

Document of
The World Bank

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Report No: 31309-MD

IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETION REPORT
(SCL-41510 IDA-30030 PPFB-P3040)

ON A

LOAN AND CREDIT

IN THE AMOUNT OF US\$16.8 MILLION

TO THE REPUBLIC OF

MOLDOVA

FOR A

GENERAL EDUCATION PROJECT

February 24, 2005

This document has a restricted distribution and may be used by recipients only in the performance of their official duties. Its contents may not otherwise be disclosed without World Bank authorization.

CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(Exchange Rate Effective December 2004)

Currency Unit = Moldovan Lei

MDL12.5 = US\$ 1

US\$ 0.08 = MDL 1

FISCAL YEAR

January 1 – December 31

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
DE	Department for Evaluation
GTZ	Gasellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit
ICB	International Competitive Bidding
MF	Ministry of Finance
ME	Ministry of Education
NCAC	National Curriculum and Assessment Council
NCB	National Competitive Bidding
NS	National Shopping
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPF	Project Preparation Facility
UNCEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Vice President:	Shigeo Katsu
Country Director	Paul Bermingham
Sector Director	Charles C. Griffin
Task Team Leader/Task Manager:	Ana Maria Jeria

MOLDOVA
General Education Project

CONTENTS

	Page No.
1. Project Data	1
2. Principal Performance Ratings	1
3. Assessment of Development Objective and Design, and of Quality at Entry	2
4. Achievement of Objective and Outputs	5
5. Major Factors Affecting Implementation and Outcome	15
6. Sustainability	18
7. Bank and Borrower Performance	21
8. Lessons Learned	23
9. Partner Comments	25
10. Additional Information	25
Annex 1. Key Performance Indicators/Log Frame Matrix	26
Annex 2. Project Costs and Financing	27
Annex 3. Economic Costs and Benefits	29
Annex 4. Bank Inputs	30
Annex 5. Ratings for Achievement of Objectives/Outputs of Components	32
Annex 6. Ratings of Bank and Borrower Performance	33
Annex 7. List of Supporting Documents	34
Annex 8. Textbooks Data	35
Annex 9. Borrower's Final Evaluation Report	36

<i>Project ID:</i> P008558	<i>Project Name:</i> General Education
<i>Team Leader:</i> Ana Maria Jeria	<i>TL Unit:</i> ECSHD
<i>ICR Type:</i> Core ICR	<i>Report Date:</i> February 24, 2005

1. Project Data

Name: General Education

L/C/TF Number: SCL-41510; IDA-30030;
PPFB-P3040

Country/Department: MOLDOVA

Region: Europe and Central Asia
Region

Sector/subsector: Primary education (42%); Secondary education (42%); Tertiary education (15%); Central government administration (1%)

Theme: Education for all (P); Social analysis and monitoring (S);
Administrative and civil service reform (S)

KEY DATES

	<i>Original</i>	<i>Revised/Actual</i>
<i>PCD:</i> 12/13/1995	<i>Effective:</i> 08/31/1997	07/01/1998
<i>Appraisal:</i> 10/31/1996	<i>MTR:</i> 07/31/1999	09/13/2000
<i>Approval:</i> 04/22/1997	<i>Closing:</i> 12/01/2002	08/31/2004

Borrower/Implementing Agency: REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA/MINISTRY OF EDUCATION; REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA/YOUTH AND SPORTS (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION)

Other Partners:

STAFF	Current	At Appraisal
<i>Vice President:</i>	Shigeo Katsu	Johannes F. Linn
<i>Country Director:</i>	Paul G. Bermingham	Basil G. Kavalski
<i>Sector Director:</i>	Charles C. Griffin	Thomas A. Blinkhorn
<i>Team Leader at ICR:</i>	Ana Maria Jeria	Monika Huppi
<i>ICR Primary Author:</i>	Mariana Doina Moarcas	

2. Principal Performance Ratings

(HS=Highly Satisfactory, S=Satisfactory, U=Unsatisfactory, HL=Highly Likely, L=Likely, UN=Unlikely, HUN=Highly Unlikely, HU=Highly Unsatisfactory, H=High, SU=Substantial, M=Modest, N=Negligible)

Outcome: S
Sustainability: L
Institutional Development Impact: SU
Bank Performance: S
Borrower Performance: S

QAG (if available)

ICR

Quality at Entry:

Project at Risk at Any Time: Yes

3. Assessment of Development Objective and Design, and of Quality at Entry

3.1 Original Objective:

The overall objective of the Moldova General Education Project (MGEP) was to support the first phase of Moldova's education sector reforms, focusing on mandatory general education. The project's key objective was to modernize and improve the quality of primary and lower secondary education through improved curricula, new textbooks, in-service teacher training and a modern assessment system.

Background. The objectives and the design of the MGEP need to be assessed in the context of the first half of the 1990s when the country went through serious trade shocks, armed conflicts and a series of natural calamities resulting in a drastic decline in the national production and living standards in Moldova. In 1993, the Government of Moldova initiated a reviving macro-economic stabilization program coupled with structural reforms that led to a slowdown of the decline in national production during 1995. However, after 1996, the succession of short-lived governments unable to shape a coherent reform policy, led again the economy into a downward spiral towards depression and poverty (Ronnås and Orlova, 2000). A tentative revival in 1997 was squashed by financial crisis in Russia, with devastating effects on Moldova's exports, the government budget and debt.

At the time of Project preparation (1996-1998), although being traditionally declared a national priority, after four decades of central planning, the education system was largely inadequate to respond to the demands of a market economy and prepare the needed future labor force. The curriculum, teaching and learning approaches, and didactic materials needed substantial changes to meet the demands of a new social and economic reality. The adoption of a new *Education Law* and a National Program for Educational Development (1995-2005) in 1995 laid the grounds for a new approach to education, bringing it closer to the European systems.

The MGEP was defined as a priority in the social sector; the project objectives fully responded to: (i) the Moldovan Government's overall new education strategy aiming at major adjustments of the curricula, teaching materials, teacher training, and modern mechanisms of student assessment; and (ii) the Bank's 1996 Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) covering social sector interventions and pointing out that this first project would represent the initiation of a long term dialogue on a comprehensive sector reform focusing on a medium term human resource development strategy.

The MGEP was a demanding project aiming at a comprehensive reform basically touching upon four essential education elements (curricula, teaching and learning materials, teacher training, and student assessment). The project objective was broad allowing the necessary flexibility during implementation under seven different ministers. It was the first social sector project in Moldova and in the education sector; it entailed an impressive coordination effort through the ME implementation unit to coordinate the project components, various working groups, other bodies set up within the project framework, the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) and ME specialists, professionals from the education system at large.

At the time of the project appraisal, the Staff Appraisal Report (SAR) format did not require agreement on a formal set of performance indicators and a logframe. As such, the key monitoring indicators included in the project monitoring plan are mostly output oriented and do not offer a thorough basis for outcome evaluation. Without any doubts, a coherent set of quality indicators would have been very useful. The original design of the MGEP was made by ME with education specialists and researchers from the Institute of Pedagogical Studies (turned into the Institute of Educational Sciences in 2000). During the project implementation, ownership was mostly assumed by the ME staff and professionals and the role of the IES has gradually decreased.

3.2 Revised Objective:

The objective was not revised during implementation.

3.3 Original Components:

The MGEP comprised five components with a total baseline cost of US\$16.67 million:

- 1. Curriculum Development (US\$0.64 million).** The component aimed at supporting the Government's efforts to revise the entire curriculum for mandatory general education, so as to ensure that the curricula correspond to the new demands on the education system and espouse a modern and methodologically improved approach to teaching and learning.
- 2. Learning Assessment (US\$0.82 million).** The component aimed at upgrading Moldova's assessment and examinations system into a national system of assessment and evaluation capable of monitoring and providing feedback on the quality of the education system.
- 3. Teacher Training (US\$3.34 million).** The component aimed at providing key rayon education directorate staff and teachers with the necessary background to effectively implement the new curricula and assessment methods and thus improve the quality of classroom teaching.
- 4. Textbook Development and Financing (US\$11.50 million).** The component aimed at: (i) facilitating the new curricula by providing schools with an adequate number of textbooks in line with the new curricula for core subjects, and (ii) to help develop a sustainable system of textbook financing that would help guarantee availability of textbooks upon project completion.
- 5. Project Management and Implementation (US\$0.37 million).** The component aimed at supporting the project management unit (PMU) to coordinate overall project implementation; the component also financed technical assistance, equipment and the incremental operating costs necessary for project management.

In terms of design, as stated in the SAR, it was deliberately kept simple and project interventions were limited to supporting reforms in mandatory general education through the above mentioned closely interlinked components. The choice of supporting reforms in general education was motivated by three factors: (i) the Government's decision to initiate reform at this level because curriculum reform had already been started, but slowed down due to fiscal constraints; (ii) economic returns from investments in general education have always been significantly higher than those at other education levels; and (iii) general education reform is less dependent on the pace of reform in other sectors.

While the design was simple and clear, indeed, the project intervention itself was quite comprehensive and demanding since it actually covered essential elements of the general education sector. The objectives of all above mentioned components were in line with the Project objective and with the Government priorities set out in its education strategy aiming at major sector adjustments expected to make it more responsive to the demands of new social and economic realities.

The SAR also states that the project, while involving some institutional changes, was deliberately designed to build on the sector's existing labor force, on existing institutions and on the achievements of Moldova's education system at the time. Indeed, these guidelines were observed during implementation and the project built on the system capacity and was basically implemented through the Ministry departments; however, a new Department for Evaluation within ME was necessary and it was a precondition for project start up.

As pointed out above, this was the first project in the social sector and the first education project in Moldova aiming at introducing innovative approaches through improved curricula, new textbooks, in-service teacher training and a modern assessment system; the project covered essential interrelated

aspects of basic education and required an impressive and commendable coordination effort from the ME PMU side. The value added by the Bank was ensured by: (i) its extensive experience with comprehensive education reforms in other countries, particularly in nearby Romania; and (ii) provision of high quality expertise in specialized education areas.

3.4 Revised Components:

During project implementation, revisions were made in order to meet urgent needs of the system, as follows:

(i) *Acquisition of grade 1 and 2 textbooks' under the Textbook component.* The project originally envisaged the development and production of new textbooks and, where appropriate, teacher guides, in Romanian for core subjects for grades 3-9; textbooks for grades 1 and 2 had not been included under the project given that they were expected to be financed by the Government funds prior to the project start-up. However, due to financial constraints, this was not possible and the Government subsequently asked for support from the project; this intervention responded to an essential need of the system at the time. The revision was fully in line with the project and Textbook component objective which remained unchanged. An amendment of the Loan Agreement (April 4, 2002) was needed to reflect this revision.

(ii) *Acquisition of learning materials (library books and other teaching aids) under the Textbooks component.* This was not envisaged in the project design, but given that substantial project savings of about US\$2.0 million (the majority of which came from the large unallocated category of US\$1.38 million) had been accumulated by April 2003, it was possible to address an urgent need of the system: the severe shortage of didactic materials in all schools in Moldova. At the time, most school libraries were stocked with old books in Cyrillic script, practically of no use to the large majority of students who needed such materials in Latin script. The Government proposal to procure new library books and other teaching aids was fully in line with the project development objectives and with the project description and aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the reforms introduced under the project, by enhancing the teaching process, and reinforcing independent learning and thinking. A critical element of this intervention was that schools were offered the chance to choose their own library books and materials, in contrast to the past practice of centrally made decisions on such educational inputs; this represented a huge step forward in a critical direction. To support this revision, an amendment to the Loan Agreement (June 3, 2003) was issued; an extension of the Loan closing date to June 30, 2004 was also granted; subsequently, an additional partial extension of the loan closing date to August 31, 2004 was needed to complete related procurement activities.

(iii) *The introduction of activities aimed at supporting an Education Management Information System (EMIS).* Although not a formal component of the MGEP, the need for an improved EMIS became a priority following a ME consultation workshop with stakeholders (early 2003) on optimizing delivery in the education sector in the framework of the next stage of reforms in the country and the provision of the informational basis needed to support such initiatives. Initial work on the EMIS including an information needs assessment, a pilot school mapping software, a comprehensive report serving as a basis for the EMIS development was administered by the PMU under the Project Management and Implementation Component; already allocated funds for studies needed for the preparation of a possible future project were used.

3.5 Quality at Entry:

At the time of project preparation and appraisal no formal Quality at Entry criteria were available. However this report follows the Bank current evaluation standards. Quality at Entry is rated satisfactory based on: (i) the consistency of the project development objective with Moldova's Government priorities (expressed in the *National Program for Educational Development for 1995-2000*, 1995) and the Bank's CAS (1996); (ii) the adequacy of the project design with the needs of the education sector at the time of project preparation; and (iii) the appropriateness of needs analysis, implementation arrangements, and the

priorities established that were fully in line with the situation of Moldova in 1995-1996. The SAR clearly presents the benefits, acknowledges the potential risks and the possible approaches to mitigate them; the potential project benefits were worth taking the risks especially related to macroeconomic difficulties and political uncertainties.

The Quality of Supervision Assessment (QSA5) performed in CY 2000 also pointed out that the project was technically ready for implementation at approval, with an appropriate sequential path laid out for reforms. The delay in effectiveness was explained as due to the macroeconomic crisis and the need for the government to sort out its budget and set priorities for borrowings at the time.

4. Achievement of Objective and Outputs

4.1 Outcome/achievement of objective:

The Project has satisfactorily achieved the major objective to support the first phase of Moldova's education sector reforms, focusing on mandatory general education. The project's key objective to modernize and improve the quality of primary and lower secondary education through improved curricula, new textbooks, in-service teacher training and a modern assessment system was achieved.

Despite delayed effectiveness and some implementation difficulties, the MGEP was successful in implementing a series of activities that are showing a positive impact in the quality of education and the teaching and learning process. The main project achievement consists in a major shift from a centralized education system based on rigid curriculum and textbooks, inefficient assessment system measuring the students' memorizing capacity to a flexible curriculum framework, new modern textbooks, an innovative approach to teaching and learning processes, modern assessment tools promoting a formative education system. These interventions fully responded to the system's needs, were adapted to international standards, demonstrated their viability, and were highly valued by their beneficiaries. In addition, one of the project's most important legacies is the development of a cadre of competent and dedicated professionals, real assets for Moldova's education system.

