Minority Education Policy in Azerbaijan and Iran*

IREX supported research project

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The world is moving in the direction of a new era. Great changes are occurring in almost every section of the world, and schools are in the middle of these difficulties, for it is the schools that are being called on to prepare youth for a future society, a society that will certainly be very different from yesterday's society. Among the changes occurring throughout the world is the requirement that social justice is gained on the part of minority groups in societies. This is particularly difficult in countries such as Azerbaijan and Iran, where recent political revolutions have stressed a high degree of nationalism and national allegiance. The implications these revolutions have for schooling are particularly difficult because schools are expected to draw young people into their national mainstreams, but if social justice is to be served, schools must also

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provide minority groups within society with a sense of cultural identity and equity. Often, however, the agenda set for schools focuses almost exclusively on nationalism and cultural homogenization. This is what has happened in both Iran and Azerbaijan, where education has been instituted to ensure that all young people develop a sense of identity and allegiance to the nation state.

THE DEFINITION OF MINORITIES

In this project we have undertaken to examine minority education policies in Azerbaijan and Iran. Our focus has been on indigenous ethnic minorities. That is, we have chosen not to deal with refugees in Iran or Russians in Azerbaijan. One complication in our project is the different ways Azerbaijan and Iran define minority groups.

Azerbaijan, on the one hand, focuses on national and ethnic minorities within its borders; however, that straightforward view is complicated by the fact that Azerbaijan is not a conventional mono-national state but is a multi-national state. In most nation-states, a dominant culture and/or ethnic group is found with one or more subordinate ethnic groups. However, Azerbaijan as a multi-national state with other important nationalities within its border. There are Russians and an extensive number of schools that continue to use Russian as the language of instruction. There

are pockets of Georgians in Azerbaijan and Azeri-speaking people in Georgia. A complicated arrangement has been carried over from Soviet times where Georgians can follow the Georgian curriculum in Azerbaijani schools and be taught by Georgian educated teachers, although Georgian pupils must study Azerbaijan history (from textbooks translated into Georgian). And Lezghian pupils can study the Lezghian language through all eleven years of schooling in Azerbaijan in preparation to attend the university in Dagestan (Russia).

To gain some glimpse of what it means to be Azerbaijani, we reviewed the textbooks on the history of Azerbaijan. It is taught in all grades of secondary school, but information about the Azeri people is given only in the sixth and seventh grade textbooks. In the sixth grade pupils learn about "The birth of the Azeri nation," while in the seventh grade they learn about "The formation of the Azeri people," which describes the formation process of the Azeri people and becoming Muslim. The texts indicate that Azeri nation originated from the local ethnic Turks and from the other Turkish speaking ethnic groups located in this region. There is a map showing where ethnic Turks lived, and it is very large, starting from Anatolia in the West and extending to the Chinese borders in the East. Though the names of the ethnic Turks were different, their origin was the same. Today's Azeri Turks are their heirs. The texts also indicate that all the important ethnic groups in Azer-

baijan have some ethnic connection with each other. However, Azerbaijanis constitute the major ethnic group among them.

In Azerbaijan, it is only the Azerbaijanis who make claim to the label "Azerbaijani." Talish, Lezghian or Udin citizens would not identify themselves as being Azerbaijani, even though they are full citizens of the Azerbaijan Republic. In other words, there remains some separation between ethnicity and national identity.

Iran, on the other hand, focuses on religious minorities. The only reference to ethnicity in the Constitution is Article 19: "All people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; and color, race, language, and the like do not bestow any privilege." But this is interpreted in a negative sense, in that no reference to ethnicity has been allowed, although we shall see that this practice is beginning to change. With the 1979 political revolution, the state of Iran was transformed into a theocracy, with the state religion being Shi'ite Muslim, although there are some Sunni Muslims as well as Bahá'ís, Assyrian and Armenian Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians in the country. For the past three decades the revolutionaries in Iran have attempted to re-arrange that country's institutions, including its education system, in order to implement Islamic ideals and values. The new regime wished to change the old system's values and institutions in a short period of time, and so the focus on minorities in schools has been on religion rather than ethnicity.

It is significant to note that, according to Article 13 of the Constitution, "Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education." Iranian policy toward most religious minorities does not excuse the excesses that are apparent regarding certain religious minorities. For example, the Bahá'í religion is subjected systematically to persecution, because those in this religion refuse to compromise their beliefs in the face of Iranian officials.[1]

For the purposes of this study, we operationally define minority education as that pertaining to ethnic minorities. Our concern in this project is to find the extent to which schools have gone beyond their nationalistic task and have begun to address the needs and interests of the ethnic minorities within their borders.

To this point, little is known concerning ethnic considerations in education in either Azerbaijan or Iran. Both countries are multicultural in terms of their respective demographic profiles. Azerbaijan has Jewish, Armenian, Georgian, Russian, Kurdish, Talish, and Lezghian minority groups, while Iran has Azerbaijani, Kurdish, Bakhtyari, Baluchish, Jewish, Assyrian, and Arabian minority groups. In recent years both countries have experienced radical political change. In 1991 Azerbaijan became an indepen-

dent republic after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, while in 1979 the Shah was deposed and an Islamic republic was established. In both countries education has become a servant in efforts to build a unified nation state.

TWO-PRONGED APPROACH

Our task in this project has been to engage in a two-pronged assessment of education for ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan and Iran. First, we wished to determine what direction state policy is going regarding education for minority groups in the two countries. Second, we wished to look at a small number of schools, both at the primary and the secondary level to see what is actually happening in the schools themselves. Our assumption has been that in periods of great change, national policy is translated differently in particular schools, so it is not enough to look only at formal state policy.

1. State Policy Data Collection

Scholars in both Azerbaijan and Iran analyzed documents reflecting state policies regarding the education of minority groups to determine the degree to which state policies have evolved in the past one to two decades. We have relied on Azerbaijani scholars to investigate Azerbaijani policies and Iranian scholars to investigate Iranian policies.

The researchers have addressed specific issues. Have policies changed in the recent past? In what direction have policies changed? In operational terms, the scholars have looked at specific educational dimensions:

- Policies related to the Language of instruction
- National Curriculum Developments
- Textbooks Developments
- Guidelines for Teacher Training Programs

2. Specific School Data Collection

Our plan was to look at schools at the primary level and schools at the secondary level in each country. Researchers visited primary and a secondary school in various communities in each country, where relatively large numbers of the community belong to ethnic minority groups. For example, in Iran we visited a city where Azeri speaking people dominate, and another community where Kurds are located. In Azerbaijan we visited a community in Lenkoran and another in Kuba, which have sizeable numbers of minority members, though no single minority group dominates in these areas.

Each school was visited by a team of researchers. Researchers were trained over an entire week in the month of March, 2002. The trainer was the Director of the project, Val D. Rust. The team spent several days visiting schools. We chose to take qualitative

approach to the study on the grounds that it would best serve the purpose of this investigation, namely: to understand the behavior of teachers in the context of the specific institutional context, to understand this context in relation to the local educational directorate, and to understand how the provisions for minority students either support or deviate from the national educational agenda. Interviews were conducted with local educational directorate leaders, school leaders, and teachers. They were open-ended and respondents were asked for information and opinions concerning curriculum, instructional programs, language issues, and textbooks. However, researchers were careful to avoid leading questions or to reinforce participant responses. Questions were grouped around policy and practice related to minorities in the local directorate and the school. A second group of questions revolved around the curriculum, language issues, and textbooks. A third group of questions were related to their perspectives on the conditions that exist related to minority students and teachers. Observations were made of classrooms with the intention of getting some sense of the interactions of teachers and students with members of minority groups.

We shall deal first with Azerbaijan, followed by Iran.

I. EDUCATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN AZERBAIJAN

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The country of Azerbaijan stretches from the Caucasus Mountains in the northwest to Iran in the south and the Caspian Sea in the east. To the west lies the disputed Nagorno-Karabagh territory. Azerbaijan covers an area of 86,600 square kilometers of which some 20 percent constitutes the Nagorno-Karabagh and neighboring territory occupied by Armenia. The country is divided into 61 administrative regions and five cities. There is a significant difference in the quality of life, schools and teachers between the rural and urban regions. The country has good deposits of natural recourses which in time might change its economic position.

Azerbaijan has a long history of minority groups, although in the past half century the status of minority groups has changed dramatically, in that the country has moved toward mono-ethnicity.[2] Analysis of the 1939, 1959, 1970, 1979, 1989, and 1999 census data shows the dynamics of the growth of the Azerbaijanis in the total population of Azerbaijan has shifted from 58.4% in 1939 to 90.6% in 1999:

1939	1959	1970	1979	1989	1999
58.4%	67.4%	73.8%	78.1%	82.7%	90.6%

While various committees on nationality affairs exist at present in the Azerbaijan presidential administration and in the Azeri Parliament, minorities are seen as susceptible to manipulation by outsiders. At the same time, the state does give financial and political support to officially sanctioned minority organizations. Currently the State radio broadcasts are in the Azerbaijani, Russian, Georgian, Lezghian, Kurdish and Talish languages. State television programs are in Azerbaijani. There are two Russian television channels. There are some newspapers, magazines, books, dictionaries, and textbooks published in languages of various ethnic groups. Some are funded by the State, while international foundations or NGOs contribute a good deal to publishing.

Data below is given according to the report published by the Azerbaijani State Statistics Committee on the 1999 Census of Population, which was held in accordance with the UN recommendations.

The dynamics of change in the ethnic composition of the Azerbaijani Republic's population

	1979, thousands of people	1979, %	1989, thousands of people	1989, %	1999, thousands of people	1999, %
Total population	6,026,500	100	7,021,200	100	7,953,400	100
Azerbaijanis	4,708,800	78.1	5,805,000	82.7	7,205,500	90.6
Armenians	475,500	7.9	390,500	5.6	120,700	1.5
Avars	36,000	0.6	44,100	0.6	50,900	0.6
Georgians	11,400	0.2	14,200	0.2	14,900	0.2
Jews	35,500	0.6	30,800	0.4	8,900	0.1
Kurds	5,700	0.1	12,200	0.2	13,100	0.2
Lezghians	158,100	2.6	171,400	2.4	178,000	2.2
Russians	475,300	7.9	392,300	5.6	141,700	1.8
Sakhurs	8,500	0.1	13,300	0.2	15,900	0.2
Talish	-	-	21,200	0.3	76,800	1.0
Tatars	31,400	0.5	28,600	0.4	30,000	0.4
Tats	-	-	-	-	10,900	0.13
Turks	7,900	0.1	17,700	0.2	43,400	0.5
Udins	5,800	0.1	6,100	0.1	4,100	0.05
Ukrainians	26,400	0.4	32,300	0.5	29,000	0.4
Other nationalities	40,200	0.8	41,500	0.6	9,600	0.12

Note: The current population of Azerbaijan is 8,141,400 (January 2002) [Unfortunately we don't have information on the number of nationalities by 2002]

These figures show that the number of *Azerbaijanis* has grown over the past 20 years.[3] The major reasons for population growth in Azerbaijan are the followings.

1. The birth rate
2. The refugees from Armenia
3. Azerbaijanis from Georgia for education or business

The number of minorities has dropped increasingly after the Armenians left Azerbaijan dew to Nagorno-Garabagh conflict.

