

**IMPLICATIONS OF WOMEN IN EDUCATION
FOR SOCIETY. THE CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

EUGENIA BOGATU*

Abstract. Concerns for equal rights between men and women in the Republic of Moldova are relatively recent. From this point of view, we cannot speak of a well-established tradition regarding the politics of feminism. Only in recent years, based on projects developed with the support of the Council of Europe, a series of aspects related to the participation of women in public and political life in the Republic of Moldova have begun to be studied. Although in theory there is enough talk from this point of view, in the immediate reality we observe a series of insecurities related to equal rights between men and women. This is largely due to the fact that the Republic of Moldova is a post-Soviet state. The mentalities of the people in this space are imprinted by the practices of the previous society, when patriarchal education dominated the whole society. So, women working in this field are largely responsible for education in society. It is very important that their training is done at the highest possible level, because the quality of the education they achieve in educational contexts results in the quality of society today and, even more so, in the future.

Keywords: *Education for Society; Gender Education; Feminism; Educational Policies; Republic of Moldova; Equal Rights*

Introduction

The concept of feminism has had multiple interpretations over time. It would seem that interpretations in relation to the issue of feminism have been exhausted, in the sense that contemporary society has solved the problem of gender equality. In fact, this is a big illusion, especially in the case of countries that are part of the post-Soviet space. If, according to the Council of Europe, equality between women and men means visibility, autonomy, responsibility and the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of public and private life, in the case of countries that are not yet part of the European Union, all these values are nowhere near being respected and implemented both at the level of private life

* Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Anthropology, Faculty of History and Philosophy, State University of Moldova, Republic of Moldova.

and at the level of public life. In the context of society in the Republic of Moldova, which is (still) a patriarchal society and in which the practices of Soviet education are still fully preserved, women have made and are making huge efforts so that their rights are respected, while their views and representations of all that it means to organize and operate a viable society are taken into consideration. In the last decades, certain increases have been achieved regarding the change in perception in relation to the distribution of roles in society of women and men. This was possible thanks to the European model of democracy, but also thanks to the amplification of the migration process, equally to the increase in the level of education in the society of the Republic of Moldova. Currently, it would seem that things have evolved and that we can talk about a balanced participation of women and men in public institutions, but in practice the situation is of a different nature. The same patriarchal attitude prevails and is perpetuated to this day. To a large extent, the field where women are fully active is that of education. There are also a number of stereotypes, prejudices about feminism, femininity, masculinity, gender power, etc. We believe that the solution in this situation lies in quality education that must be received in any social context, country, as well as in the Republic of Moldova.

The Role of Women in the Post-Soviet Society

We believe that during the Soviet period the image of the woman was fully exploited in various contexts; thus, the woman had become a symbol of physical work, e.g. the woman at the lathe, on the tractor, in the field doing agricultural work, the woman-doctor, the woman-teacher, all these images were imprinted in the collective mind at a conscious and unconscious level of the people who lived in the Soviet period, respectively now, in the post-soviet period. Equality of rights between men and women in the Soviet period was perceived as the fact that women should perform a series of hard physical jobs, common with men. Equality from this point of view meant the “right” to hard physical work. In the Soviet and post-Soviet period, women had and have a major role. Thus, from this point of view, the symbol of the female teacher represents a dominant one in the Republic of Moldova. In the Soviet period, women were also more involved in education, both in institutions, by virtue of their teaching profession, but also in the private environment, in the family. The attitude towards women was similar to the attitude towards men. All the policies that existed at that time aimed at this aspect of equality. Only this type of equality was destructive, implicitly obedient. Reminiscences of this type of education are still felt today. Practically all the policies that were valid at that time, respectively applied, had this characteristic. The perspective of equal rights for women and men was at that time a feature that marked the formation of a mentality with a negative view on the role of women in society, as well as on the formation of the generations that came after. Even if the Soviet iron hand restrained and controlled everything that happened in that period, there were also cases when some women tried to overcome the existential framework of confrontation with men.

Radical feminism was seen as a destructive energy, feminists were perceived as dangerous and capable of destroying the existing set of values at that time. This leads us to the next idea, stating that in any totalitarian society there will always be spirits capable of imposing themselves and changing the course and direction of history and time. The Soviet patriarchal society had a huge role in the distribution of gender roles, respectively in the creation of gender policies during that period. Soviet propaganda mistakenly believed that women's liberation could only be achieved in socialism. The liberation of women in an unconditional, social, cultural, political way was not seen as a goal in itself, but only from an economic perspective. This fact demonstrates the truncation of the concepts of freedom and equal rights. Femininity, as a distinctive feature of female nature, was also misunderstood; that is, women were educated in the spirit of an erroneous attitude regarding their own femininity. Society did not allow women to highlight this trait, as feminine refinement in attitude, approach, behaviour was perceived as a component of bourgeois education. Thus, the Soviet woman became a symbol not only of the feminine. In order to better understand the feminine nature, that is, for women to better understand their own manifestations of their feminine nature, it is necessary for society to have a thorough knowledge of psychology, to have a thorough education from this point of view. To the great tragedy of generations of Soviet people, psychology, logic, philosophy or genetics were considered bourgeois sciences, respectively forbidden to be studied in school. There is no doubt why the people who lived at that time had and still have this education in all its social and individual manifestations. Women and men who were educated in the Soviet space were erroneously and well-intentionedly misinformed about their human nature, as well as about society at large. The erroneous education of one generation carries with it its effects, and in the future, several generations will pay tribute for this education.