Gradual improvements in the quality of education were measured by student performance in tests (report prepared by the ME Department of Evaluation on baseline and follow up grade VI study, and annual reports on evaluation of grade IV and IX national assessments). The results of internal tests have been encouraging: VI grade students in Romanian-language schools improved their performance between 1997 and 2002, from 47 to 65 percent in reading comprehension and from 32 to 44 percent in mathematics. Students taught in the Russian language improved their performance in reading comprehension only slightly (from 49 to 51 percent). Net enrollment rates in primary and lower secondary education remained high (97% and 92% respectively), and available evidence from Household Budget Surveys show that the participation rates in education by children of compulsory school age have remained stable or increased slightly (and in fact were remarkably resilient to the Russian Crisis despite the sharp increase in poverty in 1998-99). In addition, various other channels of feedback including qualitative information in regular studies/evaluations, monitoring reports, and views of parents, teachers, students, and Government officials have also provided evidence of achievement of project activities. Finally, output indicators have for the most surpassed initial targets.

In terms of learning outcomes, recent results from TIMSS-2003 are both mixed and also encouraging: Moldova's grade 4 results in maths and science are slightly above international averages and higher than for countries like Australia, Slovenia and Armenia. When compared with 1999, grade 8 students improved in science but did worse in maths. In-country assessments show that, in Romanian-language schools, sixth grade students improved their performance between 1997 and 2002, from 47 to 65 per cent in reading

comprehension and from 32 to 44 per cent in mathematics.

The MGEP objective was fully relevant to the country needs and consistent with the country and sector assistance strategies at the time of the project appraisal and appropriate to the overall Bank's goal for poverty alleviation and the Bank's 1996 CAS specifically addressing the social sector needs and pointing at this project as an initiation of a long term dialogue on a comprehensive sector reform focusing on a medium term human resource development strategy. The relevance of the project objectives continued to be fully endorsed by the current Government initiatives as reflected by: the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EGPRS) seeing as essential the improvement of the quality of human capital building; the Mid Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) prioritizing sectoral expenditures; and plans for addressing the needs of Education for All (EFA) and achieving the MDGs; all such further steps are building on progress already made, much of it associated with the MGEP. At the same time, the latest Bank CAS (2004) is laying the ground for a follow-up project under its second pillar of the assistance strategy – improving access to social services.

However, the ultimate measure of the MGEP success is the sustainability of its achievements. In order to ensure all project outcomes and outputs are fully integrated in the system, the Ministry still needs to “secure” them both at the sector strategy level, as well as at the institutional level. The education sector strategy for the next period should build on the project achievements and maximize their benefits for the system. Such a process should establish a coherent national system of policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its impact, as well as achieving efficiency in the use of available resources.

More specifically, important project outcomes such as the assessment activities successfully implemented by the ME Department of Evaluation (DE) need to be continued, expanded and fully funded in the future; in this respect, a firm strategic plan for the DE is still needed; the same applies to the curriculum achievements that need to be fostered through a clear vision on the role and activity of the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment; similarly, the teacher training activities have to be continued based on a clear “Strategy for Continuous Teacher Training” currently under approval process. One of the project's major success stories is the Textbook Rental Fund which is highly valued by its beneficiaries; care should be taken in the future to maintain this mechanism basically ensuring every student in Moldova has access to textbooks; in this respect, the mechanism and capacity of the fund should be carefully and constantly monitored to ensure its good functioning avoiding deviations from its initial mechanism and its overburdening.

At the institutional level, roles and responsibilities should be clearly formulated in the future to ensure the adequate functioning of Ministry departments, its councils, other bodies.

The most significant weaknesses of the project were: (i) the lack of focused outcome indicators in the SAR; and (ii) insufficient focus on the sustainability of project outcomes.

4.2 Outputs by components:

Curriculum Development Component (US\$ 0.64 million)

The component aimed at supporting the Government's efforts to revise the entire curriculum for Compulsory Education (grades 1 to 9) in order to ensure that the curricula correspond to the new requirements of the education system and generate a modern and methodologically sound approach to teaching and learning. The component entailed: (i) the establishment of an integrated institutional structure for Curriculum Development and Assessment so as to promote cohesion in policy and activities; (ii) the

development and establishment of up-dated curricula for grades 1 to 9; and (iii) support to teachers with the implementation of the new curriculum. The achievement of the component objective is rated *satisfactory*, with the outcomes of the above mentioned sub-components being reached as planned.

A *National Curriculum and Assessment Council (NCAC)* as well as underlying coordination commissions per curriculum areas and subject specific working groups were established in 1997. The Council coordinated the whole process of designing, developing, approving and implementing the National Curriculum for all subjects and grades. As an initial step, the NCAC produced - for the first time in Moldova - a coherent set of *Curriculum Guidelines* for the development and implementation process as well as a *National Curriculum Framework* (see *National Curriculum. Regulatory Document, 1997*). Based on the *framework documents*, draft subject curricula were developed. They went through a complex consultation process in which experts in curriculum, specialists from rayon education departments, school managers, teachers and parents were involved. In all cases, before the final decision of the NCAC, draft curricula were reviewed by outstanding national and international experts. More than 1,000 experts, teachers at all education levels and other stakeholders were involved in the process of preparation, validation and approval of the new curriculum. As a result, new curricula were approved for grades 1 to 4 (in 1998) and grades 5-9 (in 2000). By the end of the project, 186 new curricula for all subjects and grades were developed, exceeding the 134 initially planned. The national curriculum has been gradually implemented starting in 1998 and reaching grade 9 in 2004/2005.

The need for a sound *curriculum reform* based on a new curriculum philosophy and concept resulted in the design of a *National Curriculum Framework Plan* which was incorporated into the *Curriculum Framework* initially developed. The new Curriculum Framework has been implemented gradually since 2000/2001 (*Order no. 277* of the Minister of Education - 11 May 2000). With the new *National Curriculum*, the first steps towards decentralization were taken. The Plan was structured into a *Core (compulsory) Curriculum* of approximately 85% and a *School-based (optional, elective) Curriculum* of approximately 15% of the teaching time. Based on the new Plan the initially developed curricula for grades 1 to 4 were carefully revised.

As initially planned, the project also supported the quality *implementation* of the new curricula through the development and distribution of all materials produced by the project to the teachers and the rayon education directorates, the participation of curriculum developers in the in-service training of teachers for the implementation of curricula and the evaluation and revision of the newly developed textbooks. The process of quality monitoring of the implementation was managed and carried out by the Ministry Pre-university Education Department. Feedback was received and a gradual improvement of the curriculum is on the current agenda of the Ministry (the last review of the curricula in use ended in November 2004). The new curriculum has been assimilated by the system; teaching and learning practices have improved to a considerable extent.

The curriculum development process under the project was appropriate for achieving the project development objective. The main achievements within this component were: (a) the introduction of a clear cut and coherent curriculum vision and concept; (b) an open and dynamic institutional arrangement and development/implementation strategy that allowed the active involvement and participation of hundreds of teachers, experts in education, and other relevant stakeholders into the curriculum development and implementation process; and (c) the effective functioning in the system of a curriculum that changed profoundly not just the essence of the learning process and teachers' mentality but also – at a larger scale - the perception of the Moldovan society on education. As compared to previous approaches, the new *National Curriculum* developed through the MGEP aimed at fostering students' "real life *competencies*", higher order learning *skills*, critical thinking, creativity, *procedural* instead of factual *knowledge*, and a system of flexible attitudes towards self-fulfillment and continuous learning, all crucial for the future

knowledge society. Relevance of learning to social challenges and real life needs became the core of the new curriculum approach. All these make the sustainability of the curriculum reform initiated under the MGEP likely.

Based on the project, a new 'curriculum culture' emerged in the country and generated a set of valuable developments. As highlighted in the *Borrowers' Report*, "[...] During the Project implementation years, the new curriculum played the role of a "driving factor" in the education reform in Moldova". In this respect, there are two relevant examples. First, starting from the curriculum vision developed by the MGEP, the most important local education NGO – *Pro-Didactica* - in cooperation with the Ministry of Education developed a new curriculum for grades 10 to 12 (High School/Lyceum), currently under implementation. The same process was undertaken for the curricula for pre-primary education. Second, the recent national reflection on the reform of the *higher education curriculum* have also been originated and inspired by the pre-university curriculum component of this project. This way, the curriculum developed under the MGEP actually inspired the curriculum reform for the *whole system*.

Given the above mentioned, an impact study on the quality of the implementation process would have been very useful. Such a study could have analyzed the nature and the relevance of the changes in the actual teaching and learning processes at the classroom level. It could have also highlighted the lessons learned throughout the process putting forward what should be done for further improving the quality of the products and the process.

Learning Assessment Component (US\$0.82 million)

The Component aimed at upgrading Moldova's assessment and examination system into a national assessment and evaluation capable of monitoring and providing feedback on the quality of education. The key areas as envisaged by the SAR were: (i) integrating assessment objectives into the new curriculum; (ii) improving key national examinations at grades 4 and 9 to monitor student performance and the impact of the new curriculum and textbooks on learning outcomes; (iii) developing and disseminating to teachers packages of sample assessment materials for key subjects in grades 1 to 9; (iv) training central trainers in the use of these materials; and (v) conducting a sample based survey of the student achievements under the system in place before the project against which student performance under the new curriculum could be compared towards the end of the MGEP. The improvement of the system of examination and assessment was expected to occur at least in the following two levels: (i) streamlining and upgrading of key national examinations; and (ii) strengthening of classroom based diagnostic and formative testing.

The objectives of the Learning Assessment Component were in line with the general objectives of the Project. The achievement of these objectives is rated *satisfactory*. In August 1998, after significant delays, the Department for Evaluation and Examination, later called Department for Evaluation (DE), was formally established in the ME. Even though over the lifetime of the project the DE staff went through a series of changes, most of the staff members had the opportunity to attend local and international training and conferences. International technical assistance has been provided and financed during the project. Currently, the DE is staffed with 5 persons, all professionals with appropriate training in evaluation, assessment and educational measurement. The DE has its own offices in the Ministry building with all necessary equipment for test multiplication and statistical data processing as well as satisfactory security arrangements.

Since 1999, the DE has been in charge with the design, administration and analysis of all testing and examination in grades 1 to 9. In this respect, the DE had a number of relevant achievements. First, it conducted the new national evaluation at the end of grade 4 which was introduced in 2000 to test students

in Romanian and Mathematics; in addition, students of national minorities take one more test in their Mother Tongue. Second, starting with 2001 the DE has been preparing and conducted the new gymnasium graduation examination (at the end of grade 9) in compliance with the *Law on Education*. Students take this exam in the following subjects: Romanian Language, Mathematics, Minorities Mother Tongues, History and/or Geography. Assessment tests have been conducted showing students (grade VI) in Romanian-language schools improved between 1997 and 2002, from 47 to 65 percent in reading comprehension and from 32 to 44 percent in mathematics. However, students taught in the Russian language improved their performance in reading comprehension only slightly (from 49 to 51 per cent). Students taught in Russian language also lost ground in mathematics (from 52 to 46 per cent) and the worst performance in mathematics in 2002 was in the item that probed problem solving skills, with an average score of only 25 per cent. In reading comprehension the worst scores among Romanian-language students were in evaluative items, testing the 'ability to appreciate, show sound judgments and weigh the arguments provided in the text and their implications'. Russian-language students, on the other hand, scored better in these than in other items and better than they had done five years earlier. The organizational capacity of the DE is shown by the number of participating students in this exercise: 45,186 students in 2001; 48,678 in 2002; 46,226 in 2003; and 46,870 in 2004. Following each testing or exam, national reports with recommendation to different education stakeholders are prepared and published. (*Reports are available in the project files*).

Between 1997 and 2003 the DE experts have developed and delivered to teachers and rayon education specialists a series of evaluation guidelines, testing and examination syllabi and sample materials planned in the project. Training seminars for supporting teachers' efforts to implement the new evaluation and examination procedures and for supporting the development of local capacity to organize examinations have been conducted during the project. The impact of reform measures on the quality of the evaluation and examination system was closely monitored over the project life. For example, the national testing carried out with grade 6 students in 2002 showed a clear improvement in the students' achievements in Romanian Language and Mathematics as compared to the pre-project situation (see results of the *Base-Line Survey* on grade 6 in 1997). As a follow up of the project efforts, the Institute of Educational Sciences is currently preparing an overall concept of the assessment and examination in Moldova. At the same time, a long-term strategy is under preparation.

The design of the Learning Assessment Component was appropriate for achieving the project objective. Despite difficulties faced during the implementation of the DE tasks - due mostly to the small number of the staff as well as to frequent changes of its structure - the grade 4 testing and grade 9 national examinations have been successfully designed and conducted. Moldova has now a clear vision of students' assessment and examination; the assessment and examination materials are directly related to the curriculum standards and to the specific objectives of the curriculum and evaluation. For the first time in Moldova's education system, the testing and examinations aim at evaluating the higher order learning skills, and critical thinking, instead of the simple reproduction of knowledge. The new assessment methods are highly appreciated by parents, students and teachers. Moldova has also opened towards international assessment exercises and reflection.

Teacher Retraining Component (US\$3.34 millions)

The in-service teacher training component aimed at providing key rayon education directorates and teachers with the necessary background to effectively implement the new curricula and assessment methods and thus improve the quality of classroom teaching. The prerequisite of the component was that the successful introduction of the new curricula, textbooks, teaching materials and assessment practices largely depend on how well teachers are prepared through the in-service training to implement the new curricula and to use

new materials. As stated in the SAR, the successful implementation of the new curricula was supposed to require the in-service training of about 45,000 teachers and about 1,700 central and regional staff and teacher trainers. In reality, during the lifetime of the project, 182 central trainers, and 2,120 local trainers were trained and worked in the project. About 35,000 teachers participated in initial training courses in all school subjects. Also refresher courses were organized for about 47,000 teachers including those who could not attend the initial courses (mostly due to migration). The overall achievements of the objectives under this component are rated *satisfactory*.