The number of *Russians* has dropped; over the past 20 years more than 330,000 Russians chose to return to their historical homeland. The number of *Turks* has grown following the events of violence against Meskhetian Turks in Uzbekistan in 1989. There is a minor change in the number of *Tatars* and *Ukrainians.* The number of those who registered as *Talish*, has increased as well, although many members of this nationality now regard the Azerbaijani Turkic language as their mother tongue. The dynamics in the growth of numbers of *Lezghians* over the past 20 years must be considered usual. There are persistent rumors that Lezghians have emigration north of the border into Dagestan, Russia, where the main body of Lezghians is located, but the figures indicate this is not happening. One can observe a drop in the number of Christian

Udins people. A drop in numbers is also observed among the *Jewish* population; however, there has been a drop in the number of emigrants to Israel in recent years. There are fewer emigrants among "other nationalities" as well. The number of *Kurds* has grown from 5,700 to 13,100 since 1979.

Like most countries the population in Azerbaijan is concentrated in the larger cities such as Baku (around 40 percent of the total population of 7.5 million). A slightly smaller percentage of ethnic minorities live in Baku (8.7 percent) than in the Republic in general (9.4 percent).

About 900,000 people or 12 percent of the population are refugees or internally displaced persons, who have been pushed out of Nagorno-Karabagh and neighboring regions. Such a dislocation of the population has caused an overload on the provision of education in areas where the refugee camps are located. There were approximately 450 schools (primary and secondary) in operation in the occupied territories. Now part of them have been reorganized in refugee camps.. There were other educational institutions such as technical institutes and universities. It must be noted that the numbers only indicate the quantity. The quality of the infrastructure, in many cases, is in need of urgent attention.

The collapse of trade among the republics of the former Soviet Union and the conflict with Armenia have been the main sources of continuous economic decline. Independent Azerbaijan now

faces serious problems with employment opportunities in certain sectors of the labor market. Traditional areas such as manufacturing and agriculture that serviced the Soviet market are no longer viable.

THE AZERBAIJAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The government of Azerbaijan, since the devolution of the Soviet Union, has been trying to develop an education system that will complement the government's plans to move toward a market driven economy and become a player in the emerging global economic system. Prior to 1992 Azerbaijan was a state of the old Soviet Union and during that period Azerbaijan education was planned and delivered from Moscow with little regard for local issues. At that time, curricula (i.e., the subjects to be taught and the time devoted to teaching them) were developed by the Ministry of Education of the USSR in Moscow and sent to the republics. In the republics, the local ministries could make minor changes to the received curriculum. For example, the Ministry of Education for Azerbaijan added to the curriculum time to allow for some study of the history of Azerbaijan and the Azeri language. The curriculum could also be translated into the Azeri language. Schools were available using both Azeri and Russian as the language of instruction. The Minister of Education then approved the curriculum, and funding for the implementation of the curriculum was provided

following the endorsement of the Azerbaijani Ministry of Finance. Implementation of the curriculum was the responsibility of educational institutions. All children in Azerbaijan had to learn Russian language and culture.

Generally, there were a few controlled variations of the curriculum, and what was taught in schools did not differ throughout the Soviet regions. However, during the Soviet period there were a few reforms to this general pattern. In 1980, educational institutions were granted more freedom and independence to resolve some educational problems, which enabled some innovations to emerge. For example, institutions provided for more in-depth studies of particular subjects and supported the establishment of studies that had a particular focus or emphasis (e.g., in the humanities or in technical studies).

With the fall of the former Soviet Union, the Azerbaijan education system that had been closed from the outside world for the previous 70 years and depended significantly on Moscow to provide leadership, had to fend for itself. The search for a new education system is further complicated by the continued tension on some of the country's borders with Armenia, Russia, and Iran.

In 1992, the government passed the Law on Education, which outlined the purposes, tasks and directions for educational reform. New policy directions included a modification of the highly centralized system, the incorporation of national and market economy

perspectives within the curriculum, and the encouragement of parental and community participation in education. Even though schools using Russian as the language of instruction were permitted, Soviet ideology was removed from teaching and learning.

The reforms in the early 1990s resulted in a number of curriculum variations, and approximately 30 variations have so-far been endorsed. For example, ordinary secondary schools in Azerbaijan start teaching English from the first year of secondary school, i.e., the fifth grade. However, some schools specialize in English or another foreign language and these schools start teaching a foreign language from the second grade of primary school. Additionally, there are new kinds of learning institutions: lyceums, gymnasiums and colleges.[4] At the same time, international agencies, particularly UNICEF and the World Bank, have been developing so-called pilot schools with the idea that these pilot schools reflect world standards. These pilot schools provide different curricula and instructional innovations, such as student-active learning. The pattern of study in these new institutions is initially agreed upon in the Scientific and Methodological Center on Educational Problems and presented to the Minister of Education for approval. Schools could select which curriculum plan they wanted to adopt, and could adopt different plans for the primary and secondary years of the school.

The increased flexibility in relation to curriculum plans helped to generate discussions about education and curriculum (e.g., as schools could choose between a range of curriculum plans, there was extensive discussion about which plan or plans would best suit the needs of the school and its students). These discussions helped to stimulate some school reforms, as did the Ministry's acceptance of experimental schools (i.e., schools which were given approval to adapt curriculum plans). Azerbaijan's curriculum is almost entirely subject based, even at the primary level, and all pupils are required to take almost all subjects. Because there are too many subjects little flexibility and choice are possible. Further, many subjects begin very late in the program. Finally, many critical subjects are missing, such as civics, ethics, logic, health, business, psychology, ecology, religion, political science and government.

The 1998 reform proposals have been initiated to promote greater flexibility within the education system and to improve the learning opportunities and achievements of students. The proposed reforms are currently the subject of debate in the national Parliament. They are being advanced at a time when the education system is under a great deal of pressure. The fiscal restraints created by the economic downturn have resulted in a reduction of funds available for education. Further, there is uncertainty as the system attempts to adjust to and implement the changes that are necessary to make the transition from ways of thinking and acting that were consistent with the Soviet system to those that are consistent with

the new vision for the Azerbaijan education system. Nevertheless, there appears to be a deep commitment from the Minister of Education to press on with proposed reforms.

A draft reform concept was prepared in December 1998. It indicates that the planned reforms were to be phased in over a six-year period. Phase one (1999) was to be the planning stage. Phase two (2000-2003) was to establish the conditions for the implementation of the reforms, and phase three (starting from 2004) will cover the implementation of all the activities envisaged in the program.

The proposed reforms include:

- Establishing new educational institutions designed to cater for the full range of student abilities;
- Reforming educational programs to align them to the needs of Azerbaijani society and a market oriented economy;
- Establishing agreed educational standards and accountability measures;
- Promoting greater flexibility at the school level through the devolution of agreed responsibilities (including control over financial allocations);
- Reforming the financing of the education system.

The concept paper outlining the intended reform program indicates that a great deal has been achieved in terms of

educational advancement in Azerbaijan. Literacy levels are high; there is a well-established and extensive schooling infrastructure, and education is open to all and there is universal basic education. Current reforms in the education system are thus guided by two imperatives. The first is to educate Azerbaijan youth about their own history, culture; and traditions; and the second is to attune education to the changes in the social, economic, political and governmental structures of the Republic. Although steps have been taken to improve various aspects of schooling, these reforms have not been systematic nor all-encompassing.

According to the latest Human Development Report 2001, Azerbaijan ranks 89th out of 173 countries of the world on the Human Development Index (HDI). Between 1992-95, the value of the HDI fell from 0.718 to 0.692. Thereafter, the country's HDI value has improved and so has its ranking.[5]

Azerbaijan's adult literacy rate is at 97.3 percent. (Male: 99 percent, female: 96 percent). Most people complete, on average, ten years of schooling. Azerbaijan's education system, run by the state, consists of schools which provide education at the nursery, primary and secondary stage. The state also looks after professional schools, which offer general and specialized education. Private educational institutions, which offer higher and secondary special education, are being set up. Nowadays there are five private high schools

three of them are affiliated with Universities. Lyceums and gymnasiums with their own curricula have also been established.

The country's education index is high but there are some disturbing trends.

The number of pre-school institutions has declined resulting in fewer jobs for teachers, who are mostly women. Although the number of secondary general schools has not changed, their condition has deteriorated. They have no money to renovate infrastructure, buy teaching aids, or upgrade curricula.

Since the beginning of 1996, the cost of textbooks, meals, and other services are being passed on to parents. Parents with low per capita income cannot afford to buy uniforms for their children or pay for school transport. Children are dropping out to supplement family income. International organizations and NGOs have pointed out that more girls than boys are not receiving an education. According to official statistics and the assessment of experts, fewer children are graduating from secondary general schools. Enrolment has declined for children and young adults in the age group 6-23 years. In 1998, 68.5 percent were enrolled. By 1999, this proportion had fallen to 61.3. According to the State Committee on Statistics data, around 19,570 students were not enrolled in school during 1999.

The number of secondary vocational and technical schools and upper secondary schools has decreased substantially during the last decade. This is because these programs were always a part of state-run farms, businesses, and industry and as they have been privatized, the private firms dropped them. As a result there is increased pressure on general education to provide students with knowledge and skills that are marketable.

State-run schools, which prepare specialists in construction, transportation, and communication, have been reduced nearly four times, while agriculture courses have declined nearly five times. In contrast, private institutions, which offer quick courses in foreign languages and information technology, are thriving, though the quality of education they impart is questionable. Private higher education institutions have doubled their number of students in the last ten years.

The state controls 25 universities and 13 private universities. Enrolment for higher education has declined from 148 students per 10,000 in 1990 to 112 in 1999. Women constitute about 41 percent of students and men about 59 percent. At Baku State University about 39 percent of young people opt for law and 34 percent for studies related to service. More men opt for science. They form a majority in courses on engineering, heavy industry, energy and mechanical engineering.

In 2000, about 67 percent of students studying at secondary special schools were female. Almost 95 percent of them opted for medicine, teaching, natural science and technology. More than 50 percent of girls chose courses in the arts, computer science, economics and management. Civil engineering, machine construction, energy, agriculture and fishery were not popular with girls at secondary level. About 76 percent of students who opt for teaching are women. Seventy four percent of medical student and 68 percent of students who choose courses on natural sciences are female. According to official statistics, out of 1,538 people with a doctorate of science degree, about 30 percent are women. Among postgraduate science students, nearly 31 percent are female. On the whole, science and mathematics receive low priority among students.

In every democratic society, the schools are a major mechanism to ensure social justice and help form feelings of cultural equality. And this mostly depends on the direction of the state policy about the education of the minorities in the country. During the research period we analyzed documents reflecting state policy regarding the education of minority groups, to determine the degree to which state policy have evolved in the past one to two decades.

STATE MINORITY EDUCATION POLICIES

The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan says: "The Republic of Azerbaijan is the common and indivisible country for all of the citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan" (Article 5, II). The education principles of the Azerbaijan Republic are built on equal rights, national identity (Law on Education, article 5.1.3; 5.1.6.) guarantees equal rights to different nationalities. Article 44 of the Constitution states: "Every person shall have the right to preserve his/her national/ethnic identity."

1. Policies Related to Language Instruction

One of the first national policy steps after the collapse of the USSR in Azerbaijan was the Decree of the President of Azerbaijan Republic of September 16, 1992**:** "On protection of the rights and freedoms of national minorities, small-minorities and ethnic groups living in the Azerbaijan Republic and on rendering state assistance to the development of their languages and cultures." According to this document the government would gradually solve such issues as:

- State assistance for the preservation and the development of the cultural, linguistic and religious originality of ethnic groups;
- Maintenance of their own national traditions and customs;
- Protection of the historical and cultural monuments of all nationalities;

- Free development of the national handicrafts, the professional and amateur talent groups.

