flexibility by providing Russian-language instruction and foreign language instruction in English, French or German, especially in the fields of business, economics, and law. Russian-language instruction is especially important because it increases access of non-Moldovan speakers to higher education. Private sector has also provided access to higher education for those students whom public educational institutions could not accept because of the limitations imposed by state-planned enrollment.

Educators have also benefited from the emergence of the private sector, which offers part-time or full-time employment and a salary that surpasses the salary offered by public sector. Only the members of “Univers-Moldova” have created about 700 additional job-places, which they claim are assured to receive a stable high salary. The employees of the private institutions enjoy more freedom in choosing appropriate teaching methods and expressing creativity through the creation of personal study programs (The Materials of the meeting between the Prime Minister of Moldova D. Braghis and the Association of Educational Institutions “Univers–Moldova”, 2000).

In times of devastating socio-economic situation the state of Moldova has profited from the emergence of the private sector, which is willing to satisfy the demand in higher education and to make it operation self-sufficient. Private institutions have also remitted certain portions of their revenues to the state budget. “In 1999 the Association of Private Educational Institutions “Univers – Moldova” had 81485 lei deducted and in the first half of the year 2000 - 541000 lei. In 1999 economic agents with different types of property received from the Association 966720 lei and in the first part of 2000 – 423855 lei “(The Materials of the meeting between the Prime Minister of Moldova D. Braghis and the Association of Educational Institutions “Univers–Moldova”, 2000).

The disadvantages of the private education have not been so clearly manifested due to the lack of long-term experience with private education. Several issues in relation to the access to higher education and the influence of private education on Moldovan social life are more or less are evident. Although, there is no data on the impact of private institutions in the area of access to higher education and the tuition fee introduction in public institutions, one should take into account the growing difference between the average salary in Moldova and the tuition fees in

universities in order to understand that private education continues to remain elitist. The freedom of choice in language-instruction, type of education and institution continue to remain a privilege and are offered only to those who are financially able study either at public or private institutions.

Another deficiency of private education is that it strictly demand- and revenue- oriented, offering instruction in the fields that already represent a danger for Moldovan job-market. Such fields as foreign languages, marketing, law and economics have inundated the job-market with their graduates, who are left jobless due to the inability of the market to accommodate such a great number of graduates. Thus diversity of the institutions and courses taught should remain the overarching goal for private higher education, which at the same time will allow flexibility in career choice.

Due to the multiple problems experienced by private institutions, trying to establish a certain identity, gain financial independence and achieve stability, the principle of quality education is forgone. The Ministry of Education and Science does not collaborate with the private sector in institution of certain academic standards that will affect the quality of education, nor there are other control structures concerned with the situation. The founders of private institutions have to be very careful not to ignore the foundation of standards in their desire to gain quick profit.

It is unclear at the moment what the educational outcomes of an increased choice between private and public education are and whether the quality of education has risen due to the freedoms enjoyed by the educators in private institutions. The popular opinion still holds public institutions to be more prestigious and to offer a higher quality education. It is most probable that for an indefinite period of time, while private institutions are establishing identity

and gaining experience, public education will preserve its domination in the sector of higher education, at least in the terms of prestige.

The future of private education in Moldova faces multiple uncertainties in its environment, such as changes in government and policies, instability of market demands and corruption. Nevertheless, private institutions of higher education envision themselves as key-agents in the process of nation-building and global integration, as well as in satisfaction of the increased demand for higher education related to production, trade, and human services. The success or the failure of private education will manifest itself in the impact that these institutions will make on the advance of Moldovan society.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Higher Education Institutions in Moldova¹²

Public:

1. Balti State University “A. Russo”
2. Cahul State University
3. Comrat State University
4. The Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova – ASEM
5. The Academy of Public Administration of Moldova
6. The Academy of Sciences
7. The National Institute of Physical Education and Sport
8. The Police Academy “Stefan cel Mare”
9. The State Agrarian University of Moldova
10. The State Art University
11. The State Medical and Pharmaceutical University “N. Testemitanu”
12. The State Pedagogical University “I. Creanga”
13. The State University of Moldova
14. The Technical University of Moldova
15. Tiraspol State University

Private:

1. Free International University of Moldova
2. Cooperative-Commercial University of Moldova
3. The Academy of Legal Studies
4. The International Institute of Management
5. The Institute of Political Studies and International Relations
6. The Institute of Natural Sciences
7. The Institute of Applied Integrative Studies
8. The Institute of Continuous Education