The in-service teacher training component started with some delay. The management of the process was ensured by the Department of the Teacher Retraining in the ME. The vision on the in-service training and the training as such were designed and delivered by the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES). Alongside this Institute, 7 other central in-service training providers participated in the process. The in-service teacher training was conducted at three levels: national, regional (i.e. *rayon*) and local. For the successful achievement of the on-site teacher training, 52 training centers were set up, each of them properly equipped for the organization of training activities.

The in-service training of teachers was based on the “cascade” model. Accordingly, the “national trainers” from the above mentioned institutions provided general and specific training to the methodologists, inspectors, school managers, and resource teachers selected from the *rayons*. In such a way an important body of trainers was created. These specialists, in their turn, delivered on-site training to teachers. All Moldovan teachers that teach grades 1 to 9 went through a two-week initial training and a one-week follow-up session. In terms of mechanisms, the “cascade” model was built on the existing institutional structures. This is why the model was efficient and cost effective assuring the training of a large number of teachers within a short period of time. At the same time, the model incorporated the most recent international practices in in-service training providing teachers with new methods and practices that fostered the learning process in the classroom. In terms of content, the training programs were developed by curriculum and evaluation working groups in collaboration with IES specialists and with the foreign technical assistance. The course content was based on two sections: (a) a *general module*; and (b) a *subject-specific module*. In order to better implement module *b* dedicated to the implementation of the new curriculum, textbooks and assessment, in 2000, subject based methodological guidelines for curriculum development and implementation were published as well as general guidelines for curriculum implementation.

The design of the component was appropriate for achieving the project objective. The Component had an important effect in *decentralizing* the in-service training in Moldova. Actually, over the project life, the in-service training evolved from a highly centralized and rigid model to a more flexible vision. The concept of “teachers as trainers” and of “horizontal/peer training” has become a reality and one of the most valuable achievements of the reform process. Reform-minded, highly professional *human resources* were mobilized for training; *institutional capacities* were created by fostering the responsiveness of rayon education directorates in providing every day support to teachers. Teachers’ positive motivation, creativity and ownership in their professional self-development were consolidated. From a conceptual point of view, this model ensured correlation between the new curricula, textbooks, evaluation procedures, on the one hand, and the teacher training process, on the other hand.

An impact study was conducted at the end of the Project on the effects of the teacher in-service training on classroom activities (see *Impact Study on the Teacher Retraining Process of the MGEF*, Chisinau, 2002). A number of 720 lessons have been attended and monitored by a group of independent experts. An opinion survey was conducted in which 600 parents and 600 students participated. Six localities, two from each region (North, South, Central) have been monitored. A wide range of aspects were examined: attainment of

learning objectives, content, teaching and learning technologies, the use of textbooks and other teaching/learning materials. The quantitative and qualitative data clearly show that the in-service training has an effective impact on the improvement of every day teaching and learning practices in the classroom. The most important aspect is that the majority of the students is satisfied with the new approach to learning that encourages higher order skills, critical thinking, procedural knowledge and values education.

Textbook Development and Financing Component (US\$11.50 million)

The objective of this component was twofold: (i) to facilitate the introduction of the new curricula by providing schools with an adequate number of textbooks in line with the new curricula for core subjects; and (ii) to help develop a sustainable system of textbook financing that would help guarantee availability of textbooks upon project completion.

The project component was designed to provide textbooks through a competitive bidding system combining the competition for authorship with competition for publication. This represented a total departure from the system that had been applied before in which authors were hand picked by ME in a rather non-transparent manner. The project design included clear bid evaluation criteria for the Manuscript Evaluation Committees and the Bid Evaluation Committee.

In order to ensure students' access to textbooks upon project completion, the project design included a cost recovery system for the textbooks. The amounts collected through the textbooks rental system were to be deposited into a textbook fund aimed at providing ready finance to purchase further copies of textbooks for distribution to schools.

The objectives of the Textbooks component were in line with the overall project objectives and in line with the Government priorities as well as with the Bank's Operational Guidelines for Textbooks and Reading Materials. Achievement of the component objectives as set out in the SAR is rated *satisfactory*. Project outcomes and outputs are described below.

Textbooks. After decades of using unique textbooks supplied by the central Soviet authorities in Russian and then translated into Romanian, and almost total lack of textbooks in the Mother Tongue after 1990, through the MGEP the country managed publishing its own textbooks: 113 titles of basic education textbooks and 86 titles of teachers' guides (including textbooks for grades 1 and 2 which were not initially included under the project, but were subsequently financed due to lack of Government funds at the time); a total of 5.6 million textbooks and teachers' guides were published and distributed to 1,659 schools. It was for the first time that Mother Tongue textbooks were also published for national minorities (Gagauzian, Ukrainian, and Bulgarian for grades 1-9); a significant number of textbook authors became specialists in this domain, started cooperating with authors and universities from Romania and Bulgaria; a competitive textbooks industry and textbooks market emerged with 8 publishing houses (including foreign ones from Romania and France) participating in the textbooks development; given their good quality, textbooks produced by Moldovan publishers are now being procured by other countries in the region (such as Georgia); the new textbooks generation responded to the new curriculum introducing critical thinking, problem solving approaches, shifting the emphasis of teaching and learning from memorization to the ability to use knowledge in real-life situations..

At the time of the final bid in June 2003, the PMU was managing 110 contracts for a total of US\$9.72 million from the project funds. The average price per textbook copy ranged from US\$1.53 (for primary school textbooks) to US\$1.81 (secondary school textbooks); details on textbooks quantities and values are available in Additional Annex 8. Two technical assistance seminars trained staff from six publishing

houses on the bidding process and two seminars trained about 25 textbooks authors.

Currently, in Moldova textbooks are not alternative; schools receive one textbook per subject and grade for all students; however, the second qualified textbook was also published in a reduced number of copies (5,000 in Romanian and 2,000 in Russian per title) for use as additional resource.

The Textbooks Rental Scheme and the Extra-budgetary Textbook Fund. Both were set up as envisaged in the project design and are now considered a success story in the country and in the region. Given the country economic conditions, the successful implementation of the rental scheme and the textbook fund ensured all students with textbooks and demonstrated that this mechanism is the solely viable option to ensure textbooks in schools after the project completion. Reports and direct opinions expressed by beneficiaries during the ICR team visits confirm the successful operation of these mechanisms. The rental fee is appreciated as reasonable by beneficiaries: currently ranging from MDL5.50 for a set of textbooks for grade 1 to MDL72.0 for a set of textbooks for grade 8 (US\$ 1.0 = MDL 12.34); in other terms, the rental fee represents on average 1/4 of the textbook value at primary school level and 1/5 at secondary school level. The project has also financed the software necessary for the functioning of the rental scheme and the textbooks rental fund, installed at rayon level and training for the staff at both central and local level.

The Fund started in 1999 with 2 titles in the rental scheme; to date it has 155 titles for primary and lower secondary education; in 2003, following a Government decision (no. 777) to include high-school textbooks to the rental scheme, 16 new titles were added, and in 2004, other 28 titles. Currently, the Fund's resources amount to approximately US\$4.7 million and 1,659 school units are included in the rental scheme. The rental fee collection rate was quite high: 92% for school year 2002-2003; and 93.23% for school year 2003-2004; for school year 2004-2005, it is expected that the percentage will be again above 90%.

According to the Government Decision no. 448, in support of students from vulnerable families, Local Authorities (LAs) are responsible to pay 70% of the rental fees for 20% of the students. The Ministry of Finance allocated adequate financing to cover differences in rental fees for minorities and to cover textbook costs for residential institutions; it has also worked with rayons and LAs to ensure allocations to cover the rental fees for vulnerable students, but shortfalls existed, as noted in Bank aide-memoires. Yet, officials reported that there are no major problems now in the system and all students receive their textbooks; it appears that there are also contributions from local businesses, as well as other resources.

The good operation of these mechanisms was also demonstrated by the re-printing of textbooks, their replacement, as necessary, already undertaken by the ME following the same bidding processes established by the project. Moreover, as pointed above, the ME has initiated the same process for upper secondary textbooks which were not covered under the project.

Another important aspect related to the textbooks publishing system in Moldova is the evaluation of the textbook quality for re-printing or replacement through a new bid based on textbook quality studies. Two such studies were completed: one for grades 3-4 textbooks and another one for grades 5 and 6 published from project sources. Findings of these studies are made available to the publishers so that they can take them into account for preparing their new competition entries.

Since 2003, textbooks procurement became the responsibility of the National Agency for Public Acquisitions which works in close collaboration with the Textbook Fund manager. This is a first step towards using the country system in procurement activities. Bidding documents and evaluation criteria

mirror the Bank procedures that have been used in the project. The manuscripts quality evaluation falls under the responsibility of the ME (Department for Education Means) which is setting up ad-hoc evaluation committees, as necessary. A new generation of textbooks for grades 3 and 4 was produced in 2003 and 2004 from the Textbooks Fund budget. However, the ultimate measure of its success depends on ensuring its functioning in the future. ME high officials expressed their commitment to maintain these mechanisms in place. Yet, worries have been expressed that, apparently, there are voices questioning the Fund necessity in the future.

Library Books. Another major achievement of this component is the procurement of library books. This was not envisaged in the project design, but substantial project savings (about US\$2.0 million) had been accumulated by April 2003. Such savings resulted from unnecessary piloting costs, lower than estimated cost of textbooks (including cancellation of the bid for history textbooks for grades 8 and 9 due to an upcoming shift to integrated history teaching), as well as the substantial unallocated loan proceeds of UD\$1.38 million; a decision was made by the Government to use the savings in order to procure library books and it was fully supported by the Bank. This was seen as an essential support to all general schools in the country (1,530) since they mostly had in their libraries the old books in the *Cyrillic* script, basically of no use for the students. Fifteen (15) publishers, both local and foreign, participated in the selection process offering about 4,400 titles. The ME appointed committee selected about 3,800 titles according to established categories and principles. Each school received a catalogue with all titles and was entitled to make its own choice within a given amount of money (fixed equal amount per school MDL 8, 000 plus additional fund reflecting the number of students MDL27.0).

The Government proposal to procure new library books and other teaching aids was fully in line with the project development objectives and with the project description and aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the reforms introduced under the project, by enhancing the teaching process, and reinforcing independent learning and thinking. A critical element of this intervention was that schools were offered the chance to choose their own library books and materials, in contrast to the past practice of centrally made decisions on such educational inputs; this represented a huge step forward in a critical direction.

However, the delivery of books to each school (which is entirely under the responsibility of the Government) has been very slow due to the limited capacity of the delivery company and is expected to be finalized by March-April 2005.

Project Management and Implementation Component (US\$0.37 million)

The Project Management and Implementation Component was aimed at supporting the Ministry of Education to manage and coordinate overall project implementation through financing technical assistance, equipment and incremental operating costs, as well as studies required for the preparation of a possible future project.

Based on the final assessments of the main project results and achievements and its development impact the overall project management and implementation can be assessed as *satisfactory*. Both ME and its implementation agents carried out the project activities in compliance with agreed project objectives and design, reflected in approved project documents between the Government and the Bank.

The Project management and implementation structure covered three main levels of implementation agents designated by the Ministry:

- 1) Project Steering Committee (PSC), chaired by the First Vice-Minister of Education – a governing

body of the Project, responsible for overall guidance, oversight of its activities and monitoring project progress;

2) Project Management Unit (PMU) – an implementation team set up by the Ministry for day to day project management and coordination of activities; the PMU was responsible for ensuring effective, timely and efficient project implementation in accordance with the agreed time-table and World Bank procedures;

3) Technical departments and institutions under the Ministry in charge of actual implementation of project activities by components.

The envisaged implementation structure proved to be well designed to support the achievement of project objectives. The process entailed a lot of coordination from the PMU side, a small team of five staff, but the Ministry departments and institutions were directly involved into the actual implementation. The Steering Committee members were high level officials (mostly vice-ministers) from key institutions including the Ministry of Economy, Finance, the National Bank; despite difficulties in convening SC meetings, given the high responsibilities of the its members, needed decisions were taken in due course. The Project reached its targets including setting up an integrated institutional structure for curriculum development and assessment/evaluation; establishing an effective and flexible system of textbook production, distribution and rental; developing human resources (authors of textbooks and curricula experts identified and trained, teachers trained) and strengthening institutions.

The PMU managed all the project resources in accordance with the project objectives, acted as the main liaison to the Bank, monitored project costs and project accounts, the availability of counterpart funds, processed disbursement applications, undertook major procurements prepared and distributed due reports on project status to all parties involved.

The Ministry departments and institutions were directly involved into the actual implementation of project activities; this resulted in strengthening ME institutional capacity and laying solid grounds for ME departments overtaking full implementation responsibility of upcoming projects.

The project implementation would have tremendously benefited from an Information Communication Education component (IEC). Such a function would have ensured an appropriate communication of the reform messages promoted by the project to all stakeholders; at the same time, it would have ensured the necessary feedback on the ministry initiatives. This can be considered a major shortcoming of the project design and needs to be included in any future project.

Project monitoring and evaluation

While the Project, indeed, reached its targets, its monitoring and evaluation system was designed to measure inputs, process and outputs, and fully consisted of quantitative-type indicators. At the time of the project design, the Bank SAR format did not include a logical framework annex and outcome based indicators. The PMU conducted regular project implementation monitoring and submitted timely progress reports. However, key performance indicators were limited only to numbers of textbooks published, curricula completed, examinations carried out, teachers trained, etc. A baseline study would have been necessary as well as a beneficiary assessment, and project impact study upon completion.

The final stakeholder conference held on May 19, 2004 helped in the final evaluation and dissemination of Project results. There is a lot of evidence that the project had considerable impact on the development of the Education system of Moldova - reflected in new practices and systems used, changed attitudes of all stakeholders. In the future, systemic use of quality monitoring and evaluation tools for the implementation of education policies at the national level, as well as specific programs and projects are recommended.