A preliminary comment about policies related to language of instruction is necessary. Policy is complicated by Azerbaijan's Soviet past in two ways. First, the Soviet policy continues in allowing Georgian schools to exist within the boundaries of Azerbaijan which could only be described as Georgian in orientation, personnel, and content. The main obstacle to overcoming this condition is that Azerbaijani schools also exist in Georgia, which have an Azerbaijani orientation, personnel, and content. Such a condition is not seen as desirable by the research team, at least in nationalistic terms, and it certainly does not reflect the policies regarding other ethnic minorities in the country. Second, Russian language schools continue to play a strong role in Azerbaijani education in Azerbaijan although that role has declined sharply since independence in 1991. Today approximately 25 percent of pupils in Azerbaijan study in Russian language schools, although there is some discussion about the possibility that Russian language schools will be abolished. In this project, we have chosen not to deal with these two complications; rather, we shall deal primarily with language as represented by the other ethnic minorities in the country.

On December 22, 1992 a law on the "State Language of Azerbaijan Republic" was adopted. It stipulated official status for the Azerbaijani language, but guaranteed the citizens of Azerbaijan the right to use any other national language on the territory of the

Republic. Choice of the language of education was paid special attention in the Article 3 of the law: "Every child has an inalienable right to mother tongue education." Another important quotation is "this right is ensured by the creation of a network of kindergartens and schools, with the language of education depending on the ethnic composition of the region's population."

A Governmental Committee for Internal National Relations was established by the Resolution of the Republican Parliament of September 20, 1993 (#712). A Governmental Service of the Counselor for National Policy was created by the President's Decree of March 12, 1993 (#486). This special consultative council acts under the jurisdiction of the Governmental Counselor's Service, which consists of the representatives of the various national minorities, small-numbered nationalities and ethnic groups.

In the new Constitution of the Azerbaijan Republic (November 12, 1995) the Azerbaijani language is decreed as the formal language, but at the same time Article 21 guarantees the preservation, free use, cultivation, and development of other languages of the Republic's population. With regard to the choice of the language of education, citizens of the Azerbaijan Republic have a right of free choice of the language of education. Article 45 provides for the right to use the mother tongue. Everyone may receive education in his/her mother tongue and use this language in his/her creative works. Nobody can be deprived of using the mother tongue:

"Everybody has the right to chose the language of education. Nobody can be deprived from the right to use his mother tongue."

According to the 1999 census data representatives of different ethnic groups do use their own nationality languages.

Ratio (per cent) between the population's ethnic origin and mother tongue, 1999 census data

	The language of own nationality	**Languages of other nationalities**
Total population	99.0	1.0
Azerbaijanis	99.7	0.3
Armenians	99.9	0.1
Avars	98.2	1.8
Georgians	98.0	2.0
Jews	87.1	12.9
Kurds	48.9	51.1
Lezghians	96.1	3.9
Russians	99.3	0.7
Sakhurs	99.3	0.7
Talish	89.6	10.4
Tatars	86.7	13.3
Tats	83.0	17.0
Turks	94.6	5.4
Udins	98.8	1.2
Ukrainians	32.1	67.9
Other nationalities	75.3	24.7

The situation plays itself out in different ways depending on the minority population. According to the data of the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan Republic there are schools with three languages of instruction in Azerbaijan. These are the Azerbaijani, Russian and Georgian languages. However, other linguistic minorities' children, who reside in close together, are taught their own mother tongue.[6] Data below reflects situation of 1996-1997:

Talish language was taught to 23,919 pupils,
Lezghian language was taught to 16,350 pupils,
Tsakhur language was taught to 1,090 pupils,
Avar language was taught to 4,082 pupils,
Udin language was taught to 517 pupils,
Khynalyg language was taught to 162 pupils.

Lezghians and Talish receive language instruction in their mother tongue at the elementary level (grades I-IV). This means they receive two hours a week for four years. There are presently 104 such preparatory classes, where 1,573 pupils learn Lezghian in the Gusar and Gabala regions. In the Astara region there are 78 classes, where 1,481 pupils learn the Talish language.

During our research we found that in the Soviet period Lezghians mostly chose Russian as a language of instruction. After Azerbaijan gained its independence the number of Lezghians receiving instruction in Azerbaijani increased. Because there is no state

policy directing them to do so, Lezghian's have simply decided on their own that their respect for the independent Azerbaijan Republic, its language and history, are sufficient to attend Azerbaijani language schools. At present 75-80 percent of all minorities chose the Azerbaijani language as a language of instruction (Georgians are the exception). The rest chose the Russian language schools.

Only the Georgians have secondary schools in their mother tongue (Georgian language). In the Balakan region there is only one secondary school where the instruction is both in Azerbaijan and Georgia. In the Georgian section there are 12 grades with 205 pupils. Out of 62 teachers, 32 are Georgians.

In the Zagatala region at 4 schools Georgian is used side-by-side with Azerbaijani. At all 4 schools there are 55 grades with 943 pupils, and out of 293 teachers 123 are Georgians.

In Gax we have yet another situation. At one school side by side with Azerbaijani and Russian, Georgian is used as a language of instruction, but at 6 schools the language is only Azerbaijani. Out of 386 teachers 252 are Georgians. In all of these three regions at schools where different languages are used as the medium of instruction, the school principals are Azeris, but at Georgian schools they are Georgians.

Thus, in the Zagatala, Balakan, and Gax regions there are 12 schools with 2,541 pupils, with Georgian as the language of instruction. (But in the Azerbaijani section there are 2,560, and in the Russian section 87 pupils). Out of 739 teachers, 407 are Georgians.

Region/ Language	**Balakan**		**Zagatala**		**Gax**		**Total**	
	School	Pupils	School	Pupils	School	Pupils	School	Pupils
Georgian	1	205	4	943	7	1393	12	2541

2. *National Curriculum Developments*

Azerbaijan adheres strictly to a so-called subject-based curriculum, which claims to be based on goals consistent with the Azerbaijan Constitution, Law on Education, and international agreements. The objectives of the curriculum include general and subject-specific efforts. General objectives transcend any specific subject field, and are related to life skills, democratic and other citizenship attitudes, critical thinking, learning how to learn, and problem solving skills. Subject-specific objectives include knowledge and skills in a subject field. We found there is almost no reference to ethnic minority groups within the curriculum of any subject.

General education curriculum for 1999/2000 in the Republic of Azerbaijan (Instruction language: Azerbaijani)

#	Subject	II	III	IV	VI	VII	VIII	IX	XI
I	Azerbaijani	10	10	10	4	4	3	2	1
2	Literature	-	-	-	2	2	2	3	3
3	Russian	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
4	Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
5	Information Science and basics of computer engineering	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
6	History	-	-	-	1/2	2/1	2/1	2/1	3/2
7	History of Azerbaijan	-	-	-	1	1	½	1/2	2
8	People and Society	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1
9	Natural History	-					-	-	-
10	Familiarization with the Environment	1			-	-	-	-	-
11	Geography	-			2	3	3	3	1
12	Biology	-			2	2	2	2	2
13	Physics	-			-	2	3/2	4	4
14	Astronomy	-				-	-	-	1
15	Chemistry	-					3	3	3
16	Sketching	-			-	-	-	1	1
17	Foreign Language	-			3	3	2	2	2
18	Drawing	1			1	1	-	-	-
19	Music and singing	1			1	1	1	-	-
20	Physical Training	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

21	Initial Military Training	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
22	Vocational Training	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
23	Constitution of the Azer-baijan Republic	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
24	Basics of Economics	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Total	25	25	25	29.5	32.5	34.5	37	36.9-
	Free Electives	1	1	1	3	4	4	2	4

There was occasional reference to ethnic minorities in geography and history curriculum guidelines.

Example: History (Grade 4, Section 4)

Albanian Kingdom (Caucasus)

1. The origin of the Albanian state. 1(2) hours. Territory, population, geography, ethnic content groups. Occupations. Social structure.
2. The Albanian culture. 1 (2) hours. Cultural. Alban writing. Sculpture. The Spread of Christianity in some regions of Albania. The formation process of the Azeri people.
3. Turkish tribes and their role in the formation of Azeri people.

In the above example, teachers are directed to use one to two hours to discuss the population, geography, and ethnic groups in the early Albanian Kingdom, and another one to two hours to deal with the early Albanian culture and Turkish tribes and how they contributed to the formation of the Azeri people.

Example: Geography (Grade 8, Section 3)

The social – economic geography of the Azerbaijan Republic.
The ethnic content of the population of Azerbaijan. Migration.

In this section the students are exposed to the social, economic geography of Azerbaijan, including the ethnic content of the population of Azerbaijan. The textbooks, as we shall see, provide almost no information about the ethnic groups under discussion.

In the curriculum for the school where instruction is in the Georgian language, Azeri language is taught as a secondary one. Georgians who attend the school with Georgian instruction have an opportunity to continue their education in the Georgian language only in Georgia.

In the regions where Lezghians live there are schools where instruction is either in the Russian or Azeri languages. In these schools the Lezghian language is taught as well. Lezghians also have an opportunity to continue their education at the higher levels in the Lezghian language in Dagestan. But the only options available to the Talish, Tats, Kurds, Avarz, and Udins are to enroll in schools where the instruction is either in the Russian or Azeri language.

The Curriculum of Georgian language schools is worked out in the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Georgia, and it is then formally approved by the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan

Republic. All textbooks for Georgian schools are brought from Georgia. It must be noted that Azerbaijani is taught in these schools as the official language of the Republic. The history of Azerbaijan is not taught in these schools since there is no book on the history of Azerbaijan in the Georgian language. Article 8, (Item 2) of the Law on Education notes that at schools where Azerbaijani is not a language of Instruction the History of Azerbaijan must be taught. To solve this problem the Ministries of Education of the Georgian Republic and Azerbaijan Republic have plans to publish *The History of Azerbaijan* in Georgian in two volumes, so that the Law on Education can be satisfied.

As to university education of minorities, we must note that during the Soviet period, groups of people on the margins of the Soviet Union were given privileges at the entrance exams. Though no special seats were given to them, during the entrance exams they were given every assistance to pass the exams and gain entrance into higher education. After the independence of Azerbaijan the entrance test exams were centralized and smaller ethnic groups in Azerbaijan were not given any special privileges. Today, ethnic-group pupils take their test side-by-side with other Azerbaijani citizens under the same conditions and terms.

3. Textbook Developments

Government policy regarding minorities is most clearly seen in the textbooks, because these contain the explicit information that is to

be transmitted to the students. In the last several years a completely new set of textbooks have been published for all subjects in primary and secondary schools. Thus, in 1996 Ministry of Education published ABCs in six minority languages:

Talish - 15,000 copies,
Tat - 5,000 copies,
Kurd - 2,000 copies,
Lezghian - 8,000 copies,
Udin - 1,000 copies,
Tsakhur - 2,000 copies.

At the same time, there were several textbooks in minority languages published. All textbooks are small consisting of less than 100 pages and they are designed in similar formats:

Udin language for the 3d grade - 1.000 copies,
Tat language for the 3d grade - 5.000 copies,
Lezghian language for the 2d grade - 8.000 copies,
Talish language for the 4th grade - 10.000 copies.

We did a content analysis of all the most recent textbooks that have been prepared by the Ministry of Education for the junior and senior classes to see what references are made regarding ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan. If we were to put all of these textbooks together they would add up to 4,000 pages of text. In all of these

4,000 pages we found references to minorities that amounted to less than two pages of text. And this is a generous calculation, as will be seen in the following comments.

In the readers for primary school the only references to minority groups are stories and poems by Russian writers and poets, but these do not deal explicitly with the Russian people. No other references to other minorities were found in the readers.

Textbooks for the higher grades are divided into subject fields. The textbooks on literature used in higher grades present a similar picture as the textbooks for the primary students. There is occasional information about a small number of Russian writers and their works in the textbooks for the seventh and tenth grades, although this information is presented as part of the foreign literature sections of the textbooks.