The prototype of the woman from the Republic of Moldova, the woman who is part of a post-Soviet space, is one who creates a strong woman, regardless of whether it is a working woman or an intellectual woman. This prototype combines the characteristics of the woman who includes both the reminiscences of a Soviet education and the experience of a modern, Western education. This symbiosis allows the woman from the Republic of Moldova to have a special way of being. Since the Republic of Moldova was and is a patriarchal state, thus, the reminiscences of this patriarchal education are still fully preserved, and it is not easy for women to fight for their rights and freedoms. "Moldovan society is patriarchal, and gender relations are still traditional, which implies the perpetuation of traditional gender roles. Although in the last decades the Republic of Moldova is going through an extensive process of democratization and evolution, as a state, the country's population shares, for the most part, conservative beliefs regarding the role of women and men in society."¹ On a general level, we can state with all certainty

¹ Daniela Terzi-Barbăroșie, *Participarea femeilor la viața publică și politică din R. Moldova. Raport elaborat în cadrul Parteneriatului Estic de Facilitare al Consiliului European*, "Bons-Offices" Publisher, May 2013, Chișinău, p. 7.

that the ratio between women and men at the political level is a balanced one. Women have also made a difference in this area of politics. The presence of women in politics in the Republic of Moldova no longer represents only one criterion, that of the gender ratio, but marks a success and an achievement not only at the state level, but also at the regional and international level. All these successes of women politicians mark the beginning of a favorable period for women in the Republic of Moldova. Their voice is increasingly being heard and is imposing itself in this area of politics. Also, in this context we can also talk about the situation at the level of institutions regarding the gender ratio and role. If we refer to educational institutions – schools, colleges, high schools, the share and role of women is very high, in fact, most of them are women. Respectively, the administrative functions likewise belong to women.

In the case of universities, while the gender share is also balanced, management positions are for the most part delegated to men. And the women who end up having leadership positions in universities, at least some of them, end up having these positions not on the basis of meritocracy, but on the basis of obscure criteria, which have nothing in common with the assessment of women's personal merits in personal domain. Thus, family relationships, the financial factor and others of this kind become the main criteria in relation to which access to one position or another takes place. Men often decide which women, depending on the listed criteria, will access one or another position. At the institutional level, women who are promoted by male bosses gain access to a large extent. The promotion criteria are not always part of the correct ones and do not always consider the professionalism of the promoted women. Professional contests in such institutions are a mime, the principle – the one who must pass will pass, of course according to some obscure criteria. This phenomenon that is encountered in state institutions is the biggest scourge in this state, which prevents the harmonious and integral development of people, which does not allow competent and valuable people to access positions through the experience they have acquired over time. The fair distribution of gender roles must also be done on the basis of meritocracy, not artificially and according to obscure criteria. Equity and justice must prevail in all types of policies, implicitly educational ones. Otherwise, progress, transparency and fairness in a state remain just some directives drawn purely in theory and by no means implemented in practice. Even if in the context of the Republic of Moldova where women are actively involved and have a say in many of the key components of all types of policies, masculinity still prevails in some of the institutional structures. When we refer to the functionality of a state, we are not only referring to gender roles and the weight of the ratio between the number of women and men, but also to how the approaches are built in these structures, or whether the male way of communication is fully present. The orders that are given to be executed without any resistance, the lack of critical thinking, the dominant attitudes that leave no reserve in the hope of the existence of a genuine dialogue, all these are evidence of the manifestation of this pronounced masculine attitude. This fact is reminiscent of Soviet education, which left strong imprints

on the individual and collective consciousness of all people. Currently, it would seem that things have evolved and that we can talk about a balanced participation of women and men in public institutions, but in practice the situation is of a different nature. The same patriarchal attitude prevails that is perpetuated to this day. To a large extent, the field where women are fully active is that of education.