EMIS

Although not a formal component of the MGEP, the need for an improved EMIS became a priority following a ME consultation workshop with stakeholders (early 2003) on optimizing delivery in the education sector in the framework of the next stage of reforms in the country and the provision of the informational basis needed to support such initiatives. EMIS related activities were formalized through a Ministry Order (no. 611/12/13/2003) and were administered by the PMU under the Project Management and Implementation Component; funds already allocated for studies required for the preparation of a possible future project were used.

Two national consultants were hired, office furniture and the necessary equipment were procured for the ME Information Management Directorate. Studies were conducted on the following aspects: information needs assessment at ministry, rayon and school levels; availability of equipment and expertise at rayon level; legal framework for EMIS support; financial aspects. An international consultant assisted with the Information Needs Assessment and subsequent steps in the design of the EMIS. A comprehensive report was developed to serve as a basis in the development of the EMIS. Also, a pilot school mapping software for one rayon was produced. However, progress related to this activity has been slow due to lack of clarification on the Ministry/Government's position on the model of decentralization that they plan to implement. This will make a significant difference to the EMIS design and eventual implementation.

4.3 Net Present Value/Economic rate of return:

Not applicable.

4.4 Financial rate of return:

Not applicable.

4.5 Institutional development impact:

The development impact of the Project will continue to materialize during the years following completion of the investment phase of the Project, based on the new *models, systems, attitudes and institutions* developed and tested (country's own national system of curriculum development, assessment and evaluation was created, own textbook market and national human capacity for curriculum and assessments was established, a more effective use of both budgetary and extra-budgetary funds was introduced). Also, mention should be made of an increased private sector and community participation in education finance.

New institutional structures have been created (ME Department for Evaluation, the National Curriculum and Assessment Council, and the Textbook Rental Fund), and the existing ones have been strengthened (Ministry of Education own departments: Directorate for General Pre-University Education, Department for Certification and Teacher Training, Institute of Educational Sciences, etc.). During the project these entities fulfilled new roles and functions and they have the capacity to grow.

In addition, the most important and lasting effect of the MGEP had been the development of a cadre of specialists in curriculum design, assessment, teacher training, textbook quality. Their value to the Moldovan education system is a real asset for the future, especially for further education reform initiatives. Care should be taken to retain the experience and expertise now available in the system and to consolidate the project achievements.

5. Major Factors Affecting Implementation and Outcome

5.1 Factors outside the control of government or implementing agency:

Of all the transition economies, Moldova has had one of the hardest recessions. After 1996, the economy

faced a sharp fall towards depression and poverty with short-lived governments failing to embark on a coherent reform policy. A tentative revival in 1997 was squashed by the financial crisis in Russia, with devastating effects on Moldova's exports, the government budget and debt.

In the last three years the economy has begun to recover, with real annual growth rates averaging more than 6.7 per cent. However, the driving force behind this growth has been increased consumption, fueled by rising real wages and workers' remittances which do not actually point to a sustainable structural reform.

Moldova still has the highest poverty rate in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. The proportion of the population below the national poverty line was estimated at 49 per cent in 2002 (World Bank 2004: Box 3). Poverty rates are highest in small towns (63 per cent) and rural areas (52 per cent) and lowest in large cities (29 per cent): since most live in rural areas, the rural poor predominate, accounting for 68 per cent of all poor people.

Beside emigration for work and poverty at home, another important aspect is the downward trend in the number of young people of school age. Between 1990 and 2003, the number of 7-15 year olds is estimated to have fallen by 20 per cent.

In the above mentioned context, the implementation of the MGEP was clearly a difficult task. The Government had significant difficulties in providing the necessary counterpart funds through project implementation which caused delays with fulfilling contract commitments that were subject to local financing and posed a substantial risk to the project.

Nonetheless, difficulties were gradually overcome, the project implementation progressed and finally reached its targets

5.2 Factors generally subject to government control:

Delayed effectiveness. The project was negotiated in January 1997 and the loan agreement was signed on June 02, 1997. The Development Credit Agreement was signed on November 17, 1997. The project became effective on July 1, 1998. Reasons for this included delays in meeting the effectiveness conditions including setting up of the Department of Evaluation within the Ministry. The Department's activity started on July 28, 1998; its activity was constantly subject to some risks and did not have the necessary number of staff; however, it has successfully carried out its tasks. However, the ME should have a firm sustainability plan for the activities performed under this department.

Also, the Borrower was supposed to provide evidence that a project account for counterpart funding was opened as a condition for effectiveness and an initial agreed first portion of counterpart contribution had been deposited. The Government failed to allocate its contribution on time, and this resulted in a major delay in project effectiveness.

ME management turnover, changes in the ME structure. Frequent changes of ME leadership, inherent to a transition period, sometimes resulted in delays in project implementation. There were seven ministers during the life of the project. Changes in the ME structure sometimes affected the coordination of project components and decisions on changing staffing sometimes resulted in eroding valuable capacity built in the course of the project implementation; the departments most affected were the DE which has lost staff over the project life although initially thinly staffed, and the Teacher Development Department. Frequent changes in the ministry leadership and the associated job uncertainty among component heads contributed to poor incentives to build on reforms. The PMU structure helped a lot get through the political uncertainties in the ME in operational terms.

5.3 Factors generally subject to implementing agency control:

Project Coordination. Coordination among the project components was a constant challenge, as mentioned in several Bank aide-memoires. It was a difficult task given the diverse parties involved, the complex activities and it was a learning process gradually improving over the life of the project. Coordination efforts were needed to ensure the “products” of various component activities are timely assimilated and accurately reflected (for example, feedback from textbooks evaluation timely available for subsequent cycles of textbook development, learning assessment results being fed into revisions of learning standards). The PMU had an essential role in facilitating all these processes as well as to convene meetings of the Project Steering Committee and ensure important decisions were timely taken.

Use of test results. The exercise of closely examining test results which may not necessarily be positive and using them in discussions with stakeholders was not always welcome and was sometimes seen by the ministry as triggering a negative image on its own performance, more specifically, on the DE performance. Such results should have actually “fed” technical consultations that would have identified solutions to help students have better learning achievements.

5.4 Costs and financing:

The total baseline project cost was estimated at US\$20.0 million equivalent. The loan from the Bank was US\$16.8 million equivalent and the Government counterpart financing was estimated at US\$3.3 million.

Out of the Bank loan of US\$16.8 million, US\$5.0 million was cancelled (as of August 14, 1997). Upon request of the borrower the cancelled amount was covered through an IDA credit of SDR3.5 million/US\$5.0 million equivalent. Subsequently, an amount of US\$527,335 was cancelled from the Bank loan (as of March 12, 2002). The Bank loan was therefore reduced to US\$11.27 million.

The total project cost estimated at the time of completion is US\$ 17.10 million including: the Bank and IDA loans contribution of US\$15.76 million (US\$11.08 million and SDR3.5/US\$4.68 million equivalent, respectively) and the Government counterpart funding share of US\$ 1.34 million.

The table below summarizes the above mentioned; Annex 2 provides further details.

	IBRD	IDA	Govt
SAR and LA	US\$ 16.8 (million)	0	US\$ 3.2 (million)
LA amended and IDA credit approved (Nov.17 1997)	US\$ 11.8 (million)	SDR 3.5 mln (US\$ 5.0 mln equivalent)	US\$ 3.2 (million)
After reallocation/cancellation amendment (after mid term review)	US\$ 11.273 (million)	Actually disbursed at that time SDR 3.5 (mln) (US\$ 4.681 mln equivalent)	US\$ 3.2 (million)
Actually spent up to closing date	US\$ 11.080 (million)	SDR 3.5 (mln) (US\$ 4.681 mln equivalent)	US\$ 1.347 (million)

Price estimates for the project were mostly correct except prices for textbooks development and production which were estimated higher than the actual levels at the time of their procurement. The impact of the above mentioned as well as the availability of a substantial unallocated amount, made it possible to meet reallocation needs during the project, but also to respond to important and urgent requests from the system

(i.e. financing textbooks for grades 1 and 2 as well as school library books which were not originally included in the project).

The project benefited from a Project Preparation Facility (PPF) advance of US\$700,000 mainly aimed at financing consultant services for the project preparation.

It should also be mentioned that funding for remuneration of the work of local experts working in various expert working groups and evaluation Boards was insufficiently planned and should be considered in follow up projects.

Time frames were subject to changes due to some delays in implementation (also given the late effectiveness). The initial project completion date was June 30, 2003 and the loan closing date on December 31, 2003 ; the loan was extended to June 30, 2003; in addition, a partial extension of the loan closing date (for the textbooks component) was granted to August 31, 2004.

6. Sustainability

6.1 Rationale for sustainability rating:

The project sustainability is rated *likely* given that changes are already internalized by Moldova's education system and successive Governments proved their commitments to the education reform. Sustainability reasons related to each project components are described below as well as areas for further action.

Curriculum: The existence of a set of institutional structures and mechanisms (the *National Curriculum and Assessment Council*), of coherent and sound curriculum vision and model (the *National Curriculum Framework*) as well as of an overall strategy for curriculum development and implementation ensure the sustainability of the Curriculum component of the MGEP. The following challenges should be addressed in the near future:

- *The need to reactivate the National Curriculum and Assessment Council (NCAC).* The NCAC has performed an efficient activity during the life of the project; however, it has apparently interrupted its activity for the last period. The Council activity should be reactivated, its structure and functioning mechanisms should be revised and adapted to the current developments of the Moldovan education system. All further curriculum products (new framework, standards, subject curricula, guidelines etc.) should go through the Council and should be subject to approval mechanisms so that overall coherence and quality throughout the *curriculum system as a whole* are assured. At the same time, the participatory processes developed during the project should be preserved and functionally fostered.
- *The need to clarify institutional roles and functions.* In the future, the Ministry should ensure the appropriate management of the curriculum development process while the Institute of Educational Sciences should focus on the research, design, and quality monitoring functions of the curriculum process.
- *The need to foster school based curriculum and school-based processes.* School managers, teachers, inspectors and other stakeholders should be trained on school-based curriculum and other types of school-based processes. In the future, this would respond to the system's need for a bottom-up approach in improving the quality and relevance of education.
- *The need to ensure an ongoing improvement of the curriculum.* This would cover quality-improvement processes such as: simplifying curriculum, "essentialising" standards, objectives and content, eliminating possible overlapping, ensuring subjects' integration, eliminating content overloading.

Assessment: During the lifetime of the project the DE has developed a coherent vision and a national model of evaluation and assessment in Moldova. This is largely accepted by the education community of the

country and by the public. The DE established formally in 1998 currently has 5 professionals and its legal, financial and professional status seems secure. Moldova also has an overall future strategy in approaching the issue of assessment and examination. These elements are essential for the sustainability of the Learning Assessment component of the MGEP. However, the following aspects should be addressed in the future.

- *The need to strengthen the institutional capacity of the DE.* During the project life the DE has successfully achieved its tasks related to the grade 4 testing and grade 9 examinations. However, in the future, the ME should allocate sufficient staff and funds so as to ensure that the DE has the necessary capacity to run the entire set of national testing and examinations, including the “Baccalaureate” (exit exam at grade 12). The DE should become a semi-autonomous National Assessment Agency that would ensure the coherence of the testing and examination system and practices in Moldova.
- *The need to develop an appropriate concept and underlying practices for classroom assessment.* Teacher training, ongoing support and mentoring, guidelines, sample materials are needed for everyday classroom assessment.
- *The need to use lessons learned from the assessment exercise for informed decision making.* The reports prepared by assessment specialists following grade 4 testing and grade 9 exams should include clear and explicit recommendations for the ME management, rayon education directorates, schools managers, teachers, and parents.

Teacher Retraining: The results of the In-service training Component so far – the new decentralized vision and model of training, the human resources and institutional capacities developed during the process, the up-dated content of the training – constitute a sound prerequisite for the sustainability of the Project. For the future, it is necessary to foster the current model by adapting it to current international developments of teacher in-service training, to permanently up-grade the trainers, to involve them in the continuous process of school-based professional development of teachers. The following aspects should be specifically addressed in the future:

- *The need for an overall teacher training strategy.* The new Concept and Strategy of In-service Teacher Training (already approved by the ME Collegium – *Decision 8.8. of October 21, 2003*) should go through the remaining approval process as soon as possible so as to become operational in the system.
- *The need for demand driven in-service teacher training.* Following the project interventions, the education community is fully prepared for a more flexible in-service teacher training model: a national accreditation center could be created that would assess and accredit training modules to be offered by different training providers (universities, research institutes, NGOs, etc.); a system of credits could be used for teachers professional development.
- *The need to revisit the school inspection model.* The current approaches to in-service teacher training are not fully reflected in the current model of school inspection. School inspectors and managers are still following outdated methods of quality monitoring and inspection and should receive the necessary mechanisms and training consistent with the type of training received by the teachers.

Textbook Development and Financing Component: While this component is considered a major success story of the project, there are essential sustainability aspects that need to be highlighted:

- *The need to secure the Textbooks Rental Scheme and the Extra-budgetary Textbook Fund as the only viable option to provide textbooks to all students.* This mechanism ensuring every student in Moldova has access to textbooks should be maintained in the future and the ME should ensure that the Fund is not destroyed. This is a most important sustainability issue especially given the current discussions on dropping the rental scheme in the near future.
- *The need to ensure the good functioning of the Textbooks Rental Scheme and the Extra-budgetary Textbook Fund.* The textbook provision. mechanism and capacity of the fund should be carefully and constantly monitored to ensure its good functioning avoiding deviations from its initial

procedures and its overburdening with additional titles that may jeopardize its operation. It is recommended to be cautious in the introduction of new textbooks into the rental scheme. Also, the scheme should cover primarily core textbooks and teachers' guides for the new textbooks. Some or all the textbook rental fund should be invested in hard currency as a precautionary measure.