The textbooks on geography list information about minorities in the eighth and eleventh grades. The appropriate passages in the books are in the section: "Population and Its National Content." The following is the most extensive discussion of minority groups in any of the texts. It is taken from *The Social and Economic Geography of Azerbaijan* (Grade 8):

According to the population census (1989), 17 percent of the Azerbaijan population are the representatives of more than 80 nationalities, including 5.6 percent Russians, 2.4 percent Lezghians,

5.6 percent Armenians. In addition, Tats, Talish, Avarz, Udins, Tatars, Jews and others live in Azerbaijan as well.

Most of them are very ancient people of Caucasus. From an ethnic, cultural and psychological point of view they are related to the Azeris.

Russians came to Azerbaijan in the second half of the XIX century, Armenians were imported after 1828.

The above quotation represents the most extensive discussion about minorities in Azerbaijan textbooks, and it amounts to less than ten lines of text, and tells almost nothing about the people themselves.

The textbooks on history make more references to minorities than any other textbooks, although these references give minimal information about the ethnic cultures. We interviewed the writers of several of the textbooks and they indicated that their intention was to teach more general issues and not focus on minority issues in the texts. It must be pointed out that during the former Soviet Union there wasn't any information about the history of Azerbaijan in history texts produced by the USSR. Today the history of Azerbaijan is taught in all secondary school classes beginning from the fifth grade. Azerbaijan history textbooks make occasional references about the origin of the minorities beginning from the earlier stages of the history.

Example: *Azerbaijan History* (grade 6):

Azeri Turks developed as a nation having a very ancient territory, language, culture, political formations and settled in larger territories in the early middle ages (III – VIII). These territories started from the north of Derbent and continued till Zenjan – Gazvin – Hamedan, the south region of Iran.

Azeru turks originally came from Turkish ethnic groups called Azeri, Gargar, Alban, Hun, Khazar, Sabir, Oguz. The history of the Persian language (Talish, Tats, Kurds) and the Caucasian language (Udins, Avarz, Lezghians, Sahurs, Khinaligs, Budugs, and others) nations is closely connected with the history of Azeri Turks.

In this passage there is some reference that various ethnic groups were the source of the Azeri peoples. In other words, the main emphasis is that the various ethnic groups are closely connected with the history of Azerbaijan culture and language.

Example: *Azerbaijan History* (grade 7):

There are similar ties that connect all the groups in Azerbaijan.

Firstly, they are under the influence of the same ideology. During different periods these ethnic groups had to fulfill the sacret texts of different religions, including idolatry, fire worshipping, Christianity, finally Muslim.

Secondly, they fought against the oppression of the empires (Sasani, Arab and other empires) together as Azerbaijan was their home.

Finally, they fought together against the attacks of external enemies.

In this passage, we see again the emphasis on the ties these various groups have and their importance in fighting oppression, both from within and outside Azerbaijan. There is no discussion of what the ethnic groups are, but instead how they contribute to being Azerbaijani.

4. Guidelines for the Teacher Training Program

There is no mention of ethnic minorities in the guidelines for teacher training. We reviewed the program for future teachers, and all future teachers learn Azerbaijan history, but only as a part of their general studies in higher education. Some instructors have students read a textbook devoted specifically to minority groups, written by Gadamshah Javadov, entitled *Small Ethnic Groups and National Minorities in Azerbaijan.* Unfortunately, there is no provision in the professional development guidelines for dealing with ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan. We interviewed several lecturers at the State Teacher Training University, who had written textbooks, and they indicated to us that there are no provisions at the institution for sensitizing teacher candidates to minority populations and the teaching of the students of minorities. The sentiments of Irada Gasimova, from the Pedagogical University is

indicative of the general sentiments. She strongly favors attention be given to minority groups but maintains that all citizens of Azerbaijan ought to speak Azeri and have a commitment to the Azerbaijani nation and to being Azerbaijanis.

The teacher training for Minority schools is also a very crucial for Minority people. The situation at the Georgian schools and Lezghi schools is satisfactory since teachers fro these schools are trained in the universities in Georgia and Dagestan. But for other minorities it is challenging. Beginning 2002 Lankaran State University will be training a couple of minority teachers at the Masters level for Talysh schools.

Teachers who teach in the schools where Georgian is the language of instruction are mostly graduates of institutions of higher learning in Georgia. In other words, they receive training to teach in Georgia. We might note that similar provisions are available in Georgia where schools are available for Azeri-speaking citizens of Georgia. That is, they don't receive any instruction about minority populations in Georgia.

SPECIFIC SCHOOL DATA COLLECTION

We visited three different parts of the country where the minorities are the majority of the population. We had originally wanted to go to two areas, particularly Lezghian and Talish regions, but found it

important to include Udin schools. The reason for this is that we found important innovations in Udin schools that might serve as school models for other regions where minority populations live. We have visited the following regions:
Guba-Xachmaz-Oguz region where mostly Lezghian live
Lankaran-Astara-Lerik region where the Talish live

Udin schools

Our plan was to look at schools at the primary level and schools at the secondary level in each region. Besides we visited the communities in these regions to establish a sense of rapport with administrators and teachers of the schools and attended classes to become familiar with the institutions. Our visits were informal and we did not communicate to the teachers that our specific aim was to look at education policy as it related to ethnic minorities. Our inquiries were done within the context of a much broader frame about schooling in Azerbaijan. We used a qualitative approach to the study on the grounds that it best served the purpose of our investigations namely:

- To understand the behavior of teachers in the context of the specific institutional context;
- To understand this context in relation to the local educational directorate;

- To understand how the provisions for minority students either support or deviate from the national educational agenda.

We conducted interviews with local educational directorate leaders, school leaders and teachers. The respondents were asked for information concerning curriculum, programs language issues and textbooks as well as opinions about them. We tried to group the questions around policy and practice related to minorities in the local directorate and the school and issues, and textbooks. And the third group of questions the conditions that existed related to minority students and teachers.

We turn now to comments about the specific minority groups under investigation.

Lezghians

The Lezghian ethnic group lives along the northern border between Azerbaijan and Dagestan in Russia. While most Lezghians live today in Russia, there are pockets of the population in Azerbaijan. They are Muslims and retain a devotion to this religious orientation. During the Soviet period those in Russia resisted Russification and with the fall of the Soviet Union, those groups became somewhat strident in their demands for independence from Moscow. In Azerbaijan, demands for

independence have not been strong, although they are a proud people. The quest for independence in Azerbaijan may be termpered by the fact that Lezghian people are represented in Azerbaijan's Parliament and the Government, but especially in the local towns, districts, villages and hamlets, where Lezghians live. Newspapers ("Samur" and "Gusar") and books are publish in the Lezghian language, and there are cultural centers and communal organizations, supported with state funds, specifically organized to preserve and develop the Lezghian culture.

Schools serving the Lezghians conform to the school patterns of the rest of Azerbaijan. That is, there are Russian and Azeri language schools, and they provide the standard curriculum required by the Ministry of Education. However, most Leszghians choose to place their children in Russian language schools. Lezghian language instruction is available in all eleven grades of primary and secondary school, and a number of pupils take advantage of this possibility. This appears to be a transitional pedagogical approach, because the children would not succeed as well if instruction were in Azeri or Russian.

Our queries as to provisions that are made to deal with Lezghian culture were usually met with perplexed looks. Educators made it clear that they followed the curriculum as it was issued by the Ministry of Education. There did not appear to be strict sanctions against teaching about the Lezghian culture; rather, the attitude

among teachers was more that it was their professional obligation to follow the guidelines laid down by the Ministry.

Because information given to people in interviews does not always correspond with actual behavior, we engaged in classroom observations in Lezghian schools. Of course, it is possible that teacher behavior changed while being observed, but our observations were that teachers rarely mentioned the Lezghian minority group nor did they make any reference to cultural and historical events connected with their Lezghian backgrounds.

A substantial portion of the students in the schools we visited have Lezghian principals, teachers and pupils. Our general impression was that the teachers and pupils were proud to be Lezghian, but that there was essentially no place in the curriculum where the ethnic group received attention. We have seen that the curriculum and textbooks make no provision for a discussion of the culture and how it is to be distinguished from other groups in the Republic. In our classroom visits, we found references to local conditions, places, and events, but they were not tied to any cultural conditions of the minority population. One math teacher, for example, in an exercise on geometric designs, made reference to streets in the town and how they were laid out. In Kuba, the only incident we observed relating to Lezghian conditions was made by one teacher who was not Lezghian; she chided the

children who misbehaved on one occasion that their behavior did not measure up to the expectations she had of Lezghians.

We did inquire as to the attitude minority members have about themselves, and it was evident that they took great pride in who they were. By way of contrast, in talking with teachers who were not members of the minority group, they expressed some shock when we asked if they were part of that minority, as if such an identity were an insult to them.

How do Lezghians develop such a sense of pride? The local families and community apparently provide sufficient support and reinforcement for the young people. Some efforts are taken on the national level. Regular cultural events are available where the young people demonstrate their culture through dance, music, and costumes. These events provide an outlet for the young to feel that they are a part of Azerbaijan and its people. In spite of this, we wonder why the schools pay almost no attention to ethnicity. It might be because of benign neglect. That is, ethnicity may not be considered crucial enough as a factor of national pride to be taken into consideration.

In our conversations with educators we gained the impression that the Lezghians themselves do not want to have their own schools, and they preferred to participate in the national school system, because it provides more advantages to them than would separate schools. Because the national curriculum is so extremely

centralized, they apparently consider it inappropriate to deviate in any way from that curriculum by giving attention to local, ethnic issues. Even so, there is some unhappiness with some aspects of the national policies. For example, in a group discussion with teachers, they complained bitterly about the decision in 1991 to change the Azeri language from the Cyrillic script to a modified Latin script. They felt that the children would thereby eventually be separated from their ethnic kin in Dagestan, Russia, who continue to use Cyrillic.

Talishs

Most of the 200,000 Talish in the world live in the south-east region of Azerbaijan, near the Iranian border in and around Lenkoran, Lerik, Astara. Lenkoran served for a long time as the capital of the Talish Khanate, which has enjoyed variable degrees of independence throughout history. Those in the mountains around Lerik are known for the longevity of their lives. The remainder of the Talish live across the border in Iran. They speak an Indo-Iranian language that is also called Talish. Of course, almost all of those living in Azerbaijan are bilingual or trilingual, in that they speak Azeri and/or Russian. They have lived in this region for thousands of years. They adhere mainly to the Shi'ite Muslim religion, but are also more secularized than many other traditional groups, because of their association with the Soviet Union since

1920. Their Talish traditions are connected with farming and the land, but a growing number are now skilled craftsmen. There is occasional talk of separatist intentions among the Talish, but it does not appear to be serious at this point.[7]

As is the case with other minorities, the Talish are represented in Azerbaijan's Parliament and the government, and in the local towns and districts. Newspapers ("Syado"), magazines ("Soz") and books are published in the Talish language, and there are cultural centers and communal organizations, supported with state funds, specifically organized to preserve and develop the Talish culture.

Schools serving the Talish are identical to those in the rest of Azerbaijan. That is, there are Russian and Azeri language schools, and the Ministry of Education dictates what the standard curriculum will be. However, as noted, Talish language instruction is available in the first four grades of primary school, and a number of pupils take advantage of this possibility. This appears to be a transitional pedagogical approach, because the children would not succeed as well if instruction were only in Azeri or Russian. Even though the schools we visited were populated almost entirely by Talish teachers and students, there is no place in the curriculum for a consideration of Talish traditions and culture in the schools, because the centralized curriculum mandates the same topics and content be provided throughout the Republic of

Azerbaijan. Elmira Muradaliyeva, an Azerbaijan history professor from Baku State University explained to us that the Azerbaijan policy is that people should not be divided and sorted out as separate groups. Their national identity is believed to be more crucial to be taught than is their local, cultural identity.