About Gender Equality and Education

The perception of feminism in the Republic of Moldova currently depends in the most direct way on the level of education that the people living in this state have. Feminism is often seen as a radical trend in relation to trends that emphasize a society dominated by the patriarchal attitude in all its possible manifestations. The role of women from this point of view is to contribute to the change of mentality and to strengthen the new practices in education that emphasize freedom, emancipation, justice, fairness. "Several researchers in the field of feminist theory try to reconcile the emancipatory tendency of feminism with the critical conceptions of postmodernism."² It is often not easy for women to fight the stereotypes that dominate society, namely that women are physically more vulnerable and this would automatically add value to men. In many situations, women are forced to perform a series of jobs that are less remunerated, the reason being the perpetuation of experiences with Soviet reminiscences that have always put a sign of equality between men's work and women's work. Throughout the years gender education has been so skewed that women themselves are prejudiced against assigning primacy to men on the grounds that they are men. There is a process of underappreciation on the part of women of their own feminine nature in relation to their own capabilities and aspirations. "The concept of Gender does not only involve women-men relations, but also the analysis of the differences between the roles, responsibilities, barriers and opportunities of men and women in a certain social context, in their evolution under the influence of social class, religion and culture, age, ethnicity, to which is added the geographical, economic and social environment."³ The perspective of an analysis of the created situation demonstrates how deeply this image of the role and place of women in society and in the family has been infiltrated in people's conscious and unconscious. European education, which is implicitly due to the migration process, tends to change the mentality of the people of the Republic of Moldova; respectively, it influences the formation of new policies that will be implemented both now and in the future. This change is not easy to achieve, because the old paradigms, through their carriers, have a great resistance. Feminism in the Republic of Moldova has acquired a fundamental feature of changing accents both socially and culturally. Thus, feminism acquired that feature that would combine in itself both the social and the cultural component. Both aspects are equally essential. One without the other is impossible to conceive and understand.

² Pamela Abbott; Clare Wallace; Melissa Tyler, *An Introduction to Sociology Feminist Perspectives*, Third Edition, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, p. 44.

³ Valentina Bodrug; Silvia Saca; Ina Poustovan, *Gender și educație*, Chișinău, 2001, p. 8.

Women's struggle for a better, fairer, more just society contains within itself the idea of improving the state of affairs that exists in the social, cultural, educational context of the Republic of Moldova. All these dimensions represent a claim of what is weaker, more vulnerable in relation to what is stronger and more stable. So, masculinity and femininity from this point of view are also a representation of the relationship between weak and strong, primary and secondary. The splitting of these two perspectives contains elements that would be impossible to exist on their own. The dichotomy of these two sides is a necessary and very important one. An essential factor for the specific manifestation of the feminist attitude in the Republic of Moldova resides in the confluence of these two cultures – the eastern and the western. Thus, in this context, the specificity of the eastern culture is manifested, which is represented by the dominant patriarchal attitude in all behavioral aspects, and the western culture, which is one that gives primacy to women in all the contexts in which they manifest. Western culture is one that emphasizes individuality, personality traits and human qualities. The freedom of the manifestation of human rights represents the basic characteristic of everything that encompasses the features and the way of being of a society, which tends to impose itself through the set of values focused on a classical cultural foundation, but also in relation to the newest trends of our contemporary times. The presence of Western experience is felt to the full in the Republic of Moldova. This was made possible especially in the last decades, thanks to the migration process, a process that had and has a series of benefits for the functionality of the Republic of Moldova. The negative aspect of migration consists in the depopulation of the Republic of Moldova. During the last decades, many women have migrated. All social categories of women migrated – workers, housewives, intellectuals, etc. Many of them had a precarious material situation, respectively a not easy family situation.

The fact that they were in Europe for several years and they adapted to the new western way of life, led them to adopt a series of practices upon their return to the Republic of Moldova. The metamorphosis was not only at the level of taking over every day experiences, but also at the level of changing the way of thinking – and the cultural representations that people had in this context. I think that the emancipation of women in the Republic of Moldova is very much due to the influences that came and are still coming from the West. The fact that many women migrated and lived for a long time in the West led them to see the very big differences in the society of the Republic of Moldova and Western societies. These differences reflected not only the way of life and its quality, but also how women are treated in the West, compared to the attitude towards women in the Republic of Moldova. Virtually all women who migrated developed personally and contributed, in turn, to the well-being and development of their family members. So, we can affirm that women had and have a very large share in education for society in the Republic of Moldova. By contributing to the development of their families, they also contributed to the development of the entire society.

The personal development of women who migrated evolved in the most direct way possible with education for a better quality of social life. Thus, the Soviet practices that distorted the social and personal education of all who lived in that space were replaced by the patterns of a new education, which involves a lot of responsibility, self-care and a lot of civic attitude in the spirit of a society based on the values of a genuine democracy. I believe that taking over the educational experience from the West favored the choice of the European path of the Republic of Moldova, namely its detachment from the former Soviet empire. Everything related to the implementation of new practices in education for a free and democratic society falls largely on women, because due to their spirit that involves a lot of care for the family, this trait implicitly refers to everything related to society. Caring for the other is included in the essence of women's personality. Of course, men also get involved, and maybe in this chapter a revival of all the public policies that develop in the Republic of Moldova should be done. This would favour a greater and more active involvement of all social actors, responsible for the implementation of public policies. In general, women's rights were denied throughout historical time, this was also true for the Republic of Moldova. We believe that the contribution of women during these 30 years of independence of the Republic of Moldova was and is a considerable one. The sacrifice of women was more than evident throughout this period. In general, woman has confirmed her extraordinary strength and ability in a multitude of contexts, as in this period, for example, when women in Ukraine left their country to save their children. It is an immeasurable sacrifice that comes from women in all historical periods. This is fully present even now. Women in the Republic of Moldova fight for the fact that their representativeness is considered in all possible contexts – companies, political parties, state institutions. It is very important that the quantitative balance from the perspective of the redistribution of gender roles – should be respected, because being in the minority, women will not be able to impose their point of view when very important decisions are made. "Equality between women and men means equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities for every woman and man in all spheres of public and private life. This principle is incorporated in all international treaties in the field of human rights and enshrined in the Supreme Law of the land."⁴ The formation of a new mentality, in accordance with the new standards related to European integration, are very important to respect. The integration of the Republic of Moldova into the EU also necessarily foresees the aspect related to how the entire set of requirements that the Republic of Moldova must fulfill in order to become a full-fledged EU state will be considered. The route is not easy. A perspective that must be considered when we refer to European integration concerns all types of education, not least gender education. This type of education is still new for the social and cultural context of the Republic of Moldova. Regarding this type of education, there are still enough prejudices, but also enough confusions are made when gender education is approached. "Gender education, unlike other types of "new educations" – civic,