- *The need to maintain the textbooks competitive approval mechanism developed under the project.* The textbooks development system should continue to be a transparent, fair competition activity. The project achievements demonstrated this is the best way to ensure quality textbooks. Successful implementation of new curricula and textbooks is directly linked to teacher training. In this respect, it is important to note that the new approach envisaged by the ME to an integrated history teaching and quick introduction of new integrated history textbooks requires a broad transparent consultation process with all stakeholders involved in curriculum development and approval, textbooks development and production, in teacher training and in preparation of teacher support guides.

Project Management and Implementation:

In the future, the following aspects should be taken into account:

- *The need to monitor outcomes.* Project key performance indicators were limited only to numbers of textbooks published, curricula completed, examinations carried out, teachers trained, etc. In the future, for a better project monitoring, baseline studies would be necessary as well as beneficiary assessments, and a project impact study upon completion. At the same time, systemic use of quality monitoring and evaluation tools for the implementation of education policies at the national level, as well as specific programs and projects are recommended.
- *The need to set up an appropriate EMIS.* While some progress has been made under the project with the EMIS initiatives, there are signs of backsliding; this is mainly due to the ME apparent change of focus from EMIS to the current SALT project. This program seems to be primarily focused on constructing a network of hardware and software for educational management. But this is different from an analysis-based EMIS concept for informed decision making. In order to ensure the future implementation of an EMIS, issues remain to be resolved related to the staffing of the ME Policy Department, and more generally there is an important need to strengthen capacity in policy making, planning and budgeting.

Crosscutting Sustainability Aspects:

The following challenges remain:

- *The need to firm up the institutional structures set up in the project.* The MGEP was only the first phase of the education reform in Moldova. Institutional structures established through the project (such as the NCAC, DE, textbooks approval committees, the Extra-budgetary Textbook Fund) should be strengthened as part of an overall system ensuring a coherent conceptual framework for their domains of interest.
 - *The need to establish a policy development and monitoring unit in the ME.* Some of the main challenges are now related to sustaining the reform and ensuring an institutional set-up which would facilitate policy planning, monitoring and evaluation
 - *The need to set up a national quality assurance mechanism.* Such a mechanism should include baseline surveys, impact studies, quality standards and indicators, monitoring mechanisms and tools.
 - *The need for a bottom-up approach and school-based solutions.* The system is prepared for a clear shift from a top-down to a bottom-up approach: participatory school- and community- based curriculum development; adapting the curriculum to students' needs, school-based professional development of teachers, school-improvement and community involvement need to be supported.
- The need for an information and communication function.* Appropriate communication on the reform

initiatives and other education system and Ministry concerns is essential to get the necessary support and feedback from stakeholders and beneficiaries

6.2 Transition arrangement to regular operations:

Most of the project activities are already integrated in the regular operations of the ME and school units. Therefore, no special transition arrangements were needed. Moreover, as already pointed out, there are very well functioning mechanisms in place such as the Textbooks Rental Scheme and the Extra-budgetary Textbooks Fund which were created under the project and need to be carefully maintained in the future. Moreover, the National Agency for Public Acquisitions took over the responsibility of textbooks procurement working in close collaboration with the Extra-budgetary Textbook Fund.

In general, the institutional structures established through the project such as the NCAC, the DE, the textbooks approval committees, the Extra-budgetary Textbook Fund, should be strengthened in the future as part of an overall system ensuring a coherent conceptual framework for their domains of interest. More specifically, the DE should be turned into a National Assessment Agency running not only the grade 4 tests and grade 9 examinations, but the entire set of national testing and examinations, including the “Baccalaureate” (exit exam at grade 12).

A follow-up project will have to take into account the above mentioned recommendations.

7. Bank and Borrower Performance

Bank

7.1 Lending:

The MGEP emerged as a priority during discussions with the Government in October 1995, when a Bank mission examined priorities in social sectors. Subsequently, the Bank was constantly involved in a dialogue with the ME and other key ministries (Economy and Finance) on education reform issues. The dialogue was further expanded through a Public Expenditure Review at the time which included a detailed analysis of education sector resource allocation issues. Resources for the technical project preparation were mobilized through a Japan grant facility (PHRD) and through the Netherlands Trust Fund for the social sectors in Moldova.

The project design was guided by the anchor points of the new Government strategy: a concept paper, adopted by the Parliament in December 1994, the new Education Law, adopted by the Parliament in July 1995, and the National Program for Education Development (1995-2000). The core components of education reform, as reflected in these documents were translated into the project components covering: a major overhaul of the education program (curricula, textbooks, teaching methodology) to adjust the approach to teaching to new demands of the education system, with particular focus on formative education; reform of teacher training, introduction of modern mechanisms of student assessment.

Project preparation focused heavily on involving the ME staff as well as the larger education community expected to be involved in the implementation of education reforms. A team of highly qualified Bank specialists and consultants participated in the preparation covering all relevant areas and the needed skill mix for general education, assessment, educational materials, teacher training; some of them continued to be involved during implementation. An important role was also played by experienced consultants from nearby Romania where similar reforms had already been implemented. Another element that helped the preparation process was the presence in the field of the task manager that basically made possible the direct daily contact with ME and other counterparts. Also, throughout project preparation, the Bank maintained close coordination with other donors including UNICEF, the Soros Foundation, the European Union, and GTZ.

While the project's financing plan was realistically designed in 1996/1997, through the project implementation it was possible to reallocate funds especially from the large unallocated category (US\$1.3 million) to meet urgent needs of the system (textbooks for grades 1 and 2, library books).

7.2 Supervision:

The project was closely supervised by Bank specialists and consultants all through the implementation; the project first year of implementation was supported by the presence in the field of the task manager at the time (who had also been responsible for preparation). By the end of the project, there were four task managers in total, leading competent Bank teams; also, the continuity of specialized consultants was ensured.

The MGEP was included in the Quality of Supervision Assessment (QSA5) in CY2002. The overall assessment at the time concluded that the supervision effort was very solid, with some efforts of best practice; the quality of the Bank team was found excellent; the team members were appreciated to be very good at identifying issues with implications for the development objective and linking the project with the overall Bank program in support of reforms. Suggestions made at the time of this QSA5 on more innovative approaches to issues including sustainability, increasing stakeholders involvement, particularly parents' influence, were taken into account and efforts were made especially during field visits to follow these recommendations.

The supervision strategy applied by the Bank focused on building and sustaining project systems and processes, and using those capacities to manage project implementation as well as any unexpected issues, focusing on steps toward achieving the development objective, using field visits to verify project outputs and checking with the recipients. Fiduciary aspects were closely monitored by specialized staff who regularly participated in Bank missions.

Bank teams provided very well organized, clear aide-memoires focused on key issues; also the ratings given at different points in time during implementation are considered appropriate and risks very closely monitored, especially related to counterpart funds availability, stability of ministerial management to build capacities required after project closing.

7.3 Overall Bank performance:

The Bank's overall performance is rated *satisfactory*. The Bank team was a constant partner of the Government in implementing this demanding project; also the Bank responded with flexibility to Government requests to meet urgent needs of the system (such as the textbooks for grade 1 and 2, the library books) and ensured the additional time necessary for finalizing project activities.

Borrower

7.4 Preparation:

The Borrower performance in preparation is assessed as *satisfactory*. At the time, it was the first project in the education sector to be financed by the Bank and there was no related experience in the country; the preparation team was made up mostly of committed specialist from the Institute of Education Sciences; some of them continue to be involved in different functions and to manifest a substantial project ownership sense.

7.5 Government implementation performance:

Government implementation performance is rated *satisfactory*. As already mentioned, the project had a longer than expected period of implementation, in order to complete both original and additional activities.

Despite inherent difficulties of a transition economy, with macroeconomic difficulties and political uncertainties, the project advanced and finally reached its targets.

7.6 Implementing Agency:

The implementing agency performance is rated satisfactory. As already noted, the PMU's activity is commendable; it was a key player in the project implementation; given its continuity, it functioned as a catalyst of all project activities, bringing together the needed actors, managing to coordinate and monitor activities, ensuring procurement and financial management adequacy. The PMU was largely supported by the technical assistance provided by the project implementation adviser (Arizona State University during 1998-2000); also the implementing agency had a good cooperation with CITO (Netherlands) that had a umbrella TA contract covering all education components.

7.7 Overall Borrower performance:

Based on the above, the overall Borrower performance is rated *satisfactory*.

8. Lessons Learned

The lessons learned during the process are clustered into the following categories: (i) Sector-wide lessons; (ii) Component-specific lessons. Positive and negative lessons as well as strengths and weaknesses are presented in this context.

8.1. Sector-wide lessons

8.1.1 Areas of strength:

- *The relevance of the “Christmas Tree” Model.* The MGEP entailed a wide range of basic and correlated education sub-sectors – i.e. curriculum, assessment, textbooks and teacher training based on the so-called “Christmas Tree” model. Without any doubt, such a model was an appropriate option for Moldova - a country that faced a *first phase* of an overall education reform. Piece-meal approaches would not have sufficient power to determine systemic changes.
- *The relevance of the project for current needs and future challenges.* The MGEP started from the most relevant needs of the students, it carefully took into consideration the current international trends in education development, as well as the future challenges of education in the country, and the need for gradually structuring the future knowledge society.
- *The quality of project design.* The success of the MGEP can be explained - among other factors - by the quality of the initial project design. The design was clear and relatively simple (yet not simplistic; the components were both consistent for the stakeholders and understandable for the public. This ensured clear guidance to all those involved in implementation).
- *The quality of Project management.* The management of the MGEP ensured both a good correlation of the components, but also the involvement of all relevant stakeholders reaching all schools in the country. The direct involvement of the Ministry staff members generated an active ownership that can successfully mobilize forces for the future.
- *The quality of local expertise.* In Moldova, it was a valid option to identify key experts and local “champions” for every project domain. They not only promoted the development of the domains they worked in; but also created an informal network of promoters of the education change and reform idea at large.

8.1.2. Areas of weakness:

- *The importance paid to base-line surveys.* One of the main weaknesses of the MGEP was the lack of *sector-wide base-line survey* carried out at the beginning of the Project. In the specific case of Moldova, such a survey could have clearly displayed the state of art of the current system; at the same time, it would

have constituted a valuable frame of reference and comparison for any further evaluation of the project, especially, the final one.

- *The role of quality monitoring.* The MGEP did not have a clear set of *quality indicators* and *quality monitoring mechanisms*. This would have been necessary; and the quality monitoring of the implementation should have started from the very beginning offering valuable and timely data for further improvements.
- *The role of an overall – both top-down and bottom-up – institutional reform.* The institutional reform undertaken in the MGEP mostly covered Ministry or Ministry-related bodies. While this was part of the first reform steps and cannot be considered a weakness, schools need more support to shift from their status of mere *implementing bodies* to the one of responsible *learning organizations* and this should be part of future projects. In the same sense, *intermediate level managers* – i.e. *rayon inspectors, methodologists and school managers* - should have been timely and specially trained for the implementation process. The discrepancy between the training provided to teachers and the one for school administrators and inspectors was one of the most dysfunctions during the implementation of the MGEP
- *The need for public awareness on education reform initiatives.* Another limitation of the MGEP was the lack of a specialized PR and Communication function. Fundamental social sector reforms as the MGEP would have benefited from permanent and sustainable public awareness raising campaigns as well as horizontal and vertical communication with all those concerned.

8.2. Component-specific Lessons

Curriculum

- As a positive lesson, the MGEP showed that in order to develop and implement a thorough curriculum reform in the context of a transition country the following are necessary: (a) a clear curriculum vision; (b) specially designed institutional structures for supporting the curriculum development process (i.e. the NCAC) and (c) a clear-cut strategy for curriculum implementation. Moldova offers a good example for countries that face the same challenge.
- However, in a curriculum reform, more should be done for getting the reform idea to the schools. In this sense, the training of teachers, inspectors and school managers in matters concerning *school-based curriculum* and other types of *school-based processes* is of utmost importance.

Assessment

- One of the best moves and at the same time lessons of the Assessment component is the creation of a special institutional structure able to conduct all national assessments and examinations. This is an important step forward for a transition country as Moldova, at the beginning of a long-term process of reforming the whole assessment system.
- Timely decisions are needed on the national testing and examination mechanisms, regulations and timeline and the public should be informed in due course on all these aspects. Guidelines concerning subject-based and classroom assessment are needed in a reform process given that classroom assessment is crucial for quality assurance.
- Reports prepared by assessment specialists should contain more concrete, clear and explicit recommendations to different categories of stakeholders so that the results of the assessment and examination process can really improve an information based decision making process.

Teacher Training

- Education reforms are more likely to show results when all or almost all teachers are directly covered by teacher training activities; this was possible in a small country like Moldova and induced a “reform spirit” that was one of the biggest strengths of the MGEP.
- However, some weaknesses also offer lessons for the future, namely: (a) in-service teacher training

that supports the implementation of specific reform measures should be provided at least one step prior to the implementation itself; (b) teacher training should not focus just on “delivering” new teaching methods and practices; on the contrary, the training should offer teachers a wider perspective on the change process; strategic thinking and planning skills are essential for teachers professional reflection and status.

Textbooks

- The best lesson offered by the MGEP is the fully successful textbook provision mechanism ensured by means of a reliable and credible textbooks rental Scheme and an Extra-budgetary Textbook Fund.
- Therefore: (a) existing good mechanisms should be maintained when there is no evidence of feasible and sustainable new mechanisms; (b) the textbooks development and competition system should be a transparent one; in this respect, procedures and processes need to be timely clarified with all parties involved to avoid misunderstandings or irregularities (e.g. domestic/foreign vs. public/private preference rates, appeal procedures, contract cancellations); (c) textbook development should be part of a clear and transparent consultation process with all stakeholders.

9. Partner Comments

(a) Borrower/implementing agency:

On August 24, 2004 the former project PMU submitted the MGEP Final Evaluation Report. In the Ministry's view, the objectives of the project have been achieved satisfactorily. Additional Annex 9 contains the short version of the Report.

(b) Cofinanciers:

NA.

(c) Other partners (NGOs/private sector):

During the ICR visit, NGOs such as Pro-Didactica (one of the most important local education NGOs), acknowledged the importance of the MGEP and its benefits for the system. Pro-Didactica supported a lot of complementary activities at school level in Moldova and had an important input related to the curriculum development for high-school and pre-primary education based on the project model.