We pressed teachers to explain if and how they incorporated Talish culture into the school curriculum, and our queries indicated that the teachers took for granted that they would teach the curriculum that was provided to them by the central Ministry of Education. Teachers considered it their professional responsibility to teach what the Ministry mandated. The textbooks were followed almost as if they were the teacher rather than the individual teacher.

We devoted time in the classroom observing the instructional sessions. We anticipated that there would be some attention, however minimal to the local culture and local situation. Contrary to expectations, we found that teacher behavior was consistent with what they had told us. That is, teachers followed the prescribed curriculum very closely. The language of instruction is Azeri or Russian from the very beginning, but teachers who spoke Talish did not hesitate to help young children, particularly in the early grades of school, by explaining the meaning of terms and concepts in Talish. However, they used the Talish language as a means of communicating the prescribed curriculum. In other words, the

information provided in the textbook was binding for them, and they followed it closely and carefully. After a history class we inquired if the teacher ever pointed out local monuments, buildings or other markers of local history, and the teacher appeared surprised that she might do this, and it appeared to be an appealing idea the teacher had never entertained. In fact, some teachers expressed an interest in incorporating this kind of local artifact into their instructional program. Obviously, they had not been encouraged to do such a thing in their training program or by the curriculum guidelines that come from the Ministry.

It is clear that the Talish are a proud people. There apparently is enough support in the family and community for their culture to develop this sense of pride in their culture. The school is not at all hostile to Talish culture, but it takes for granted that its purpose is Azerbaijan nationalism and a sense of pride in being Azerbaijani.

We found that the Talish educators and the students are not interested in having schools that teach the Talish language and culture. They wish to participate in the national school system and see that it provides them with more advantages than a Talish school would provide. In fact, the Talish language is at times considered a dead end for pupils, because they are unable to go on to higher studies in the language. More than one Talish teacher dismissed the language issue, explaining that the children were not terribly interested in the written form of their native language. Other

teachers were more dedicated to the perpetuation of the language. We noted above that some sentiment has been expressed for Talish independence from Azerbaijan, but this did not manifest itself among the educators we visited. They were proud to be thought of as Azerbaijan citizens though with a Talish cultural background.

Udins

The Udins are a small minority population living in the Gabala region of Azerbaijan, 350 km to the northwest of the capital city of Baku. On the whole, an estimated 10,000 Udins live in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia and Belarus today.[8] They identify themselves with the Christian Albanians who used to live in the Caucasus (B.C.). The modern Udins (Udi) are descendants of one of the 26 Albanian tribes, who are believed to be the original residents of this region. After the conquest of Azerbaijan by the Arabs most of its population was assimilated into the culture of the conquerors. However, some part managed to retain their distinctive identity. The Udins and Hinaligs belong exactly to these groups.

The Udins' religious belief was influenced by Christianity, Islam, Armenian Gregorian Church religions. There are a number of literate sources going back to 1840 by German researchers. They are devoted to the history of Udin people, including some language development problems.

Modern Udins have preserved themselves as a small ethnic group with its own language, material, and spiritual culture. There is a compact population of 4,000 people in the village of Nidge, in the Gabala region. They consider this place the only one where the language and cultural environment are preserved, as well as traditions and moral values are maintained. The main occupation of Udins is farming. Some people work at local enterprises, and there are also school teachers and local administrative authorities. According to the historical-ethnographical research devoted to Udins and published as a monograph by the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences in 1999, in Nidge there are 131 teachers, 2 physicians, 12 workers of culture, 10 educators in kindergartens who are Udins by birth.

The Udins speak Russian and Azerbaijani, but Udin is the main language of communication in families. People who live in this village but who are of Azeri or Lezghian origin would sometime also speak in Udin, which is the main language at a pre-school level, in 2 kindergartens for 150 kids.

There are five coeducational schools in this village centrally developed by the Azerbaijan Ministry of Education. Azerbaijani is the language of instruction in two schools, and in the three other schools the language of instruction is Russian. Udin children attend the latter 3 schools. One of these schools is still located in the building constructed in mid-1930s according to the USSR Central Government Decree of January 1934 on Measures for Udin

People Education. Currently the Udin language is compulsory for grades 1 to 3 in the elementary school. There has been a proposal made to extend the program up to the ninth grade and it is under consideration. Children from families who are not Udin, who attend these three schools do not have to take the Udin language lessons, although some non-Udins choose to learn the Udin language in school. Teachers and parents, whom we met, say though that all children study Udin with interest and motivation.

There is no textbook used for teaching the Udin language in the first grade. Language lessons are presented orally. Teachers sometimes refer to a pictorial language learning textbook developed six or seven years ago, although it was not intended specifically for Udin language learners. We understand that publication of that textbook is under the discussion with the Ministry of Education. There are two textbooks called *Udin Language ABC* used in grades 2 and 3. Both were published by the Azerbaijani Ministry of Education in 1996. Each title has a print-run of 1000 copies. According to the local school principal, the textbooks are distributed free of charge to schools and then to students. We met the author of the textbooks, the Udin writer Mr. Georgi Kechaari. According to him, the Udin Language textbooks do not present any specific national/cultural vocabulary or notions, but deal with the general lexicon only. The currently taught alphabet is formed on the modern Azerbaijani language alphabet, which in turn is based on the Latin script. Though there are 52 letters in the Udin alphabet

(compared to 33 in the Azeri language), no special symbols are developed, but only extra-signs are added to letters or pairs of symbols are used. As this alphabet has roots in the Azeri language alphabet, Udin people living outside Azerbaijan cannot use it.

Students of the upper grades of the middle school take Udin language weekly for 2-4 hours planned by the National Curriculum as an "elective" course. At the same time there are a number of choices children can make as part of extra-curricular activities run by all three schools in the village. These include "Study of Udin Customs", "Udin Songs", and "Udin drama" in the Udin language. There are additional materials available to the general public. In 2001 with the help of the Norwegian Humanitarian Enterprise Azerbaijan, which renders important help to the Udin minority group there were two books published. One is called "Orayin." It's a 144-page collection of poems, legends, and anecdotes published in the 52-letter alphabet of the Udin language. This anthology is compiled by Udin writer Georgi Kechaari. The second publication, "Waterspring," is a 23-page booklet of Udin legends, humorous stories, and anecdotes in English translation. "We have waited 40 years to see our poems published in our own language," says Mr. Kechaari.

Teachers who work with Udin children are mostly born in the same village. They come back and work here after getting their Degree at one of the Universities in the capital city of Azerbaijan.

II. EDUCATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The country of Iran is located south of Azerbaijan and Armenia and north of the Persian Gulf. It covers 632,457 square miles and has a population of 66 million people, approximately one tenth of whom live in Tehran. The country is divided into 24 provinces, and there is a significant difference in the quality of life between the urban centers and the rural regions.

According to Shahrokh Meskoob, Iran's cultural identity is built on four major factors. These are: "(1) the country's pre-Islamic legacy, which took shape over a period of more than a millennium, from the time of Achaemenians to the defeat of the last Persian dynasty (the Sasanians) by the invading Arab armies in the middle of the seventh century; (2) Islam, or, more specifically, Shi'ism, the religion of over ninety percent of the country's present-day inhabitants, with an all-encompassing impact on every facets of Iranian culture and thought; (3) the more diffuse bonds, fictive or real, established among peoples who have inhabited roughly the same territory, with the same name, faced the same enemies, struggled under the same despotic rulers and conquerors, and otherwise shared the same historical destiny for over two millennia; and

finally (4) the Persian language, currently the mother tongue of a bare majority of the population, but long the literary and "national language" in Iran (as well as in parts of Afghanistan, Central Asia, and parts of the Indian subcontinent)."[9] In other words, the notion of being Persian goes beyond ethnicity, in that all ethnic groups are formally considered part of being Iranian. In Iran there are a number of ethnic minorities:

1. Azeri speaking (24-42 percent)
2. Kurds, (7-12 percent)
3. Arab (minor)
4. Baluch (1 percent)
5. Bakhtiyari (1 percent)
6. Jewish (.5 percent)
7. Ashoori (minor)
8. Talishs
9. Turkamans

Estimates of the number of Azeri-speaking people and Kurds vary widely. This can be explained in part, by the lack of solid information available on the minorities, but also because Iran does not want its minority population to appear too significant in the country. Many of the smaller groups descend from slave and Indian trade. Farsi is the official language and native tongue of over half the population. It is also spoken as a second language by the majority of the remainder. Besides permanent ethnic minorities

in Iran, there are also large numbers of refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq, who brought their own linguistic and cultural traditions with them.

According to the most recent Human Development Report on Iran,[10] from 1960 to 1995, Iran's human development index values increased 0.452, moving Iran from the group of countries considered to have low human development to join the ranks of those with medium human development. The transformation of the social environment has significantly affected income, education, and health (three basic components of the human development index). While it took three decades (1960-1988) for life expectancy to rise from 49.5 to 61.6 years, it took only one decade (1988-1997) for it to rise from 61.1 to 69.5 years. Adult literacy rose from 41% on the eve of the Islamic Revolution (1979) to 57.1% in 1988, and then jumped to 74.5% in 1997. Similarly, combined enrolment ratio (combined first, second - and third - level gross enrollment ratio) shot up from 46% in 1980 to 65.6% in 1988 and then to 75% in 1997.

Before the revolution, real GDP per capita expanded at a rate equal to 150% from $1,985 in 1960 to 4,976 in 1976. After the revolution, the growth slowed registering an initial drop in the first decade after the revolution, but in the second decade it rose from $3,715 to $ 5,222. During the past decade, the female literacy rate rose from 46.3% to 67%, while the female rate of admission in higher education also saw a proportionate increase. Female life expectancy

increased form 62.7 years to 70.6. During 1988-97 under - five mortality rate declined from 85.3 to 37.3 in every 1000 live births. During the past decade human poverty decreased form 31% to 18%. Moreover, during 1988-97 the infant mortality rate was reduced from 63.5 in every 1000 live births to 30.7.[11] In Iran, the Azerbaijani or "Turkish People" participate in partnership in jobs with the majority Farsi-speaking people, though the key jobs are usually held by Farsi-speaking people.

THE IRANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The state school system was formally established with Iran's first constitution in 1905, although those in the cities were the main early beneficiaries of schooling. One way of promoting Iran's interpretation of Islamic ideals and principles is to use the public school system. Since the Islamic revolution, all of the educational material used in the schools has been changed or updated to make sure that there is no conflict with the laws of Islam. The revolutionary government recognized that the long-run consequences of the revolution depended on the transformation of the present school children by creating a new set of values. The old system's values and institutions were to be fundamentally altered. The schools were seen as major vehicles for change, so in the schools, the major educational variables available were to be altered.

Two of the most important factors in the improvement of human development levels in Iran from 1988 to 1997 were the improvement of the adult literacy rate from 57.1% to 74.5% and the increase in the combined enrollment rate from 65.5% to 75%. Adult literacy grew at a higher rate than combined enrollment. This can be explained largely by the fact that because literacy was a prerequisite for access to further education, training and employment opportunities, demand for literacy courses was high. The gross enrollment ratio at the tertiary level jumped from 6.89% in 1988 to 18.17% in 1997, while the ratio at the secondary level went up from 52.7% to 77.5% in the same period the ratio at the primary level, on the other hand, declined from 122.5% in 1998 to 119.2% in 1997. The significant increase in the number of universities and institutions of higher education and the growing presence of the private sector at this level explain why growth in tertiary education has been higher than in secondary and primary education.