⁴ *Strategia pentru asigurarea egalității dintre femei și bărbați în Republica Moldova pe anii 2017-2021*, p. 4; online: https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/intr16_85.pdf.

ecological, education for the understanding of ethnic diversity, tolerance, for community development, etc. – is, for now, modestly present in the school. It remains a vague concept both for teachers and educational institutions of all levels, as well as for other social institutions and civil society.”⁵ This type of education supports equal opportunities for women and men. Gender education also provides for the creation of relationships between men and women based on the relationship of partnership. The concept of partnership relations must be accepted and understood both theoretically and directly in public and private life, by both men and women. We can see that the partnership relations that some people from the Republic of Moldova would assume are found in the minority and not even close to the majority level. This type of human relationship in a couple is more favoured by those who have a high level of education, who know well enough the cultural and social experience of human relationship, which is found in the west.

The role of women in gender education is fundamental, because in this way they have a chance for their life to be one of quality and this will necessarily influence the formation of the young generation, an aspect that is fundamental in the evolution of society in the Republic of Moldova. In this sense, women are also responsible for change, even if they are caught up in so many tasks and responsibilities, both at the public and social level. Men have less interest from this point of view in wanting to change, because they have no desire to lose their male-power status, which has been so well-established throughout historical time. There is a clear reluctance in society when it comes to gender education. All the more so because women would also be responsible for this education. From this point of view, women are accused of the fact that the gender education they promote is one that belongs to the politics of feminism. Thus, gender equality between men and women was understood more in terms of women doing a range of physically demanding jobs, just like men do. Equality of role, implicitly of opportunities, rights for men and women implies much more than this aspect; it refers to gender equality, which must be achieved first of all in the family, then kindergarten, school, university, various organizations, etc.

The fact that there is a division of roles in the newly created family, which is based on the experience accumulated in the previous family, only leads to a perpetuation of the old, distorted experience, experience in which the dominant patriarchal relationship is an essential constituent. From this point of view, the whole society should be sensitized. “It is indisputable that the implementation of democratic principles in the analyzed field is impossible without the active involvement of the state. There is a need to create a respective infrastructure, which, along with other factors, could play an important role in liquidating legal nihilism and in developing a complex program in the nominated field.”⁶

During the last years, many references were made to gender education in the Republic of Moldova. A series of seminars, round tables, events were organized throughout the republic where the importance of this type of education was

⁵ Loreta Handrabura; Viorica Goraș-Postică, *Educație pentru echitate de gen și șanse egale*. Auxiliar didactic pentru profesori și elevi, 'Pro Didactica' Publisher, Chișinău, 2016.

⁶ Eugen Osmochescu, *Analiza Gender a legislației Republicii Moldova*, Chișinău, USM, 2004, p. 47.

discussed. An essential success from this point of view was and is the fact that such events were organized not only in cities, but also in the countryside. It is precisely in the rural environment that the greatest precariousness of women's education is found, implicitly also with reference to gender education. The implementation of gender education in society would lead to a resizing of the way of life in general, it would lead both men and women to understand what is their most authentic purpose –, both individually and socially. The school should not in any way perpetuate the traditional relationships of a patriarchal nature, which would inoculate the children in their formation some models that contradict gender education. Unfortunately, in the Republic of Moldova the quality of life in many families is precarious, thus poverty, unemployment, marginalization, discrimination, domestic violence represents a degrading environment for quality education, implicitly for gender education. From this point of view, a series of policies should be implemented that would increase the chance of all the marginalized for a quality education. The inter-human relations that are built in the present time are based on a sum of traditions and practices that have been perpetuated from the past. Given the post-Soviet past of the Republic of Moldova and the patterns of an education dominated by patriarchy with all its manifestations, all these features created a society in which the model of gender inequality relations was preserved.