Also, in a meeting held with private publishers, the project contribution to a competitive textbooks industry and textbooks market that emerged in Moldova. At the same time, the publishers offered a very realistic view on the challenges in the future, the need to sustain the successful mechanisms already put in place and to improve them in the future.

10. Additional Information

The ICR visit took place during November 21 to December 1, 2004. The Bank team included:

Mariana Doina Moarcas, Operations Officer, ECSHD

Olena Bekh, Operations Officer, ECSHD

Alexandru Crisan, Consultant

Ala Pinzari, Operations Officer, ECCMD

Annex 1. Key Performance Indicators/Log Frame Matrix

Outcome / Impact Indicators:

Indicator/Matrix	Projected in last PSR ¹	Actual/Latest Estimate
Key Indicators: - Number of curricula approved and adopted.	134	186
Key Indicators: - Number of draft curricula completed.	134	186
- Number of consultations held.	97	186
Key Indicators: - Number of invitations issued to submit textbook proposals.	7	17
- Number of textbooks delivered to schools by title.	95	113
Key Indicators: - Number of grades covered by book rental scheme.	9	9
- Percentage of expected fee collected (net of subsidies to needy families).	80	87%
Key Indicators: - Baseline survey conducted for grade 6.	1	1
- Carrying out of national examination for grade 4.	4	4
- Carrying out of national examination for grade 9.	3	3
- Number of initial training courses held.	1,680	1975
- Number of refresher training courses held.	2,065	1600
- Number of teachers trained in initial courses.	39,000	35752
- Number of teachers trained in refresher courses.	45,000	47334
Number of School libraries that received books and other didactic materials	1530	

Output Indicators:

Indicator/Matrix	Projected in last PSR ¹	Actual/Latest Estimate

¹ End of project

Annex 2. Project Costs and Financing

Project Cost by Component (in US\$ million equivalent)

Component	Appraisal Estimate US\$ million	Actual/Latest Estimate US\$ million	Percentage of Appraisal
Curriculum Development	0.64	0.32	49.61
Learning Assessment	0.82	0.68	82.61
Teacher Retraining	3.34	2.20	65.92
Textbooks Development	11.50	11.90	103.3
Project Management Unit	0.37	0.65	176.15
Total Baseline Cost	16.67	15.75	
Physical Contingencies	1.74	0.00	
Price Contingencies	1.55	0.00	
Total Project Costs	19.96	15.75	
Total Financing Required	19.96	15.75	

Actual/Latest estimates include funds spent from the IDA credit of SDR3.5 (US\$5.0).

Note: The increase in the actual estimated PMU costs is due to a number of factors: (1) There were 5 PMU staff members instead of the originally estimated 3.5; (2) Implementation took 5 years instead of 6; (3) An additional 8 months of international technical assistance was required; and (4) There were additional expenditures for EMIS preparation which was added to the component in 2003.

Project Costs by Procurement Arrangements (Appraisal Estimate) (US\$ million equivalent)

Expenditure Category	Procurement Method				Total Costs
	ICB	NCB	OTHER	NBF	
1. Goods					12.1 (11.9)
1.1. Equipment & Materials	0.4 (0.4)		1.2 (1.0)		1.6 (1.4)
1.2 Textbooks		10.5 (10.5)			10.5 (10.5)
2. Services					2.2
2.1 Textbooks Distribution				2.2	2.2
3. Consultants & Training					4.7 (4.1)
3.1 Technical Assistance & Studies			1.5 (1.5)	0.1	1.6 (1.5)
3.2 Training & Fellowships			2.6 (2.6)	0.5	3.1 (2.6)
4. Incremental Operating Costs			0.1 (0.1)	0.2	0.3 (0.1)
5. PPF Refund		0.5 (0.5)	0.2 (0.2)		0.7 (0.7)
TOTAL					20.0 (16.8)

Project Costs by Procurement Arrangements (Actual/Latest Estimates) (US\$ million equivalent)

Expenditure Category	Procurement Method				Total Costs
	ICB	NCB	OTHER	NBF	
1. Goods					12.67 (12.67)
1.1. Equipment & Materials			1.12 (1.12)		1.12 (1.12)
1.2 Textbooks	5.58 (5.58)	4.14 (4.14)	0.06 (0.06)		9.78 (9.78)
1.2 (a) Library books			1.77 (1.77)		1.77 (1.77)
2. Services					0.48
2.1 Textbooks Distribution				0.46	0.46
2.2 Equipment Distribution				0.02	0.02
3. Consultants & Training					3.55 (2.95)
3.1 Technical Assistance & Studies			1.21 (1.21)	0.13	1.34 (1.21)
3.2 Training & Fellowships			1.74 (1.74)	0.47	2.21 (1.74)
4. Incremental Operating Costs			0.11 (0.11)	0.10	0.21 (0.11)
5. Taxes				0.17	0.17
TOTAL					17.08 (15.73)

Note: Figures in parenthesis are the respective amounts financed by IBRD (including the IDA credit)

Project Financing by Component (in US\$ million equivalent)

Component	Appraisal Estimate			Actual/Latest Estimate			Percentage of Appraisal		
	Bank	Govt.	CoF.	Bank	Govt.	CoF.	Bank	Govt.	CoF.
Curriculum Development	0.64	0.05		0.32	0.03		50.0	60.0	
Learning Assessment	0.82	0.11		0.68	0.10		82.9	90.9	
Teacher Retraining	3.30	0.60		2.20	0.50		66.7	83.3	
Textbooks Development	11.50	2.25		11.90	0.55		103.5	24.4	
Project Management Unit	0.37	0.29		0.65	0.16		175.7	55.2	
TOTAL	16.63	3.30		15.75	1.34		94.7	40.6	

Actual/Latest estimates include funds spent under the IDA credit of SDR3.5 (US\$5.0).

Annex 3. Economic Costs and Benefits

No economic costs and benefits was carried out at the time of project appraisal, nor was it done at the time of the ICR.

Annex 4. Bank Inputs

(a) Missions:

Stage of Project Cycle	No. of Persons and Specialty (e.g. 2 Economists, 1 FMS, etc.)		Performance Rating		
	Month/Year	Count	Specialty	Implementation Progress	Development Objective
Identification/Preparation					
	10/16/1995	5	PROJECT TEAM LEADER (1); EDUCATION (1); HEALTH (2); CONSULTANT (1)		
	01/09/1996	2	CONSULTANT (2)		
	01/31/1996	4	PROJECT TEAM LEADER (1); EDUCATION (1); HEALTH (1); CONSULTANT (1)		
	04/02/1996	3	CONSULTANTS (3)		
Appraisal/Negotiation					
	10/09/1996	6	PROJECT TEAM LEADER PTL (1); EDUCATION (1); TEXTBOOKS EXPERT (1); TEACHER DEVT. EXPERT (1); CURRICULUM DEV (1); OPERATIONS ANALYST (1)		
Supervision					
	06/16/1998	1	EDUCATION (1)	S	S
	02/08/1999	3	PROJECT TEAM LEADER (1); PROJECT OFFICER (1); CONSULTANT (1)	U	S
	10/09/2000	7	PTL (1); TEXTBOOKS EXPERT (1); TEACHER DEVT. EXPERT (1); ASSESS.&EXAM. EXPERT (1); PROCUREMENT OFFICER (1); OPERATIONS ANALYST (2)	S	S
	04/01/2002	8	TEAM LEADER (1); PROJECT OFFICER (1); CURR. & ASS. SPEC. (1); TEACHER TRAINING SPEC. (1); TEXTBOOK SPEC. (1); PROC. SPEC. (1); FMS (1); OPERATIONS ANALYST (1)	S	S
	04/01/2002	6	PROGRAM TEAM LEADER (1); OPERATIONS OFFICER, CH (1); PROCUREMENT OFFICER (1); EDUCATION SPECIALIST (1); TEXTBOOKS EXPERT (1); PILOT SCHOOLS AND CURR (1)	S	S

ICR	03/31/2003	5	TASK MANAGER (1); OPERATIONS OFFICER (2); EDUCATION SPECIALIST (1); TEXTBOOKS EXPERT (1)	S	S
	12/05/2003	5	TASK MANAGER (1); CONSULTANT (2); PROJECT OFFICER (1); PROCUREMENT OFFICER (1)	S	S
	05/21/2004	1	TASK TEAM LEADER (1)	S	S
	11/28/2004	4	PROJECT OFFICER (3) CONSULTANT (1)	S	S

(b) Staff:

Stage of Project Cycle	Actual/Latest Estimate	
	No. Staff weeks	US\$ ('000)
Identification/Preparation	10	20
Appraisal/Negotiation	60	123
Supervision	193.5	404
ICR	8.8	17
Total	272.3	564

Annex 5. Ratings for Achievement of Objectives/Outputs of Components

(H=High, SU=Substantial, M=Modest, N=Negligible, NA=Not Applicable)

	<u>Rating</u>				
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Macro policies</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input checked="" type="radio"/> NA
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sector Policies</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input checked="" type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NA
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Physical</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input checked="" type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NA
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Financial</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input checked="" type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NA
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Institutional Development</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input checked="" type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NA
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Environmental</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input checked="" type="radio"/> NA

Social

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Poverty Reduction</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input checked="" type="radio"/> NA
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Gender</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input checked="" type="radio"/> NA
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other (Please specify)</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input checked="" type="radio"/> NA
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Private sector development</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input checked="" type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NA
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Public sector management</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input checked="" type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> NA
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other (Please specify)</i>	<input type="radio"/> H	<input type="radio"/> SU	<input type="radio"/> M	<input type="radio"/> N	<input checked="" type="radio"/> NA

Annex 6. Ratings of Bank and Borrower Performance

(HS=Highly Satisfactory, S=Satisfactory, U=Unsatisfactory, HU=Highly Unsatisfactory)

6.1 Bank performance

Rating

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lending | <input type="radio"/> HS | <input checked="" type="radio"/> S | <input type="radio"/> U | <input type="radio"/> HU |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supervision | <input type="radio"/> HS | <input checked="" type="radio"/> S | <input type="radio"/> U | <input type="radio"/> HU |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overall | <input type="radio"/> HS | <input checked="" type="radio"/> S | <input type="radio"/> U | <input type="radio"/> HU |

6.2 Borrower performance

Rating

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation | <input type="radio"/> HS | <input checked="" type="radio"/> S | <input type="radio"/> U | <input type="radio"/> HU |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government implementation performance | <input type="radio"/> HS | <input checked="" type="radio"/> S | <input type="radio"/> U | <input type="radio"/> HU |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation agency performance | <input type="radio"/> HS | <input checked="" type="radio"/> S | <input type="radio"/> U | <input type="radio"/> HU |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overall | <input type="radio"/> HS | <input checked="" type="radio"/> S | <input type="radio"/> U | <input type="radio"/> HU |

Annex 7. List of Supporting Documents

- Ministry of Education/Department for Evaluation. *Exam for Graduating Mandatory Education (Grade 9). Romanian Language and Mathematics* (“*Examenul de absolvire a gimnaziului. Limba romana. Matematica*”). Analytical Final Report. Chisinau. 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.
- Ministry of Education. *The Strategy for Continuous Training of Teachers in Mandatory Education* (*‘Strategia pentru formarea continua a personalului didactic din invatamantul general obligatoriu’*). Draft. Chisinau. 2002.
- Ministry of Education. *Educational Standards. Gimnasium and Lycee.*. Chisinau. 2003.
- Ministry of Education. *Organization and Management of the Pre-school, Primary Gimnasium and High School Education* (*‘Organizarea si dirijarea procesului educational in invatamantul prescolar, primar, gimnazial si liceal. Anul de studii 2004-2005’*). Chisinau. 2004.
- Ministry of Education/Department for Evaluation. *Syllabi for Testing at the End of Primary* (*‘Programa pentru testarea de la finele ciclului primar in anul scolar 2000-2001’*). Chisinau. Lumina. 2001.
- Ministry of Education/Department for Evaluation. *Criteria for Marking Students’ Performance* (*‘Criterii de notare pentru instrumente de evaluare de tip test oral, essu, investigatie experimentală si proiect’*). Chisinau. 2001.
- Ministry of Education/Institute of Educational Sciences. *Conception of the Assessment of Students’ Performance in Moldovan Mandatory* (*‘Conceptia evaluarii rezultatelor scolare in institutiile de invatamint preuniversitar din Republica Moldova’*). Draft. Chisinau. 2000.
- Ministry of Education. *Evaluation on the Quality of Textbooks* (*‘Evaluarea calitatii manualelor scolare. Raport general’*). Report. Chisinau. 2004.
- Government of Moldova. Ministry of Education. *Decision no. 1307/24 November 2004 concerning the Approval of the Structure of the Ministry of Education. Hotarire cu privire la aprobarea structurii aparatului central al Ministerului Educatiei. Monitorul Oficial – 26 Noiembrie 2004.*
- Ministry of Education. *The Experiment concerning the Assessment of Students’ Basic Competencies.* (*‘Experimentul privind evaluarea capacitatilor de baza a elevilor’*). Chisinau. Octombrie 1997.
- *** *Teoria si metodologia Curriculum-ului universitar* (*‘Theory and Methodology of University Curriculum’*). Chisinau. CEP USM, 2003.

Additional Annex 8. Textbooks Data

Grade	Number of Subject-matters	Number of textbooks titles
I	12	7
II	18	10
III	18	10
IV	19	11
Total I-IV	67	38
V	20	14
VI	21	15
VII	23	16
VIII	22	15
IX	21	15
Total V-IX	107	75
TOTAL I-IX	174	113

Grade	Total quantity (copies)	Total value (\$ 000)	Unit Price (\$)
I	167 600	310	1.85
II	355 700	638	1.79
III	453 400	571	1.26
IV	557 400	831	1.49
Total I-IV	1,534,100	2,350	1.53 (average)
V	741 350	872	1.18
VI	840 725	1,614	1.92
VII	887 350	1,603	1.81
VIII	805 350	1,627	2.02
IX	805 350	1,653	2.05
Total V-IX	4,080,125	7,369	1.81 (average)
Total I-IX	5,614,225	9,719	1.73 (average)

Additional Annex 9. Borrower's Final Evaluation Report

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Project Management Unit General Education Project 41510-MD Project Final Evaluation Report

Initial goals:

The general goal of the General Education Project (GEP) was to support the strategy of the Government of the Republic of Moldova for the reformation of the general education (lower secondary education). The Project's specific objectives were to update and improve the quality of general education by strengthening the curriculum and training the teachers; strengthening evaluation and examination, and textbook quality.