The educational system is highly centralized, and the educational programs of the schools are highly uniform. The programs throughout the country look much the same as the programs in Tehran. The major difference with Tehran is that there are more facilities and a wider number of schools that are designed to provide education at a single level, such as pre-primary schools, high schools and pre-university schools. However, all schools are managed within a single system with no differences observed in the programs of these schools.

Although the composition of the population shows more men having an opportunity to become literate, women have shown a great interest in literacy. The index for the number of female students in higher education increased from 100 in 1988 to 322 in 1996. In 1998, 60.5% of students were in urban areas, while the remaining 39.5% were in rural areas. Of all learners covered by the Literacy Movement, 56.8% were in urban areas and 43.2% were in rural areas.[12]

Article 30 of the Iranian Constitution, which was drafted in 1979 after the Islamic Revolution, states that primary education is mandatory for children between the ages of 6-11, and in Article 30, the Constitution stipulates that, "The government must provide all citizens with free-education up to secondary school, and must expand free higher education to the extent required by the country for attaining self-sufficiency." One of the first measures adopted by the government after the Revolution in 1979 was the desecularization of the public school system. This was a three-pronged program that involved purging courses and textbooks believed to slander Islam and substituting courses on religion; purging teachers to ensure that only those who understood the true meaning of Islam (i.e., were not secular) remained in the schools; and regulating the behavior and dress of students. Only one Jewish school remains open and its Muslim director is appointed by the ministry of education. The school is forced to operate on the Jewish sabbath

and the teaching of Judaic texts is permitted only with Farsi translations of the Bible.

The revolutionary government recognized that the long-run consequences of the revolution depended on the transformation of the present school children by creating a new set of values. The old system's values and institutions were to be fundamentally altered. The schools were seen as major vehicles for change, so in the schools, the major educational variables available were to reinforce and conform with Shi'ite Muslim values.

Although the government reintroduced the study of religion into the public school curriculum from primary grades through college, it did not act to alter the basic organization of the education system. Thus, schools have not changed significantly from the pattern prior to the Revolution. Pupils can enter pre-school education at the age of five, where they receive training in the basic notions necessary to be successful in primary school. At the age of six, pupils then begin a five-year primary school cycle, which is both free and compulsory. They take examinations at the end of each year that determine if they move on to the next grade level. At the end of the primary cycle they have a major examination that determines if they are promoted on to the next cycle. At approximately age 11, most pupils then move on to the so-called guidance cycle, which might be considered as a three-year middle school or lower secondary school. Even though the education might be

considered more general in nature, it is during this time that the talents of students are assessed and a determination will eventually be made whether they move on to academic or vocational/technical education. At the end of this cycle students are examined to determine if they are allowed to move on to secondary education. Secondary education is a three-year program covering grades 9 through 11. It is divided into two main branches: academic and vocation/technical. The academic branch is divided into four streams, namely literature and culture, socio-economic, physics/mathematics, and experimental sciences. The vocational/technical branch is intended to train students for the labor market and has three main streams, namely technical, business/vocational, and agricultural. National examinations are held at the end of each year during the secondary cycle. If a student wishes to attend the university, the student must take an additional preparation year.

The new government put a high priority on education and invested money in adult literacy programs, new school construction, and expansion of public colleges and other institutions of higher learning. Tehran (Iran's capital) is considered to be the center of higher education and learning. Educational projects in the rural areas include expanded extension services and agricultural training as well as building and improving the primary schools.

A significant percentage of the population is school age, and although many people go on to further their education, many

others do not. The literacy rate for males is about 85 percent, while the literacy rate for females is about 70 percent. The most likely people in Iran to drop out of school after the age of 11 are girls who live in the rural areas. Many rural families still do not understand why it is important for women to be educated. These girls may stay home and help their families out financially by working and contributing to the family income. Rural families may also want to "protect" their girls from outside influences and instead keep them home to promote a more traditional female role and to prepare them for marriage.

The grading system of Iran is important to understand. It is based on a 0-20 point scale. The pupil must score at least a 10 to be promoted. The scale is roughly equivalent to the American A, B, C, D scales as follows:

A = 17-20
B = 14-16.9
C = 12-13.9
D = 10-11.9
F = below 10[13]

STATE MINORITY EDUCATION POLICIES

Iran's minority education policies focus exclusively on religious minorities. However, we have chosen to deal operationally with

ethnic minorities. We mentioned above that the only reference to ethnicity in the Constitution is Article 19: "All people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; and color, race, language, and the like do not bestow any privilege." In this project we investigated specific educational dimensions.

- Policies related to the language of Instruction.
- National Curriculum Developments.
- Textbook Developments.
- Guidelines for Teacher Training Program.

1. Policies Relating to Language of Instruction

According to Article 15 of the Constitution, "the official language and script of Iran, the lingua franca of its people, is Persian. Official documents, correspondence, and texts, as well as text-books, must be in this language and script. However, the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian." According to Amir Hasanpour, this is interpreted to mean that literature of a minority group that is taught in the schools can be in the native language, but the language of instruction is always Farsi.[14]

Clearly, Farsi is the national language and is closely connected with being Iranian. A negative consequence of connecting Farsi too

closely with being Iranian, is the tendency to suppress the other languages spoken in the country. Iranian policy makers are attempting to create a country with a single language and a single identity. This means that Azeri-speakers must give up part of their cultural identity in order to be considered Iranian. There is little allowance for Azeri or Kurdish to be spoken, even though they constitute so much of the identity of the marginal cultures of Iran. According to Shahrokh Meskoob, the "ideal state of affairs ... is one in which all these languages could exist and thrive alongside each other, each in its area of concentration and in accordance with its own capabilities, but with Persian continuing as the common language of communication among all Iranian ethnic groups."[15] To this point such a state of affairs has not been attained.

In areas dominated by minority groups, the school teachers usually come from the minority group. In the Azeri-speaking areas 99 percent of the teachers speak Azeri as a mother tongue, while in Kurdistan 95 percent of the teachers speak Kurdish as a mother tongue.

2. *National Curriculum Developments*

In the centralized system of education, the curriculum is everywhere the same. Even though in most countries teachers are not slaves to curriculum guidelines, in Iran, teachers are required to follow curriculum as outlined by the Ministry of Education. Of course, they are encouraged to choose the most appropriate

instructional practices. New initiatives are under way in Iran to develop interactive and participatory learning in the schools, but teachers are expected to cover the content entirely without any opportunity to deviate. In addition, the system of examinations and all kinds of assessments are powerful reasons for teachers to follow the curriculum as it is provided to them. We have provided here the curriculum in the first eight grades of the Iranian school.[16] The curriculum requires children to engage in religious teaching, and some religious minorities are able to participate in their own religious instruction.

We have refrained from including the curriculum for the upper secondary program, because it is not uniform. Upper secondary school students must complete 96 units within three years of which 68 to 70 units are obligatory and common for all streams; however, 26 units are specialized and elective. In mathematics, for example, students are able to specialize in three different kinds of mathematics in the final year of secondary school study. However, within each course of study, the curriculum is explicitly spelled out.

Islamic Republic of Iran. Primary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	**# of weekly periods in each grade**				
	I	**II**	**III**	**IV**	**V**
The Holy Quran	-	-	2	2	2
Religious teaching	-	3	2	2	2
Persian composition	-	2	2	2	2

Dictation	-	3	2	2	2
Persian (reading and comprehension)	12	4	4	3	3
Social studies	-	-	2	-	-
Arts (painting, calligraphy, workmanship)	2	2	-	4	4
Health and natural sciences	3	3	4	3	3
Mathematics	5	5	4	4	4
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	**24**	**24**	**24**	**24**	**24**

Islamic Republic of Iran. Lower secondary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	**# of weekly periods in each form**		
	I	**II**	**III**
Persian language and literature	5	5	5
Mathematics	5	4	4
Natural sciences	4	4	4
Religious teaching	2	2	2
History	1	1	1
Geography	1	1	1
Arabic language	2	2	2
Social sciences	1	1	1
Arts	2	1	1

Introduction to techniques and vocations	3	3	3
Foreign language	-	4	4
Defense preparation	-	-	1
The Holy Quran	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	**28**	**30**	**31**

While there are healthy developments in some aspects of Iranian curriculum, the nationalizing element so dominates the scene that the treatment of minority groups remains almost completely absent from the picture. For example, the geography curriculum is a likely candidate to stress ethnic groups of a country, and it has been upgraded so that it no longer focuses exclusively on memorization of names and places. It has incorporated some of the ideas prevalent in international geography programs. These include the development of a wide range of geographic skills on the part of the student, and the ability to actually engage in geography projects and solve geographic problems. Unfortunately, these new developments do not include coverage of ethnic groups in Iran itself, beyond the learning of the names of ethnic groups and where they are located in Iran. In other words, regarding ethnic minorities, the Iranian geography curriculum remains as it was in its most traditional periods in that it focuses almost exclusively on the learning of names and places.

No course or special curriculum modules are found that deals with specific ethnic issues. Kurdish or Turkish people and other ethnic minorities in Iran are not allowed to institute special programs dealing with the group; all programs are uniform throughout the country. All pupils in all of the areas of the country are judged on a uniform scale at the same level and there is no distinction among them. In addition, the entrance examination for university students cannot take local considerations into account. Authorities cannot consider the ethnic situation in their decision to admit students.

There is comparable treatment of ethnic minority groups in the Iranian curriculum as is found in the Azerbaijan curriculum, but it has a special value orientation, and this is best seen in the content of the textbooks.

3. *Textbook Development*

Because the system of education in Iran is highly centralized, textbooks, which are the main medium across the country, are centrally written and used in all schools. Each course at each grade level has its own textbook that is used in every school of Iran. More than a million copies of textbooks are used each year, and there are approximately 800 different textbooks produced for primary and secondary schooling. Teachers are instructed to use the textbook to guide every facet of their instruction. The pupils are supposed to study and understand the textbook in each course. Finally, testing and evaluation are limited to the contents of each textbook. In

other words, the primary vehicle for transmitting the curriculum is the textbook. Shorish has noted the following regarding textbooks in Iran:

It is through the textbooks that one sees the aspirations of the revolutionaries about the establishment of their ideal society expressed. This society is composed of men and women who are profiled in the pages of the textbooks as ideal citizens. It is hoped that children have, over the years, internalized the contents of the textbooks as well as other similar and reinforcing values inculcated by the other socializing agencies readily available to the revolutionary state like the news media.[17]

We have noted that constitutionally textbooks must be in the Persian language and script. And true to the focus of Iran on religion, the textbooks are focused on Islamic pedagogy through training and purification. The purpose of textbooks is to inculcate sacredness and the attributes that an Islamic person possesses into each child.[18] Thus, women always appear in the texts wearing a veil or scarf. Men do not wear a tie, which is a mark of a Western man. Pictures always display marks of Islam, including the Qur'an, religious leaders, a mosque, or some other symbol.[19]

Iranian education clearly addresses minorities, but it is done in the context of religious minorities. We have noted that Iran recognizes Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, and it has sponsored textbooks specifically for these faiths, called *Teaching of the Sacred Religions*

and Ethics for the Religious Minorities. The Ministry of Education produces the textbooks for the schools, but it claims to consult teachers and other appropriate groups as it develops the textbooks. In this context, the Ministry consults religious leaders of these minority religions in the production of the religious texts. The justification for creating such textbooks for religious minorities is the recognition that belief is not the major problem. It is disbelief that causes the difficulties. Those who don't believe anything cause more problems that do the Zoroastrians, Christians, and Jews. We might generalize that the textbooks for religious minorities in many respects push the ideas that all religions have in common with Muslims. In fact, the same textbooks are used for all three minority groups, so it must emphasize things in common to most religions. That is, there is a supreme creator, a God. There are prophets, such as Jesus and Moses. The order of the universe is a manifestation of God's hand in all things. There is a resurrection and an assessment of one's deeds on earth.