9. The Institute of International Relations “Perspectiva”
10. The University of Humanitarian Studies of Moldova
11. The International Academy of International Law
12. The Superior Anthropological School
13. The Slavic University
14. The Institute of Scientific Research, Education and Production in the sphere of Management
15. The University of Finance and Economics
16. The European University “Basarabia”
17. The University of Criminology
18. The International University of Finance and Law
19. The Moldovan Branch of the Modern Humanitarian University
20. The University of Modern Languages and International Business
21. Nistean University of Economics and Law
22. The Academy of Telecommunication Studies and Computer Science
23. The Institute of International Economic Relations
24. The Moldovan branch of the Baltic Institute of Ecology and Law
25. The University of Humanitarian Sciences
26. The University of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnology
27. The Academy of Transport, Computer Science and Communications
28. The International Institute of Management and Computer Science for Health Services and Social Assistance

¹² <http://www.ournet.md/~abitRM/UNIVERSITETI/index.htm>

Appendix 2. Public Colleges in Moldova¹³

Name in English	Name in Rumanian	Location	Specialties offered
The Republican College of Computer Science	Colegiul Republican de Informatica	Chisinau	Law Customs' activity Assistant-secretary Computer science in economics Finances and accounting
The Republican College of Microelectronics and Calculating Machinery	Colegiul Republican de Microelectronica si Tehnica de Calcul	Chisinau	Microelectronics Electronic radio systems Electronic radio machines for private (home) use Calculators
The College of Ecology	Colegiul de Ecologie	Chisinau	Forestry and public gardens Ecology and nature protection
The College of Light Industry	Colegiul de Industrie Usoara	Balti	Machines and devices in light industry Design and technology of ready-made clothing Design and technology of knitwear Hair-dressing and make-up
The College of Polytechnics	Colegiul Politehnic	Balti	Technology of machine-construction Calculators Electronic radio for private use Firm management Machines and electric devices for private use
The College of Electro-Mechanics	Colegiul Electromecanic	Chisinau	Electro-mechanics Automatics and computer science

¹³ <http://collegenet.moldnet.md/Colleges/socrate.htm>

			Technology of material processing Machines and electric devices for private use Firm management Metrology Control and certification of products Electronic radio Accounting and Audit
The College of Telecommunications	Colegiul de Telecomunicatii	Chisinau	Telecommunications Postal communications
The College of Transport	Colegiul de Transport	Chisinau	Auto transport, machinery, tools Construction machines and installations
The Industrial College of Construction	Colegiul Industrial si de Constructii	Chisinau	Civil, industrial and agricultural constructions Technology of materials and construction-ware Engineering installations Real estate and property evaluation
The College of Technology	Colegiul Tehnologic	Chisinau	Design and technology of ready-made clothing Machines and devices for private use Clothing design
The Technical College of Railroad Transportation	Colegiul Tehnic Feroviar	Balti	Railroad transportation
The College of Finance and Banking "A. Diordita"	Colegiul Financiar-Bancar "A. Diordita"	Chisinau	Management, finances and securities Finances and Accounting Banks and stock exchanges Accounting and audit
The College of	Colegiul	Lipcani	Primary education pedagogy

Pedagogy "Gh. Asachi"	Pedagogic "Gh. Asachi"		Preschool pedagogy
The Technical and Agricultural College of the Cahul State University	Colegiul Tehnic Agricol al Universitatii de Stat din Cahul	Cahul	Finances and Accounting Cadastre and territory organization Assistant-secretary
The College of Construction	Colegiul de Constructii	Hancesti	Civil, industrial and agricultural constructions Railways, roads and bridges
The College of Technology	Colegiul Tehnologic	Chisinau	Material processing technology
The National College of Commerce of the Academy of Economic Studies	Colegiul National de Comert al Academiei de Studii Economice din Moldova	Chisinau	Accounting and audit Commerce
The College of Pedagogy "A. Mateevici"	Colegiul Pedagogic "A. Mateevici"	Chisinau	Primary education pedagogy Preschool pedagogy Music pedagogy Social assistance
The College of Pedagogy "M. Eminescu"	Colegiul Pedagogic "M. Eminescu"	Soroca	Primary education pedagogy Preschool pedagogy Music pedagogy
The College of Medicine	Colegiul de Medicina	Chisinau	General medicine
The College of Pedagogy "V. Lupu"	Colegiul Pedagogic "V. Lupu"	Orhei	Primary school pedagogy
The College of Pedagogy "Alexandru cel Bun"	Colegiul Pedagogic "Alexandru cel	Chisinau	Primary school pedagogy Music pedagogy