Project components

The Project was structured into four well-linked components:

- I. Curriculum Development (US\$ 0.64 mln)
- II. Learning Assessment (US\$ 0.82 mln)
- III. Teacher Training (US\$ 3.3 mln)
- IV. Textbook Development and Financing (US\$ 11.5 mln)

Achievement of goals and outputs

The major objective of supporting the strategy of the Moldovan Government for the reformation of general education has been achieved satisfactorily.

The specific objectives have been achieved with regards to the updating and improvement of primary and lower secondary education quality by means of strengthening the curriculum, teacher training, assessment and examination, and quality of published textbooks.

The major Project achievement consists in the change that has taken place in the education sector, its discharge from a centralized system based on a standardized curriculum and focusing on an objective-based curriculum, promoting the formative education system; from inefficient student assessment systems to a reformed system, with a flexible curricular framework, new textbooks published on tender basis and a modern assessment system.

The Project's most important and sustainable merit was the identification and development of competent professionals in curriculum development, educational measures, teacher training and textbook quality, their value for the Moldovan education system has been significant and must remain a valuable investment for the future.

The Project shortcomings were:

- 1) Insufficient mastering of Project objectives and processes by second level decision making factors in the education system and at local level;
- 2) Lack of quality performance indicators of Project results;
- 3) Changeable, politicized and often unclear priorities of the successive leaderships and teams of the Ministry of Education. Sometimes, the pressures to fulfill short-term tasks focused the attention more on immediate outputs rather than on the process and sustainability.

Outputs by components

Curriculum Development (US\$ 0.64 mln.)

The component's objective consisted in revising the entire general education curriculum, ensuring its correspondence with the new requirements set for the education system, reflection of modern teaching-learning methods improved from a methodological point of view. The process of development and approval of curriculum for all subjects was guided by the National Curriculum and Assessment Board, founded in 1997. The main innovation within this component was the organization of the development process with a considerably large base and participation of area specialists.. Thus, in 1998 there were approved the curricula for grades 1-4 and in 2000 – for grades 5-9.

As a result, there were developed 186 curricula for all lower secondary education subjects and grades, instead of the 134 initially planned. The curricula for all subjects were translated into Russian, published and distributed to every teacher. The national curriculum has been implemented gradually, starting with 1998 and reaching grade 9 in 2004/2005.

The output consisted in the development and approval of the National Curriculum Framework Plan implemented since the school year 2000/2001 (order no. 277 of 11 May 2000). The new framework plan stresses the development of skills, abilities and attitudes, clear curricular and implementation standards, a student-oriented learning process, and relevance to the social issues and real life.

The new framework plan essentially remodeled the method of teaching and learning in primary and secondary education. It was structured into a common (obligatory) part, which constitutes approximately 85% of the teaching time and a school-based program of approximately 15% of the teaching time. In order to support the students' personal growth in accordance with the characteristics of and to balance the presence of various cultural fields, the new plan was structured into six curricular areas (Language and Communication, Mathematics and Sciences, Socio-Human Education, Arts, Sports, Technologies).

Learning Assessment (US\$ 0.82 mln.)

This component's objectives stipulated in the Project Evaluation Report (PER) were the following:

1. Integration of assessment objectives into the new curriculum;
2. Improvement of technical quality of final evaluation tools in grade 4 and grade 9 examinations to monitor students' performance and the impact of the new curriculum and new textbooks on learning results;
3. Development and distribution of packages with sample materials – pattern of assessment for core subjects in grades 1-9;
4. Training of central trainers in using these materials;
5. Performance of a sample research of students' achievements in the framework of the current system and their comparison with students' performance in the framework of the new curriculum by the end of the Project.

The evaluation and examination system reform was based on the following principles:

- (i) Enhancement of the **impartiality** of continuous class evaluation through a system based on adequate assessment tools;
- (ii) Focusing on the quality of **gymnasium graduation examinations**;
- (iii) Improvement of examination **impartiality and transparency**;
- (iv) Transition from a “content-based assessment” to an “**objective-based assessment**”;
- (v) Transition from the evaluation of memorized information to the evaluation of the **ability to apply** the knowledge in a new, real life context.

A Department for Evaluation and Examination, later called Department for Evaluation (DE), was created

in August 1998 to improve and update the national examination system. Starting with 1999, DE has been responsible for the development, administration and evaluation of grade 4 and 9 national examinations. DE staff received considerable technical assistance at local level, DE specialists attended trainings conducted at the National Service for Evaluation and Examination (NSEE) in Romania, participated in international conferences, underwent a specialized training in Great Britain and The Netherlands.

The Project financed all inside and outside training. Modern equipment was purchased for DE for test multiplication and statistical data processing.

The DE achievements have been the following:

- Introduction of a new national evaluation by the end of grade 4 (2000-2003).
- Introduction of a new gymnasium graduation examination in compliance with the Law on Education starting with 2001; the new strategy of examination implementation includes:
 - Preparation of an examination program
 - Pilot testing of examination documents at raion level
 - Preparation of final tests version
 - Examination unfolding
 - Preparation and distribution of final reports.

In the period 1998-2003 there were developed and delivered a series of evaluation guides and materials as follows:

- Methodological guide “Evaluation of School Results”, 1996, republished and modified in 2000.
- Subject Evaluation Guides: Romanian Language, Foreign Languages, Mathematics, which were to be distributed free of charge to schools.
- Programs for grade 4 national testing and grade 9 graduation examination.

Although there have been difficulties with the implementation of DE tasks, grade 4 and 9 national examinations have in general been successfully conducted, are accepted by parents, students and teachers. Very few of them would like to go back to the old method of examination. The nature of the new tests is completely different from the old content of examinations. They are related to the specific objectives of the curriculum and evaluation and aim at evaluating other abilities than the simple reproduction of knowledge.

Teacher Training (US\$ 3.3 mln.)

The component’s main objective was to provide the key personnel in raion education departments and teachers with the necessary training to implement effectively the new curricula and evaluation methods and thus to improve the quality of classroom teaching. The successful implementation of the new curricula, didactic materials and evaluation methods depends to a great extent on how well teachers are trained for making such changes.

Therefore, upon the development of new curricula and new textbooks started out the process of teacher training. Teacher training was conducted at three levels: national, central and local. The former Teacher Training Institute, as the main institution responsible for training, trained its own staff and the staff of institutions–teacher training centers. There were set up 7 such centers.

The trained specialists from those centers trained methodologists, inspectors, school managers, teachers selected from the former raions (judets) so that they, in their turn, could train teachers on site. Thus, there was formed a “cascade” model, which used the existing structure and adopted its capacity and functions to the new challenges of education. This method was more efficient also from the viewpoint of costs of training a large number of teachers within a short period of time. This model was also efficient and

well-thought through the fact that it transferred the accents and the main training effort from the central level to the raion one, thus consolidating the capacity of education departments of providing support to teachers. From the content point of view, this model ensured sound relations between the new curricula, textbooks, evaluation procedures, on one side, and the teacher training process, on the other side.

Thus, in the course of four years, 34 central trainers, 482 local trainers and over 10 thousand primary school teachers underwent initial and recap training for primary schools. As to lower secondary education, there were trained 148 central trainers, 1638 local trainers and about 30 thousand teachers in all school subjects..

For the successful fulfillment of on-site teacher training tasks, there were set up 52 training centers, each of them being properly equipped for the organization of training activities.

For the sake of efficiency of teacher training courses, in 2000 there were published (at the stage of recap retraining) Methodological Guides for curriculum development and implementation for all subjects included in the teaching plan. They were accompanied by a General Guide for curriculum implementation.

At the end of the Project, there was conducted an impact study on the teacher training process in classroom activities. A group of independent experts attended 720 lessons, and an opinion survey was conducted on 600 parents and 600 students. The monitoring took place in six localities, by two in the north, center and south of the country.

There were monitored the learning objectives, contents, teaching and learning technologies and the utilization of textbooks and other didactic materials.

The result of the study was presented in a broad report that will serve as argument for planning teacher training sessions in the future.

The quantity and quality statistical analysis denotes that the results of teacher training within training sessions exerts an essential positive influence on the teaching-learning process, the quality of educational activities is basically good.

Textbook Development and Financing (US\$ 11.5 mln.)

The objectives of this component were the following:

1. To facilitate the introduction of the new curriculum by supplying schools with an adequate number of textbooks corresponding to the new curriculum;
2. To provide assistance with the creation of a sustainable textbook financing system that would contribute to the guarantee of textbook availability after Project completion.

The expected outputs of the Textbook Development component were:

- to publish and deliver 95 titles (approximately) 4.2 million textbooks for Romanian schools, 1 million textbooks for Russian schools and 150 thousand textbooks of national minority languages;
- the publishing industry to be able to meet the needs of the educational system regarding textbook supply;
- to set up a Textbook Rental Scheme and an Extra-budgetary Textbook Fund, establish the mechanism of textbook reproduction after Project completion.

In 2000 the Ministry came up with a proposal to the World Bank to include grades 1 and 2 textbooks in the list of textbooks published from the Project sources. The request was explained by the lack of budgetary funds for the republication of grades 1 and 2 textbooks published by the Government in 1996. Also, a request was made for the publication of the Civic Education textbook for grades 5-7 in connection with the

introduction of this new subject into the teaching plan.

The editing, publication and distribution of textbooks for the general education textbooks – grades 1-9 – were the responsibility of PMU and CAM. Contracts were signed with those publishers that had submitted good proposals in terms of **quality** and **reasonable prices**. The costs and quality were balanced through an accurate and transparent evaluation scheme, included in the Tender Documents. At this education level, textbooks are distributed on a rental basis, being entirely purchased by MoE.

In the period 1998-2003 there were organized 17 tenders.

After six years of efforts made in favor of the reform, the following main achievements can be mentioned:

- 113 titles of basic textbooks and 86 titles of guides have been published;
- for the first time there have been published textbooks for the national minorities: Gagauzian Language, Ukrainian Language, Bulgarian Language, grades 1-9.
- groups of authors for each subject have been made up;
- a competitive publishing industry at international level has been created;
- a group of specialists adequately trained for textbook evaluation;
- over 10 publishing and printing houses (including foreign ones) have been involved in textbook development;
- a new generation of textbooks for students has been created, which develops the knowledge and skills required by the new curriculum: analytical thinking, problem solving, tolerance etc. facilitating the integration of the new generation into a democratic society;
- 14 titles of new alternative textbooks for the lower secondary education;
- a new textbook financing mechanism has been set up by means of application of the Textbook Rental Scheme and creation of the Extra-budgetary Textbook Fund.
- One of the component's major achievements has been the procurement of fiction and methodological literature for school libraries. In the procurement campaign took part 15 local and foreign publishers and agents. The procedure of literature and other material selection unfolded in a transparent and democratic way.

Overall, there have been purchased books and materials in the amount of US\$ 1736 thousand, 92% of which is the share of local publishers and agents and 8% - of foreign ones.

At the beginning of the 2003/2004 school year, the main task - production of new textbooks for the lower secondary education – had been accomplished. However, the Ministry of Education decided to continue the process of textbook renovation under the same principles: transparent competition among publishers, textbooks chosen by teachers.

In order to assess the textbook quality level and to make the decisions on their republishing, the Ministry organized a textbook quality study:

The study of grade 3-4 textbooks was conducted in 2002/2003, and of grade 5-6 textbooks – in 2003/2004.

The results of these studies will be used by the Ministry of Education in the production of the second generation of textbooks for primary and lower secondary education.

EMIS In view of preparing the informational basis for the next step of reforms, it was decided to use the Project funds to support the first stage of development of the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

For this purpose a series of studies on the following issues were developed and conducted:

1. Analysis of information needs at ministry, rayon, school levels;
2. Current availability of equipment and expertise in rayon education departments;

3. Legal framework to support EMIS;
4. Financial aspects – budgetary and extra-budgetary financing.

An international consultant with experience in the field was hired to assist with the needs evaluation and EMIS set up. As a result of the on-site and off-site assistance, a comprehensive report was developed, which will serve as basis in the development of the EMIS project.

Project Management and Implementation

Project Management Unit (US\$ 0.37 mln.)

The Project Management Unit (PMU) was set up under the Ministry of Education to manage and coordinate the Project's overall implementation.

The Project Management Unit's activity was directed towards:

1. preparation of Steering Committee meetings;
2. monitoring of component implementation activities;
3. financial management of the Project;
4. procurement activities;
5. development of project amendments;
6. preparation of reports.

The Project Management Unit was created by Government Decree no. 659 of 9 December 1996. Its main activities were directed towards:

1. Preparation of Steering Committee (SC) meetings

Between 1 July 1998 (the date of Project's entering into effect) and the Project closing date (30 June 2004), the coordination of the implementation activity took place under the supervision of the Ministry of Education along with a Steering Committee. The SC's role consisted in adopting educational policy decisions related to project implementation and in ensuring the coherence between the activities of different components. SC meetings were prepared to make reference to main problems and obstacles, estimations of implementation stages or to analyze the financial aspect of the implementation process.

2. Monitoring of component implementation activities

The monitoring of Project activities was one of the most important activities carried out by PMU. The monitoring process referred to the following aspects of the implementation effort:

- quantity aspect of project achievements(annex 1);
- quality of final results;
- time as a limited resource;
- use of funds.

The estimations made by periodic progress analyses served as starting points for various financial reallocations or corrections of Project's working programs.