While there appears to be great efforts to recognize and address the educational needs of religious minorities, the textbooks give almost no attention to the fact that ethnic minorities are a part of Iranian national culture. And when they do, they are often negative in character. For example, textbooks in Iran include anti-Semitic remarks relating to Middle Eastern history or religion. Of course, these are made in the context of Israel, but they pointedly

degrade the Jewish tradition as being anti-social and against the family structure.[20]

The only references to Azeri-speaking people in the textbooks are found in geography. They are factual in nature pointing out where Azerbaijan is and where in Iran the Azerbaijani peoples are located. There are no supplemental materials in schools available that deal with ethnic minorities in Iran.

Textbooks define the content of the examination system in the country. In 2002, for example, the national examinations assessed performance of those in the fifth grade of elementary school, the third grade of the guidance or middle school and the third grade of high school. The content of these examinations was drawn directly from the textbooks. This means that teachers increasingly rely on the textbook to define what they teach. In addition, they resort to memorization of the content of the books.

4. Guidelines for Teacher Training Program

As is the case in most countries, primary school teachers are trained in different institutions than are secondary teachers. Primary and guidance school (similar to general lower secondary school) teachers are trained in two-year Teacher Training Centers, where they obtain something similar to an American associate degree. Secondary school teachers must pass the National University Entrance Examination and follow a four-year course

leading to a bachelor's degree. The most important aspect of any teacher is to be the kind of morally and ethically oriented person that children can emulate. The ideal teacher is the ideal Muslim. Students that attend Teacher Training Centers, have diverse educational backgrounds. Most have completed upper secondary school, but some are admitted with less education. Even though, in theory, in order to teach at the upper secondary level, a university degree is required, due to a shortage of teachers, schools have been compelled to use teaching staff with other educational backgrounds. Teachers are trained in universities and higher institutes. There are seven teacher-training colleges in Iran. There are, of course, programs in higher education that deal in one way or another with ethnic minorities, particularly history and geography, but the pedagogical and professional aspects of the training of teachers do not include any content related to ethnic minorities in Iran. There is nothing similar to multicultural courses, the special pedagogical needs of children from ethnic minorities, or the need to appreciate cultural differences. All teachers must have a healthy background in religious studies.

Specific School Data Collection

Our plan was to look at schools at the primary level and schools at the secondary level in each region. Besides we visited the

communities in these regions as during the first days we established a sense of rapport with administrators and teachers of the schools and attended classes to become familiar with the institutions. As we familiarized ourselves with the schools, then became more systemic concerning data collection. The collected specific data concerning the ethnic background of teachers and students, their rate of success and specific provisions for them. Beyond this we, used a qualitative approach to the study on the grounds that it best served the purpose of our investigations namely:

1. To understand the behavior of teachers in the context of the specific institutional context
2. To understand this context in relation to the local educational directorate
3. To understand how the provisions for minority students either support or deviate from the national educational agenda.

We conducted interviews with local educational directorate leaders, school leaders and teachers. The respondents were asked for information concerning curriculum, programs language issues and textbooks as well as opinions about them. We tried to group the questions around policy and practice related to minorities in the local directorate and the school and issues, and textbooks. And the third group of questions the conditions that existed related to minority students and teachers.

According to our research plan we visited two different parts of the country where ethnic minorities are the majority of the population. These are:

1. Azerbaijani regions
2. Kurdish regions

Azerbaijan Regions

Azerbaijanis often speak of Southern and Northern Azerbaijan, to distinguish between those Azeri-speaking peoples living in what is today known as the Republic of Azerbaijan and those living in Iran. The territory where the Azerbaijan peoples live was divided almost two centuries ago in two major treaties, the Treaty of Gulistan (1813) and the Treaty of Turkmenistan (1828). The Azerbaijanis had little to do with these treaties; they were in fact decisions made between Iran, Russia, England and other powers who were attempting to establish control over the territory. In those treaties, the territory constituting what is now the Azerbaijan Republic was given to Russia, while the territory where the Iranian Azeri-speaking people live was given to Iran.[21]

Azeri-speaking people live mainly in three provinces which are part of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Eastern Azerbaijan, Western Azerbaijan, and Aradebil. A fourth province, Zanjan has a mixed population, although most of its population are also Azeri-speaking. Other provinces have small pockets of Azeri-speaking

people. Tabriz is the major Azerbaijan city, and it is located in the Eastern Azerbaijan province. The Azerbaijani population in Iran speak the Azeri language, one of the dialects of the Turkish language. These people tend toward the Shi'ite branch of Islam, which makes them religiously similar to the mainstream Farsi-speaking population.

In Iran, the Azerbaijan "Turkish People" participate in partnership in jobs with the majority Farsi-speaking people, though most of the key jobs are held by Farsi-speaking people. However, one does find Azeri-speaking people in the top positions of education, the military, business and industry. One potential advantage of the educational system being highly centralized and the educational programs being highly uniform is that it provides more equal opportunity for the Azeri-speaking people. A growing number of Azeri-speaking people are moving to Tehran in an attempt to better their lot in life. Teachers complained that even though programs throughout the country look much the same as the programs in Tehran, there are better facilities and a wider number of schools that are designed to provide education at a single level, such as pre-primary schools, guidance schools, and pre-university schools.

Our fieldwork took place in schools in and around Tabriz, including small villages. We had the good fortune of having on our research team teachers, university instructors and graduate

students, most of whom spoke Azeri. There was therefore little hesitation on the part of teachers to share with us their feelings and attitudes.

From our discussions with teachers, it was clear that these people maintain a strong preference for the Azeri language, but unfortunately the language is not allowed in public schools. Farsi has been the official language of the country since 1906, although it was not until the so-called Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) that the central government was strong enough to mandate Farsi in all public schools. As early as 1923 the Prime Minister prescribed Farsi in all schools attended by Azerbaijani children, and noted that provincial governor was to "notify all the schools under your jurisdiction to fully abide by this and to conduct all their affairs in the Persian language." This tradition continued after the fall of the Shah, although enforcement of Farsi language policies has declined somewhat since that time.[22]

Some educators complained that because there is no legal place for the Azeri language in the public education system, different accents in the language have developed over time. This has occurred in almost all villages and even in different areas of towns. And a situation has developed where distinctions are being drawn between different Azeri dialects. Tabriz Azeri, for example, is commonly recognized as being superior and commonly accepted among the more cultured, educated, and cosmopolitan Azeri-

speaking people. Fortunately, recently the Azerbaijani language has been taught in a small number of private educational institutions and books in Azeri are now commonly published and an intention of this activity is to recreate a more uniform Southern Azerbaijani language.

According to the people we visited in the schools, prohibitions against Azeri are being relaxed. Whereas in the past, Azeri was spoken at school in a whisper, now teachers and children speak the language openly and comfortably. In the spring of 2003 Azeri language classes will be taught at Alame Tababeti Institute, a teacher training college, in Tehran. And in the fall of 2003 Azeri language classes will be taught at Tabriz University.[23]

In visiting classrooms, we were pleasantly surprised to find that teachers at the primary level occasionally used Azeri when the child did not understand in Farsi, even though Farsi was the formal language of instruction. We even witnessed a chemistry class at the secondary level where the teacher was giving instruction in Azeri. However, these were exceptional cases, although teachers candidly pointed out that if a teacher only speaks Farsi, that teacher will have great difficulty as a teacher instructing Azeri-speaking children, particularly if the teacher is working in elementary schools and in the villages.

Traditionally, achievement levels among the Azeri-speaking peoples have been relatively low, mainly because of the language

barrier. In 2000, for example, among the 24 provinces of Iran, the province of Eastern Azerbaijan ranked twentieth in terms of overall school achievement, while Western Azerbaijan ranked twenty-fourth, Aradebil ranked twenty-second, and the province of Zanjan, which is mixed, ranked twenty-first. In other words all four provinces where Azeri-speaking peoples live, ranked no higher than twentieth in terms of achievement.

Some experts in Iran would explain away this low achievement by suggesting that the Azeri-speaking peoples may not be as intelligent as Farsi-speaking peoples or that they come from a different social class. According to Younes Vahdati, our Iranian team leader, there has been some research on the issue. Younes explains that in one study, achievement tests in spelling, reading comprehension, science, and mathematics were given to children in four schools of Tehran, and the same test given to four schools in Tabriz and surrounding villages. The average Azeri-speaking child made 7 spelling mistakes, while the average Farsi speaking child made only 1.5 mistakes. Even though the Azeri-speaking children scored lower than did the Farsi-speaking children on the science test, the differences in test scores were not dramatic. The mathematics test showed very similar results, indicating that language played a role in the outcome.

In another research project, Azeri-speaking pupils were given a test in Farsi and the same test was also administered to pupils in

the Azeri language. The average Farsi language score was 11 but the average Azeri language score increased to 15.5, indicating a dramatic improvement in the performance level, even though the children had not even received Azeri language instruction in the school. We recall that the grading system is such that an 11 would represent a grade of "D" while a score of 15.5 would represent a grade of "C".

In our research project the head of one school we visited showed us some data he had collected. The previous year, the school enrolled 451 students, 440 of whom spoke Azeri as their mother language. Of course, all pupils were taught in Farsi, and the Farsi-speaking children experienced a higher degree of success than did the Azeri-speaking children. Only nine percent (less than 40) of the Azeri-speaking pupils passed the exams while almost all of the Farsi-speaking children passed. The average score of the Azeri-speaking pupils was between 10 and 11 (barely passing with a grade of "D"), but the average score of the Farsi-speaking children in this school was about 18 (high score with a grade of "A"). In examinations and competitions, Persian students were not only more successful, in our visits to classrooms we found them to participate more actively in class discussions and to be more involved in activities such as the science experiments and demonstrations.

We were told that Azeri-speaking young people appear to have become quite competitive with Farsi-speaking youth, but the data on university admissions does not substantiate this claim. According to the Rector of Tabriz University, for every 10,000 people in Eastern Azerbaijan, where Tabriz is located, only 67 school leavers are accepted in the university, whereas the average admission rate in Iran is 109 students.

The textbooks, the teaching hours, and other aspects of the program in all of the areas are the same. Because the educational system is uniform, all children, whether they are Turkish, Kurdish, Baluch, Bakhtyari, Jewish, Ashoori, and Arab minorities receive this uniform education, and the language of instruction is in Persian/Farsi. Of course, ethnic minority groups have great difficulty with Farsi, and the people who live in villages are not familiar with it at all. As a result this uniform education tends to disadvantage ethnic minority groups. It is unreasonable to insist on a uniform education in terms of curriculum and textbooks, because the ethnic minorities are always at a disadvantage. The situation is so regulated that many children are embarrassed to speak because they are laughed at by Farsi-speaking children, who make fun of their poor language skills and dialect.

From our visits to the schools, we observed that teachers were uniformly diligent in attempting to teach the prescribed curriculum and textbooks in Farsi. For many this was a difficult

language and they were at a disadvantage in their ability to communicate, but they did so, in spite of the fact that in the schools we visited the Azeri-speaking children dominated the classrooms. In other words, both the teacher and the pupils were able to communicate better in Azeri, but they were both attempting to function in a second language.

We asked teachers why they were so diligent in using Farsi, and they simply responded that it was necessary to do so, because teachers were required to do so. To do otherwise might mean they would loose their job or they would be placed in a more undesirable school. Some teachers also found the information in the textbooks to be dated or not reflect the latest research findings in the various content areas. Obviously, Azeri-speaking teachers have access to information from a wide variety of sources and are in a position to make critical judgments about the materials available in the classroom and its suitability.