Historical, social and cultural factors have determined the formation of a context in which these models can be found in full, all the more since the struggle for their resistance is fierce in the present society. “The problem of women's inequality in the Republic of Moldova is not solved even now, in 2022 the wage disparity of 13-17% for the period 2000-2020 is maintained, with the exception of 2008, when the average wage of women constituted 73.3% of the average salary for men.”⁷ The metamorphosis of gender relations that would lead to a new resizing of society represents a major benefit for the educational reality in the Republic of Moldova. In gender education, respectively, equal opportunities as well as gender roles and educational models play a big role. Throughout the past, man was associated with rationality, mind, and woman was attributed with emotions, nature. From a religious point of view, again, primacy was associated with the man, authority, control, orders should come from the man, and the woman was supposed to conform, obey, not contradict. The specificity of the traditional mentality imprinted so much in the collective mentality of the Republic of Moldova has permanently perpetuated this state of affairs.

From an anthropological point of view, we can see and perceive woman and man as part of two sign systems. During marriage they form a 3rd system of signs, in which the specific traits from the man's family of origin are usually taken over. The fact that the woman takes her husband's name after marriage, again, is a factor by which we understand how the newly created family will function. Basically, the woman separates herself from the identity of her family

⁷ Oleg Ursan, *Impulsionarea politicilor de gen în Republica Moldova după participarea la Conferința Mondială a femeilor din Beijing*, 1995, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52673/18570461.22.2-65.11>; online: http://aka.demos.asm.md/files/117-123_0.pdf.

of origin, if she agrees to change her last name. Children born in this type of marriage will also have the father's surname. We believe that this is a decisive one regarding how the relationship between spouses will evolve, how children will be educated in the spirit of gender education. "Women are signs and, at the same time, producers of signs; as such, they cannot be reduced to the status of tokens or tokens."⁸

The woman assumes the role she will have in the family she will create, as well as in society. And for this assumption, a high level of presence of an individual conscience, a quality education, and the presence of critical thinking are needed. All these conditions can be fulfilled only in the context of a state where quality education is carried out, where state policies consider the chance of women's education for a better life. It is not enough to rely only on outside interventions, in the form of meetings where women are told about their rights, about the chance they should fight for in their lives; the most appropriate thing would be for the education in society to educate any woman from her childhood so that, as an adult, she can make the most appropriate choices that would contribute to her personal and professional development. Gender education involves a clarification of the concepts of masculinity and femininity. The fact that throughout history the man was considered the supreme authority in relation to the woman, does not mean that this is true and that it must be perpetuated. Masculine and feminine complement each other, they can coexist without competing for the supremacy of one gender or the other. Choosing one gender or another gender to give priority to is an erroneous matter. "Let's not try to find out who has the power in the field of sexuality (men, adults, parents, doctors) and who is deprived of it (women, teenagers, children, the sick), nor who has the right to know and who is forced to ignorance. Rather, we should investigate the pattern of changes that force relations involve through their own functioning."⁹ When one gender or another will not be chosen according to the principle of power, society will reach a necessary balance. The dichotomy between traditionalism and emancipation must also be overcome. The male/patriarchal model as well as the female/feminist one ended up dividing the social and cultural realities into 2 realities; the solution would be to overcome this split through quality education, not least through gender education. This education will help society to see woman as a free, independent being, capable of making a series of choices that will help her to integrate effectively in any social structure.

The phenomenon of masculinization and feminization is encountered in society in different ways. Often the male or female model regarding any given profession or another are perpetuated by school textbooks, advertising, TV, etc. The issue of gender education is almost completely sidelined or completely absent in certain contexts. A strong male dominance is present everywhere. This is often done consciously by all those who promote the model of masculinity at the expense

⁸ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Antropologie structurală*, trad. J. Pecher, Editura Politică Publishing House, 1978, Bucharest, p. 76.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Istoria sexualității*, Vol. I, *Voința de a ști*, trans. Cătălina Vasile, Univers Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004, p. 94.

of the feminine. The perspective of gender education could be implemented in society starting from school, by educating students and training teachers in relation to the latest trends in the approach to gender education. Education for democracy should be implemented in parallel with gender education. Democracy itself represents the right to equal opportunities, to quality education, implicitly to gender education. Everything that entails contemporary education valid for today's society has a deep meaning and an approach that places great emphasis on human values and freedoms.

The role of teachers in gender education is enormous, because they are the ones who lay the foundations of the way society will function in the future. The purpose of education in general, implicitly of social education, is to educate good citizens, i.e. responsible citizens, who would have as reference points in their life a reference system based on a well-founded system of values. A specific feature of education in the Republic of Moldova and, especially in the post-Soviet space, resides in the fact that school is run by female teachers, but directed by men. Thus, according to the data of the Bureau of Statistics, the share of women and men in general primary and secondary education is for women – 87,6%, men – 12,4%; the share of women and men in higher education – women – 55,5%, men – 44,5%; the share of women and men rectors in universities/higher education institutions – women – 20,8%, men – 79,2%. Women are underrepresented in the positions of rector, having a 58,4% lower share compared to men.¹⁰

In some subjects, students are also divided by gender. Often the realities are distorted to the detriment of gender education. The critical spirit, the deep approach to things should be the criteria to guide all actors who develop and implement educational policies. Gender education is particularly related to the new pedagogies, which emphasize the responsible assumption of all aspects that will intervene in the lives of young people in training. Gender education has tangents with moral and social education, it is not directly related to the division of people into the 2 sexes, but primarily refers to how education takes place in society. Thus, the principle of gender equity and equal opportunities should be the principle that should dominate the entire social and individual reality in any society. The sexual and social dimensions are the main determinants in gender education.