	Bun"		
The College of Pedagogy "I. Creanga"	Colegiul Pedagogic "I. Creanga"	Balti,	Primary school pedagogy
The College of Pedagogy and Arts "Iu. Hasdeu"	Colegiul de Pedagogie si Arte "Iu. Hasdeu"	Cahul	Primary school pedagogy Pedagogy of fine arts Social assistance
The College of Pedagogy "M. Ciachir"	Colegiul Pedagogic "M. Ciachir"	Comrat U.T.A. "Gagauzia"	Primary school pedagogy Preschool pedagogy Music pedagogy
The College of Pedagogy "Sf. Chiril si Metodiul"	Colegiul Pedagogic "Sf. Chiril si Metodiul"	Taraclia	Primary school pedagogy Preschool pedagogy Music pedagogy
The Republican College of Music and Pedagogy	Colegiul Republican de Muzica si Pedagogie	Balti	Instrumental interpretation Choir directing Music pedagogy
The Republican College of Music	Colegiul Republican de Muzica	Chisinau	Instrumental interpretation Choir directing Musicology
The Republican College of Fine Arts	Colegiul Republican de Arte Plastice "A. Plamadeala"	Chisinau	Painting Applied decorative art Pedagogy of art Pedagogy of fine arts
The Republican College of Folk Creation	Colegiul Republican de Creatie Populara	Soroca	Instrumental interpretation Choir directing Decorative art Directing
The College of Medicine	Colegiul de Medicina	Balti	General medicine Laboratory diagnostics

			Dental medicine
The College of Medicine	Colegiul de Medicina	Orhei	General medicine
The College of Medicine	Colegiul de Medicina	Cahul	General medicine
The College of Medicine	Colegiul de Medicina	Ungheni	General medicine
The National College of Wine-Making	Colegiul National de Viticultura si Vinificatie	Stauceni	Machines and devices in food industry Technology of fruit and vegetable preservation and processing Technology of wine and derived products Horticulture
The Technical and Agricultural College	Colegiul Tehnic Agricol	v. Svetlai, U.T.A. Gagauzia	Marketing Agronomy Agricultural technologies Agricultural mechanization
The College of Agriculture	Colegiul Agricol	v. Taul t.Dondusani judetul Edinet	Marketing Agronomy Agricultural technologies
The College of Agro-industry	Colegiul Agroindustrial	v. Grinaiti, judetul Edinet	Agricultural mechanization Milk and milk products technology Meat and meat products technology
The Technical and Agricultural College	Colegiul Tehnic Agricol	Rascani	Machines and devices of food processing industry Finances and accounting Production technology of sugar and other sugar bearing products Technology of cosmetic and medical

			products
The Technical and Agricultural College	Colegiul Tehnic Agricol	Soroca	Machines and electric devices of private use Mechanization of agriculture Agricultural electrification
The College of Animal Breeding	Colegiul de Zootehnie	v. Bratuseni judetul Edinet	Veterinary medicine
The Military College "Alexandru cel Bun"	Colegiul Militar "Alexandru cel Bun"	Chisinau	Motorized infantry Artillery Transmissions
The College of Police "D. Cantemir"	Colegiul de Politie "D. Cantemir"	Chisinau	Law

Appendix 3. Tuition fees in higher education institutions of Moldova in 2000 (Moldovan Leu; approximately 13 lei to \$1)¹⁴

	Chisinau	Balti	Other cities	Chisinau	Balti	Other cities
Specialty	1 st year of studies			2 nd -year until graduation		
Mathematics and Physics	3800-4500	2800	2500	5400	3000	2600
Mathematics/Physics and Computer Science	4900-5000	3100	2600	5100	3200	2600-2700
Computer Science and English	5500-6000	3700	3000-3200	6200-6400	4000	3300-3500
Law, Economic Law	5800-6000	4000	3600-3800	6100-6500	3900-4100	3800-4000
International Law and In-depth study of a foreign language	6500-6700	4200	3800-3900	6700-7000	4100-4300	3900-4000
Accounting and Audit; Management in commerce Management in education and Economics Finance and Accounting Marketing	5700-5900	3900-4000	3000-3200	6000-6500	4000-4100	3250-3500
Foreign Languages and Literature	4500-4800	4000	3100-3200	4800/5000	3900-4000	3200-3400
Rumanian Language and Literature and Russian Language and Literature	4200-4500	3000	1800-2000			
Rumanian Language and Literature and a Foreign Language and Literature	4800-5000	3100-3200	2000-2100	5000-5400	3200-3300	2000-2050
Russian Language and Literature	3200	2600	1500-1700	3300-3400	2600	1600
Ukrainian Language and Literature		3000			3000	

¹⁴ Data provided by the Office of International Relations at Balti State University

Primary School Education with in-depth study of a foreign language	3900-4300	3200	2100	4300-4500	3200-3300	2100-2200
Primary education and pre-school instruction	4000	3100	2300	4100-4300	3100	2350-2400