3. Financial management of the Project

The financial activity of the Project was based on the work with two accounts: Project Special Account (for loans) opened with Moldova Agroindbank and Project Account for Moldovan Government contribution. The accounting was kept in accordance with the specific national and international procedures. Applications for Withdrawal were prepared for the replenishment of the Special Account 2251301029,

which were accepted by the Disbursement Department of the World Bank.

The Project's finance and procurement specialists prepared, implemented, monitored and assessed over 200 contracts for the execution of works and provision of goods and consultancy services.

Budgets were provided for each Project sub-component, as shown in Annex 2. Starting with 1999, annual audits of the Project were conducted. The audits were conducted by the international companies Arthur Anderson and Ernst & Young in accordance with international accounting principles and rules.

In 2000 the Project was subject to an inspection by the Court of Accounts.

4. Procurement activities

Based on the specific provisions of the Loan Agreement and World Bank Evaluation Report, PMU prepared General and Specific Procurement Plans. During Project implementation, there were purchased goods, services and civil works in the total amount of US\$ 13,15mln..

5. Development of Project amendments

During Project implementation, the PMU prepared 5 amendments to the Loan Agreement approved by the World Bank and the Moldovan Government, as follows:

Amendment dated August, 6, 1998 (Reallocations);

Amendment dated November, 5, 1998 (Procurement of Grade 2 Foreign Language
Textbooks)

Amendment dated April, 4, 2002 (Procurement of Grades 1 and 2 Textbooks)

Amendment dated July, 16, 2002 (Reallocations)

Amendment dated June, 3, 2003 (Project Extension)

Letter from Country Director dated June 18, 2004 (Limited Extension)

6. Preparation of reports

In accordance with Loan Agreement provisions, starting with 1998, the PMU prepared in each year of implementation half-yearly reports that reflected the evolution of implementation and the main problems and obstacles generated by the legislative aspects or related to the quality of financial control. The financial or staff employment problems were also mentioned. The reports were submitted to the World Bank, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Education.

Besides half-yearly reports, PMU also prepared partial reports in response to the requirements of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Moldovan Government, Court of Accounts, World Bank etc.

The Project was coordinated by the ministers: Petru Gaugas, Iacob Popovici, Anatol Gremalschi, Ion Gutu, Ilie Vancea, Gheorghe Sima, Valentin Beniuc.

During Project implementation, PMU encountered difficulties resulted from the Project complexity, conducted controls, administrative issues, changes in the Ministry's structure etc.

In spite of those difficulties and of the growing work amount, PMU preserved the key staff and entirely fulfilled its tasks: organization of complex procurement activities, coordination of the activities of all components, information sharing, communication with education departments, teachers, parents, publishers and other stakeholders. PMU managed all Project resources in accordance with the stipulated objectives, acting as the main link with the World Bank, monitored project costs and accounts, processed disbursement applications, carried out major procurements, administered technical assistance contracts with contracted publishers, prepared and distributed to relevant agencies reports on the implementation status and the

encountered problems, expenses made for each Project component, as well as annual audit reports.

Impact

The general institutional impact of the Project is significant. The MoE capacity of using effectively the personnel, managers and specialists of different levels of the education system has been highly increased.

The new institutional structures set up under the Project – the National Curriculum and Evaluation Board, evaluation commissions, textbook evaluation expert commissions, working groups for the development of assessment materials – all of them operated under the Ministry's control policy, with well defined roles and relations.

The most important and sustainable Project's effect was the identification and development of a framework of qualified professionals in curriculum development, educational measures, teacher training, and textbook quality. Their value for the Moldovan education system is significant for the future.

Care must be taken that the experience developed during the six years of Project implementation is not lost. Project achievements must be strengthened and passed on.

Factors affecting implementation and outputs

Negotiated in January 1997, approved by the Board of Directors in November 1997, the Project entered into effect only on 1 July 1998. The reason – failure to meet some conditions stipulated in the Evaluation Report. One of them was the creation of the Department of Evaluation within the Ministry. The Department of Evaluation was created only on 25 July 1998 and its activity was constantly subject to various risks until the end of the Project. From the very beginning the established composition did not correspond to the requirements (5 persons instead of 8). Along the way, the nominal composition was modified several times, the trained personnel being dismissed for various reasons and replaced with new specialists that needed initial training in evaluation. By the end of the Project, the DE composition increased by only one unit, which is insufficient for the realization of major tasks of organization of evaluation at the end of every educational level (primary, gymnasium, lyceum).

Another problem that slowed down Project implementation was related to the timely supply of the necessary funds from the Government share.

The Project's design stresses the coordination between the four components linked by contents to ensure a logical coherence and consistency in the implementation of reforms in the education system of Moldova. The coordination and consistency were affected by the multiple changes in the Ministry structure.

The structure of the Supervision Committee was made up of heads of ministries, representatives of the Parliament, Government and National Bank, but did not include component representatives and just a few teacher representatives. Its modifications, efficiency and frequency of meetings greatly depended on the interests of the succeeding ministers.

Costs and finance:

The total cost of the Project was estimated at US\$ 19.96 million, of which US\$ 16.8 million was to be financed by the Bank and US\$ 3.16 million – by the Government. At the moment of preparation of this Implementation Report, the Project has disbursed-US\$ -15,7mln from the Bank loan and has also spent US\$ 1,35 mln from the Government contribution. Out of US\$ 16.8 million, about US\$ 5 million or SDR 3.5 million are the share of the International Development Association and US\$ 11.8 million is the World Bank Loan.

Upon updating the procurement plan for 2003, it was established that about US\$ 2 million would remain unused. The difference between the estimated contribution and the actual one was especially caused by the

lower textbook costs per unit as well as lower costs for the procured equipment; lower indirect costs also contributed to this. The initial estimations of costs also were higher than the current costs. The impact of the above-mentioned loan development made possible to reallocate during the Project and to respond to the Government's request of providing funding for the publication of grades 1-2 textbooks and grades 5-8 Civic Education textbooks. Also, WB supported the Government initiative of using the unused amount of circa US\$ 2 million for the procurement of fiction and methodological literature for school libraries. In order to implement successfully the procurement, the loan closing date was extended by 12 months. Despite the disbursement rates and slow implementation pace, caused by the difficult transition period, the loan has been disbursed in proportion of 94% (Compared with Appraisal Estimates).

Sustainability

The Project sustainability is possible to assess by means of continuous support of reforms in each component.

Curriculum The creation of the National Curriculum and Evaluation Board made possible the sustainability of the curricular reform. However, it is essential that curriculum development be considered a basic on-going function and not a single task that was finished upon approval of the Curriculum National Framework Plan and subject curricula.

Teacher training As a measure of support of the actions undertaken under the Project and in order to ensure the sustainability of the teacher training process, it is necessary to set up a National Continuous Training Center. The new body would aim at further developing the teaching standards and accredited quality teaching programs.

The situation regarding of the continuous training strategy is uncertain. The strategy was approved by the Ministry Collegium in May 2004, after which it was to be adapted to the provisions of the new Law on Education.

It is necessary to ensure the funding of the necessary continuous local assistance so that it has a permanent impact on the teachers' behavior and their teaching style. The training capacity for a student-oriented education system, based on standards, requires a strong network at school level in order to be implemented.

Evaluation The legal, financial and professional position of the Department of Evaluation seems to be uncertain. The small capacity of DE does not allow for the development of supporting materials for teachers in all subjects and grades. Evaluation has not been fully integrated as an essential part at school level, day to day. Essential physical and financial resources are required to support the component sustainability, increase its credibility and ensure its capacity.

The solving of this problem is the medium-term priority of the Ministry of Education.

Textbooks By the end of the Project, PMU had developed a set of documents on the policy framework, with important recommendations on continuity after the Project end. Recommendations were made on the technical aspects, systematic evaluation and approval of titles that constitute the legal duty of MoE; on economic aspects (finance, price policy etc.); procurement system, delivery, administration and payment issues; political and social aspects, such as the supply with books of students belonging to national minorities and vulnerable families.

The component sustainability is related to the following concerns:

- a) Preservation of the considerable experience acquired under the Project;
- b) Evaluations must be conducted by teacher committees and independent specialists adequately trained under the agreed and known criteria;
- c) All tenders and evaluations must be professional, justifiable and transparent and must aim at

quality improvement;

d) Each new tender must be preceded by a thorough study of textbook quality based on which it should be decided whether to republish or reprint one textbook or another;

e) On a medium or long term, there should be preserved and continued the operation of the Textbook Rental Scheme and financing of textbook reproduction from the sources of the Extra-Budgetary Textbook Fund.

Final conclusions

The results of the six year implementation show that most education specialists, teachers, parents agree with the main goals and features of the reform Project. During six years of effort, the Ministry of Education managed to implement successfully the General Education Project #41510-MD: all project objectives have been accomplished in due time. The Project offered the Ministry of Education a good possibility of negotiating a new project.

However, the success will be real only if the ending Project does not become the end of reforms in the Moldovan education system.

In conclusion, the following years must strengthen what has been done so far, all the reform's initiatives, mechanisms and bodies must be made sustainable.

Also, it should be mentioned that so far the reforms have been made from top to bottom: the main goals and activities were determined by the experts of the Ministry and the World Bank, the implementation was coordinated with the Ministry, the source of funds was also the Ministry with its structures and the services were purchased at the center. Little space was left for local initiatives or for various differentiated strategies.

Such an approach, from top to bottom, pays less attention to real classroom activities. It cannot take into account the specific needs of many schools that work in different conditions. A new initiative for reforms must ensure a balance between the "top to bottom" and "bottom to top" approaches, making local initiatives possible and making the teacher and the school manager responsible for the quality of the taught education.

Any new reform project must have as one of its goals the training of teachers and school managers. The implementation of the new curriculum, work with the new concepts, operation with new concepts, utilization of the new evaluation methods, selection of textbooks were difficult tasks for many teachers that had not been adequately trained. The new role of the teacher in the classroom – manager of the teaching activity – was not mastered by this category of teachers. Therefore, the provision of broad access to training programs is, first of all, a professional duty and not in the least – a moral one. The sustainability of reform measures both within teacher training at pedagogical institutions and on-the-job, becomes primordial for the success of any reform programs in the future.

One of the most important achievements of the Project was the identification and training of a group of national experts from different educational areas. Due to some unclear stipulations in the financial legislation, it was impossible to remunerate adequately their activity. But the use of insufficiently paid staff is a great risk for the successful implementation of any project.

A weak and vulnerable point in the Project was the lack of a communication strategy. The preparation and implementation of the Project were considered responsibilities of the education specialists. Thousands of people were involved in the activities of different components, but this was not enough. From the viewpoint of communication and advertising, it was long before the reform process received essential assistance from parents, students, local authorities, and the society. Although reference had been made to this problem at

the Project mid-term evaluation, the explanation of the reform measures did not become one of the Ministry's priorities. A systematic communication strategy was missing, which represents a significant risk for a project that aims at changing the education system.

Cooperation with the World Bank

The relations between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the World Bank, the main sponsor of the Project, unfolded under the following documents:

- Agreement on the Loan provided to the General Education Project approved by the World Bank on 2 June 1997 and ratified by the Moldovan Parliament on 5 February 1998;
- Project Handbook;
- World Bank Evaluation Report dated 21 March 1997.

These documents set up the main Project objectives, the activities that had to be implemented and financial allocations, main rules and procedures that had to be followed during the implementation, and evaluation and monitoring methodologies and instruments. In accordance with the above-mentioned documents, the World Bank supported the implementation effort of the Ministry of Education in the following directions:

A. Support with Project Current Implementation

There was a permanent direct communication by e-mail between the Project Task Manager (Ms. Monica Huppi, Ms. Sue Berryman, Ms. Ilona Szemzo, Ms. Reema Nayar), World Bank Procurement and Finance Officers and PMU members. The component coordinators were in permanent contact with various World Bank consultants. At the beginning of the Project, PMU received technical assistance from the international consultant Mr. Laverne Cook. A special merit for the successful completion of various Project activities had the World Bank curriculum, evaluation and textbook consultants (Ms. Johanna Crighton, Mr. Alexandru Crisan, Mr. Adrian Stoica, Mr. Phillip Cohen), who offered competent advice during the entire duration of the Project.

The resident staff of the World Bank Mission in Moldova (especially Ms. Ala Pinzari) permanently visited PMU, attended Steering Committee meetings, organized and participated in different meetings and consultations with the Government, Parliament, President's Office, providing technical assistance, thoroughly monitoring the implementation progress and offering professional advice on the adjustment of Project's activities and working schedules.

World Bank management and financial and procurement officers (especially Maribeth Macica, Seyoun Solomon, Nicolai Chisteaikov, Ester Kovacs, Wu Yingwei) responded promptly and competently to all PMU requests. Guides, procurement documents or other World Bank relevant information were delivered in time.

B. Periodical Supervision Missions

Every half a year the World Bank organized supervision missions that included meetings with the leadership of the Ministry of Education, Steering Committee members, component responsible parties, social partners and on-site visits throughout the country. Meetings were organized with teachers, students, parents, local public authorities where people expressed their opinions on the Project impact, starting with higher level authorities and including teachers, school directors, students. Those meetings were good opportunities for collecting general and specific information on the satisfaction level of the reform beneficiaries. The evaluation missions' conclusions (positive and negative), approached problems and recommendations were mentioned in the aide-memoirs that guided Project coordinators and component responsible persons in their further activities.

C. Professional Development Support

The World Bank supported the professional development of PMU staff and of Ministry of Education

specialists. They were encouraged to participate in training courses organized by the Bank and courses organized by prestigious training institutions. Ministry representatives were invited to take part and to share their experience with their colleagues from different countries of the world, where educational projects had been successfully implemented.

Project Closing Conference

At the end of the Project, the Ministry of Education and PMU, with the World Bank support, organized a national Project closing conference.

Over 180 participants, representatives from all levels that had been involved in Project development and implementation were invited to the conference.

The participants unanimously appreciated the Project's contribution to the educational reforms in Moldova and stressed the need to continue the good things started by the Project.

The event was widely covered by the press, radio, and TV. There was organized a rich exhibition of the materials developed under the Project.

The conference was attended by decision-making factors from the Government, President's Office, WB international experts, the Permanent Representative of the World Bank in Moldova.