Social Education – Determining Factor in the Context of Public Life in The Republic of Moldova

Human personal development cannot be effective without taking these factors into consideration. The very concepts of femininity and masculinity are associated; they cannot be fully understood outside of these perspectives of understanding. There have always been prejudices and stereotypes about these concepts. Thus, the concept of care is most often associated with the feminine, emphasizing the woman's sacrifice in the family for the sake of those close to her. Control and

¹⁰ Biroul Național de Statistică, Chișinău, 2021, online: Egalitatea de gen în cifre.

decision are seen more as masculine attributes, emphasizing the man's strength. In patriarchal societies everything about women is seen as secondary and everything about men is seen as primary, powerful, dominant. The biggest prejudice from this point of view is to see the man as a strong being, as strength is not only physical in nature. And the woman should be considered only secondary. Many women would surpass men in this chapter because they are flexible, able to adapt. Patriarchal relations should be replaced by partnership relations, because understanding, mutual help, communication, negotiation dominate in partnership relations. I and He should become We. In partnership-type relationships, emotional, verbal, psychological abuse does not take place, because the relationship is not one of dominance of one over the other. It is not a relationship built vertically, but horizontally. "Gender equality presupposes that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices unfettered by either strict social conventions or exaggerated constraints."¹¹

A special perspective in the Woman-Man relationship is determined by the phenomenon of alterity. This trait causes us to develop our ability to better understand what the other feels, what are the aspirations of the other, the universe of beliefs. Of course, this type of empathy is formed along with the growth of man, his becoming. Otherness also means another self, to which every human being must constantly relate. It is impossible for human relationships to take place outside of this universe of beliefs and relationships. When the other person's way of being is not considered, abuse appears in all its forms of manifestation. Due to the presence or absence of the capacity called empathy people test each other's own human limits. Otherness also implies the ability not to try to transform the other according to one's own goals and representations.

Women have always had a major role in the social education of the younger generation. Whether as mothers or teachers, women have had and have a major role in society education as well as gender education. Education for society aims at an essential dimension in human formation. Everything that is done in education includes this dimension of education, because the purpose of the education process is precisely to educate responsible, rational and reasonable citizens, who would have very well-developed critical thinking in all its forms of manifestation. Since in the post-Soviet society women mainly deal with education, this is also true in the case of the Republic of Moldova. In most cases, women are the ones who deal with family education, but also with social education. The social dimension characterizes all public policies, implicitly the educational ones. The post-Soviet mentality distorted in these spaces the authenticity of the attitude towards everything – social. The social was identified with the state. In turn, the state was perceived as having absolute hegemony, which controlled everything. Thus, people were deprived not only of their private property, but also of the formation of correct representations towards everything that means a correct attitude towards the social field. The social domain was not perceived as an

¹¹ Maia Cojocaru-Borozan; Lilia Țurcan; Irina Arbuz, *Cultura de gen în educație*, Chișinău, 2014, p. 156.

extension of all that the property of the people living in this state means, but as something distinctly broken from all that belonging means. Thus, the representation of the people towards the public domain was eroded and distorted. For this reason, after the 1990s in the Republic of Moldova, an attitude of indifference towards the public domain was observed both on the part of the politicians and also on the part of a large number of the citizens.

Nowadays, things have changed, but it will take a long time for people's mentality to change. Education in all its forms is responsible for this fact. From this point of view, the new models in contemporary pedagogy provide an alternative for the Soviet-type pedagogy under whose auspices the current generation of adults was educated. Social education has as its fundamental goal to educate a new society, made up of people who would be free to decide how to build their interpersonal relationships, on an individual and social level, so that their social life becomes positive and qualitative. Not infrequently in the Republic of Moldova one hears debates about the quality of life that people in the West have. This quality of life the Western states have acquired by virtue of hundreds of years of experience in fighting for this type of life. It is much more difficult for the states that recently broke away from Russian dependencies, of which the Republic of Moldova is a part, to access a comparable quality life in a short time. Of course, individual effort, through the experience gained by migrants, but also through the efforts of politicians, led to substantial increases in all aspects of social life in the Republic of Moldova.

We can talk about the female-male dichotomy also from the perspective of the peace-war duality. The woman is associated with peace, the man with war. Peace means well-being, tranquility, safety, soundness. War signifies malaise, unrest, insecurity, extinction, death. The unity and struggle of opposites is represented here by this duality peace – war, woman – man. During the war, men are the ones who go to fight on the front line. Women are the ones who have to ensure the safety of children. In the case of the war in Ukraine, it was women, children and the elderly who had to flee to save themselves. The role of women from this point of view is major, because they provide the necessary support for their children to feel safe. The social side in education depends almost exclusively on the contribution of women. Thus, in all borderline situations, women ensured the survival of their families, but also the fact that society as a whole resisted, when the men were away at war. If during the Soviet period education for society was done through political indoctrination, then nowadays it is done through recourse to the promotion of classical values – good, truth, beauty, justice, but also through recourse to critical thinking.

Women from the Republic of Moldova express their critical attitude when appropriate regarding how the state of affairs is evolving in one field or another. This is possible due to the level that democracy has reached in recent years in the Republic of Moldova, although there is still a lot to be done in this regard. Critical thinking in the Republic of Moldova, although it is at the initial stage of manifestation in the public space, has however begun to manifest much more

actively nowadays. This is due to intellectual women in particular. The education of critical thinking has a special role from this point of view. Critical thinking is authentic thinking, and this can be developed by resorting to learning logic, argumentation, philosophy. Last but not least, it is about personal development, which in turn plays an important role. Unfortunately, logic, philosophy, and psychology are not studied in schools and high schools in the Republic of Moldova. And the consequences in this chapter are serious. It is not possible to have a society where there is a critical mass of people if the subjects in question are not specifically studied in school. We believe that the education system was specially designed and implemented, so that the citizens of the Republic of Moldova do not develop their critical thinking, not to mention the fact that they exhibit it in the public space. This phenomenon is against an authentic education of the people living in this society. The education of critical thinking should be one of the main objectives of the education system, including that of the Republic of Moldova. For the time being, this segment related to critical thinking education is covered by philosophy professors, who are teaching staff at universities in the Republic of Moldova, because only in these institutions is philosophy still studied. Thus, university education somehow ensures the education of critical thinking, not least social education. It is impossible to have quality social education in the absence of critical thinking education. The presence or absence of critical thinking is the main indicator of a society that has a high level of education. In the given case, with the aspirations of EU integration, of course the education system in the Republic of Moldova has a lot to recover, and it should persevere in this regard. We will not be able to change the state of affairs in society, the mentality of people educated in the Soviet period, if the school is not one of the present and the future. Even if some reforms are made from this point of view, the essential changes are missing, they are only of form and substance, not of content and depth. The politician has imposed himself not only in the field of politics, but he has also controlled the field of education, to ensure that the people he needs are molded by the education system in the manner and form that the government system needs.

In addition to the fact that the politician gets involved into and controls everything that happens in the education system in the Republic of Moldova, this also influences the state of affairs and the mentality of the people, the split regarding the assumption of national and linguistic identity. The involvement of women in this framework is also very high. As I mentioned before, the involvement of women in education is full in the Republic of Moldova. The author Terzi Daniela mentions that feminization is at the base and masculinization at the top of education.¹² From the perspective of gender equity, we can say that it is minimal. Gender education is minimally promoted, especially since in practice this principle of equity is also not respected. A particular problem in the context

¹² Daniela Terzi, *Egalitatea GENDER și abilitarea femeilor*, p. 4, online: <https://ipp.md/old/public/files/Publicatii/2003/octombrie/Prezentare%20Obiectivul%203.pdf>.

of gender education, but also of social education, would be the presence of many stereotypes and prejudices that are encountered regarding the attitude towards girls/boys and women/men, differences that are highlighted both in school and in the public environment. The differences are reported both regarding the expectations in relation to these children, but also regarding the attribution of characteristics that should be considered when studying such phenomena as the degradation of the condition of women, but implicitly also of the feminine, discrimination, the dominance of patriarchy in all its forms of manifestation. A very common prejudice in the Republic of Moldova is – men are more capable to drive than women. Many women also share this prejudice.

Quality education promotes the idea that it is not gender that determines the ability to do something better or less well, but capabilities, professional experience, etc., that is, the value of human personality. Gender equality should be achieved best and most through education, namely in this field there should be the greatest involvement from this point of view. In education for society women have a full contribution, as in gender education. This thing is valuable because the society in the Republic of Moldova is a patriarchal society and many people share prejudices, stereotypes. It is important to promote more women in leadership positions, who will have the responsibility of promoting gender education.

Social education includes a number of important aspects for the formation of young people; concepts such as empathy, human dignity, equality, solidarity, the spirit of the law, non-discrimination, critical thinking are essential for the formation of young people and their integration into society. In order to educate such qualities, a great involvement is needed from the school, but also from the parents. Only in this complex system of reference will it be possible to achieve all the desired goals related to the education of an integral person, with a critical thinking, able to show their critical attitude as the case may be. The education of these human qualities and values rests largely with women. Thus, women have a major responsibility both in their own family and in the context of education for society, because they form to the greatest extent the personality of the child/student, the adult. The multiple tasks that women have cause them to work much longer than men.

Even though they work more, in many cases they are paid less. Accordingly, we also encounter the phenomenon of discrimination from this point of view. On the one hand, women are discriminated against; on the other hand, they fight discrimination and train others in relation to the principle of non-discrimination. We encounter the same aspect when we refer to the concept of human rights. Women teachers educate from the perspective of forming awareness and respect for these qualities, but they themselves, in turn, experience the feeling of non-respect of their rights in certain circumstances of their social and personal life. An important trait that women educate is social activism. Being active in society is an important desire in the contemporary world. Activism is manifested with reference to a series of situations in which young people will not remain impartial when asked to get involved in various voluntary actions.

Conclusions

- In the context of the digital era and the information and knowledge society, education becomes fundamental. Formal, non-formal and informal education become vital if we refer to professional activities in which adults are involved. As far as society is concerned, first of all, education is necessary for the formation of more skills in the context of social, digital, cultural inclusion.

- Education for society is of crucial importance in the formation of future citizens. The extent to which citizens are informed about their rights and obligations, about the structure of society and how it works, as well as everyone's willingness to get involved, will, in the long term, make for a better, more tolerant and more inclusive society. However, education for society and all the subjects attributed to it are aware of a limited segment of the population, mostly with a high level of education. Therefore, education for society has results with the increase in the level of education of the population. At the same time, in the last decades, together with the processes of globalization, technologization, migration flows, the borders of national citizenship are being erased, the concepts of citizenship at the European, global, etc. level are being approached more and more often.

- From a statistical point of view, there are more female teachers who teach this subject in school, because there are more women in pedagogy. At the family level, the process of familiarization with general human values, reporting to society, etc., is largely promoted by mothers; in young families both parents have an equal role in the education of children.

- Mass media also has an important role in promoting education for society. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number and intensity of addressing different subjects that are part of education for society, such as volunteerism, empathy, tolerance, etc. A significant qualitative leap has occurred from this point of view in the mass media, where the number of projects, broadcasts, forums that address certain other aspects of education for society has increased.

- Education for society is necessary to develop a civic spirit of citizens. Even more so for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, this is a requirement in the context of our country's European journey and to strengthen the state's democracy.

- Education for society involves an open attitude towards change, interactive involvement and collaborative participation. The ex-Soviet mentality is sometimes hostile and prejudiced. Thus, it is difficult to overcome these impediments. Conservative people know the concepts and notions with which this field operates, but show some caution and do not want to get involved. Commitment to a quality society education requires a willingness to enrich one's educational experiences and share knowledge.

- Regarding the involvement regarding education for the society, we believe that any institution/organization must be interested in this aspect, because the society must be informed about the products/services provided by the organizations. In relation to information, society must also have an education regarding these services/products. This aspect can be implemented by organizing various webinars,

podcasts, community conferences, etc. People involved in education for society must be receptive to new, openly share and validate professional ideas and experiences through the media. These experts also need to be open facilitators of change and collaboration online and offline. Society needs experts in various fields who share their experience and contribute to the development of society's skills.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Abbott, Pamela; Wallace, Clare; Tyler, Melissa, *An Introduction to Sociology Feminist Perspectives*, Third Edition, Routledge, London and New York, 2005;
- Biroul Național de Statistică, Chișinău 2021, online: Egalitatea de gen în cifre;
- Bodrug, Valentina; Saca, Silvia; Poustovan, Ina, *Gender și educație*, Chișinău, 2001;
- Levi-Strauss, Claude, *Antropologie structurală*, trans. J. Pecher, Editura Politică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1978;
- Cojocaru-Borozan, Maia; Țurcan, Lilia; Arbutz, Irina, *Cultura de gen în educație*. Chișinău, 2014;
- Foucault, Michel, *Istoria sexualității*, Vol. I, *Voința de a ști*, trans. Cătălina Vasile, Univers Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004;
- Handrabura, Loreta; Goraș-Postică, Viorica, *Educație pentru echitate de gen și șanse egale*. Auxiliar didactic pentru profesori și elevi, "Pro Didactica", Chișinău, 2016;
- Osmochescu, Eugen, *Analiza Gender a legislației Republicii Moldova*, Chișinău, USM, 2004;
- Strategia pentru asigurarea egalității dintre femei și bărbați în Republica Moldova pe anii 2017-2021*, https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/intr16_85.pdf;
- Terzi, Daniela, *Egalitatea GENDER și abilitarea femeilor*; online: <https://ipp.md/old/public/files/Publicatii/2003/octombrie/Prezentare%20Obiectivul%203.pdf>;
- Terzi-Barbăroșie, Daniela, *Participarea femeilor la viața publică și politică din R. Moldova. Raport elaborat în cadrul parteneriatului Estic de Facilitare al Consiliului European*. "Bons-Offices" Publishing House, May 2013, Chișinău;
- Ursan, Oleg, *Impulsionarea politicilor de gen în Republica Moldova după participarea la Conferința Mondială a femeilor din Beijing*, 1995, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52673/18570461>. 22.2-65.11; online: http://akademos.asm.md/files/117-123_0.pdf.

This work was developed within the project "The epistemological approach to personal development and education for society: from transdisciplinary strategies to the pragmatic goals of the current society in the Republic of Moldova", number 20.80009.1606.08 / "State Program" (2020-2023).