In elementary schools there are usually teachers' meetings once a month and in this meeting the teachers discuss the school and student problems and difficulties. The director of the meetings is usually the headmaster of a school. But our observations were that the teachers, who were almost all native Azeri speakers, did not have courage to take part in the discussions, with the result being that the headmaster becomes very directive and imposes his will on the teachers.

In elementary schools, at the beginning of the year, a number of parents are chosen as representatives according to the number of students in the school. These representatives participate together in an attempt to reinforce the relationship and partnership between the school and the home and thereby help improve the quality of educational activities and expand the relations between parents and school. Members of this council are as follows: (1) Head-master, (2) One of the assistants chosen by the head master, (3) Representative of teachers council, (4) Training teacher, (5) Representative of parents. All school expenses must be confirmed by the parent/teacher committee in monthly meetings. Teachers usually have good relationships with each other and respect to each other and rarely do they quarrel with each other. In some schools one finds Azeri, Kurdish, and Farsi speaking teachers, and our data indicate that there is usually high respect shown among these teachers and high respect shown by the pupils toward all teachers, regardless of ethnicity.

In Iran, all schools, either in Azerbaijan or in Tehran, Isfahan, Kurdestan observe the same holidays and periods that are held dear by national leaders. For example, 22 February is celebrated as the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution throughout the country. Essentially no special days that are honored by the Azerbaijani minorities are observed in the schools. There are no formal cultural events related to ethnic minorities.

In some private schools, food is served but in all of the pubic schools of Iran there is no formal serving of food. In spite of this, in most schools the local community provides food services, without cost to pupils, so this is one means by which local foods are a part of the school. All classes and lessons are related to the whole country and books and lessons never discuss local problems. Teachers invariably hold to the curriculum and textbooks as they are distributed by Tehran. We might also note that research projects at Tabriz University are expected to focus on the whole country and are not expected to focus on local and racial problems. Researchers do not even acknowledge their understanding of differences in the country as a whole.

We inquired of the teachers about their attitudes about being Iranian and Azerbaijani. Almost all of them expressed some pride in being both, although there appears to be an age factor in the equation. That is, younger teachers appear to have a greater sense of pride in being Iranian than the older teachers. However, none of the teachers expressed outright hostility toward being Iranian, even though they were uniformly proud to be Azerbaijani. An important element in the development of Azeri-speaking people concerning their self-identity is the presence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which gained independence in 1991. In the past Azeri-speaking people in Iran had no place with which they could easily identify, but in the last twelve years they have had close

relationships with a country with which they can identify and relate to.

In spite of this, the nationalistic educational mission of Iran has had a noticeable effect on the Azeri-speaking people. They constitute an important part of Iran and they identify strongly with the country of Iran. Significantly, Azeri-speaking people are not visible within the radical political movements of the day. We found some educators who said they were waiting in the wings until the right time, but others clearly were not interested in radical activities.

Kurdish Regions

The Kurds are a transnational minority ethnic population that inhabit the region in northwestern Iran adjacent to Iraq. They reside in the provinces of Kurdestan, Kermanshahan, and the southern part of Western Azerbaijan. As of the late 1990s, there were estimated to be more than 20 million Kurds, about half of them in Turkey. The Kurds in Iran constitute some 7% of the country's people, about 4.2 million. Ethnically close to the Iranians, the Kurds were traditionally nomadic herders but are now mostly semi-nomadic or sedentary. The majority of Kurds are devout Sunni Muslims. Kurdish dialects belong to the northwestern branch of the Iranian languages. The Kurdish population in Iran speak Kirmanji, which is a collective term in Iran for dialects spoken by Kurds. However, in conventional discourse we usually

refer to the language as Kurdish. The Kurds have traditionally resisted subjugation by other nations. In fact, in 1946 the People's Republic of Kurdestan was established, under the leadership of Qazi Mohamnmad, although the Iranian army soon crushed the revolt. Despite their lack of political unity throughout history, the Kurds, as individuals and in small groups, have had a lasting impact on developments in Southwest Asia.

We visited Kurdish schools in and around the provincial capital city of Sanandi, in the Kurdestan province, where most of the Kurds of Iran are located. The schools were extremely poor, as were the young people attending them. But we sensed them to be honorable people, but people most of whom do not have extensive formal education. We observed Kurdish teachers in the classroom and talked at length with many of them. They were initially anxious about who we were and whether we might be affiliated with the central government. Fortunately, in our group were graduate students who were Kurds and others who were immediately identified as sympathetic with their situation, so we felt few barriers in our conversations with them.

In visiting classrooms, we found that Kurdish teachers were usually more open than were Azeri-speaking teachers about their Kurdish background. At the lower primary school level they often spoke in Kurdish to the children, if it appeared the child needed that additional input to understand a word or idea. We did not

observe any classes taught in the Kurdish language, but we were told on several occasions that such classes are taught quite regularly when teachers feel that the children can achieve better if they are taught in Kurdish.

Achievement levels in the schools populated by Kurds is low. In 2000, for example, among the 24 provinces of Iran, Kurdistan ranked twenty-third in terms of achievement. Some experts in Iran would explain away this low achievement by suggesting that the Kurds are traditional peoples who have no interest in school and therefore they fail to achieve. According to Younes Vahdati, our Iranian team leader, there has been some research on the issue. In the study cited in the Azerbaijan section where 4 schools of Tehran and 4 schools of Tabriz were studied, an additional 4 school of Naghadeh and the villages it were also studied. Very similar results concerning Kurdish children came as was found with Azeri-speaking children. That is, the Kurdish children performed much lower than Farsi-speaking children on the spelling test, and their achievement in science and math was also lower, though not as dramatic as in the spelling test. The research project in which the same test was given in Azeri and Farsi was also given using Kurdish and Farsi. In this case the Kurds scored 12.5 (giving them a grade of low "C") in the test given in Farsi, but scored 16.5 (giving them a high "B" grade), when the test was given in Kurdish.

The textbooks, the teaching hours, and other aspects of the program in all of the areas are the same. Kurdish teachers were very critical of the system, because they felt it was based on cruel and unkind purposes. They were aware of scientific evidence that children must learn in their mother language, at least at the beginning of school, if the children were to optimize their chances for success. Teachers were open that it is unreasonable to insist on a uniform education in terms of curriculum and textbooks, because the ethnic minorities are always at a disadvantage.

In spite of the above criticisms, from our visits to the schools, we observed that teachers were diligent in attempting to teach the prescribed curriculum and textbooks in Farsi. For many this was a difficult language and they were at a disadvantage in their ability to communicate. As we observed the teachers in the classrooms, it seemed to us that even though the teachers taught the prescribed curriculum and held to the content of the textbooks, they were not always as dedicated to that content as Farsi teachers might be. Of course, one of the variables that mediates the influence of the curriculum and textbooks is the teachers. If teachers are sympathetic with the contents of the textbooks, their effectiveness is obviously greater. However, if teachers are ambivalent or even hostile toward the content, the learning process will be negatively affected. This may even be unconscious on the part of the teacher, but we observed a lack of enthusiasm for some content that was unsympathetic to Kurdish interests, particularly as it was asso-

ciated with the Farsi majority, the Shi'ite Muslim religion, and claims that the people of Iran are one people.

The same can be observed on the part of the children. Some content obviously contradicts what the children are learning at home. Believability in the content of the textbooks by the children themselves may prevent them from learning and internalizing matters dealing with political socialization and other kinds of learnings. The lack of reinforcement by very important actors in the children's lives such as the parents and the religious leaders of the community reduces the impact of teaching (and that of the textbooks) and sometimes forces children to compartmentalize in order to please the many significant advocates of conflicting values. That is, young Kurds obviously learn outside the school about their culture, their dress, special foods, their dances, etc. They learn to take pride in who they are, their religion and their condition as a minority population.

We noted in our discussion of Azeri-speaking peoples, that no special attention is given to ethnic minority holidays, no cultural events are celebrated, no attention is given to local problems and issues in the schools. We asked teachers if they broke from these guidelines and did recognize certain events and special issues, but they made clear that they did not do this and took great pains to avoid mentioning local events and celebrations. In order for Kurds to rise to the point that they achieve higher education, they have to

commit themselves to Farsi ways. It would be a great loss to them to challenge the course they had taken.

In our discussions with teachers, we concentrated largely on the materials that were supplied to them, that dictated the content of instruction, particularly textbooks. We explored general concerns of teacher, as teachers. As expected, even though teachers were critical of the textbooks and their ability to interest students, and they were even critical of the kinds of pictures found in the books, the covers, and the way they were formatted, they tended to accept the program and content with a sense that they probably could have been worse, but that they were what might be expected. Teachers were aware that there is great discussion in the country about the importance of giving a balanced view of ethnic groups, sexual issues, occupations, social class, and language, but they felt little of this was reflected in the textbooks themselves. And what was there usually reflected a negative picture toward the Kurds.

We also explored issues related to the degree to which the curriculum and textbooks addressed them as Kurds. There was consensus that the program of instruction was not intended to address the concerns of the Kurdish population, and particularly the personal needs of the students. In fact, the only place in the program of studies that the Kurdish population is mentioned is in geography, and in this aspect of the program, some attention was given to the location of ethnic groups in Iran and particularly

where the Kurds were located in the country. However, no attention is given to the Kurdish history, culture, values, and arts. The school is devoted exclusively to being Iranian and the creation of a Shi'ite Muslim state. It is the task of the school to help young people learn how to be good Muslims and please Allah. In fact, academic competency takes a seat behind commitment to the Islamic state. Some teachers complained that the pictures in the textbooks reflected a negative attitude toward them as Kurds. They made them afraid and angry.

We asked the teachers what their attitudes were about being Iranian and Kurds. They were quite open about their ambivalence. They live close to the Kurds in Iraq and feel a kinship as Kurds that has never existed toward being Iranian. In spite of this, they see themselves as Iranian although the sense of identity expressed by Azeri-speaking Iranians was not so evident among the Kurds. In spite of this, the nationalistic educational mission of Iran has had a noticeable effect on the Kurdish people. They constitute an important part of Iran and they identify with the country of Iran.

III. Outcomes of the Research Project

Policy Findings

The policy outcomes of our study can be stated in rather simple terms. In terms of the constitutions, school laws, curriculum plans, textbooks, and teacher training policies, we determined that in both countries the policies were clear and consistent. That is, constitutional articles and school laws pertaining to the education of minority groups were consistent with instructional policies, curriculum plans, textbooks, and teacher training policies, and they, in turn were consistent with each other. In fact, there is a conscious and deliberate attempt to meld them, by having the same people set policies and write the programs. In Azerbaijan, for example, the people who are asked to write the textbooks are the same people who serve on the curriculum councils charged with establishing curriculum programs. And these same people often teach at the teacher training university and they therefore participate in determining the content of teacher training programs.

However, the straight forward articulation of all of these things, at least in Azerbaijan, is only found in the standard program, and a wide variety of experiments, pilot schools, and new school types are now to be found. Unfortunately, almost none of these innovations relate to ethnic minorities.

The policy in Azerbaijan is clearly that minority pupils be given the opportunity to be given instruction in the primary schools about their native tongue. The number of years in which the native language is used as the language of instruction differs, but the general policy is rather clear. Lezghian children are able to study the language as an optional subject in primary school to the end of secondary school, whereas for Talish the opportunity ends after four years of primary school. The rationale for this difference is that Talish is a dead end option in that there is no opportunity to continue in higher education, whereas Lezghian students are able to go on to higher education studies at Mahachgala University in Russia. Language provisions are generally seen as transitional in nature, in that they are not intended to help the children gain insight into the minority culture but to better prepare them to eventually succeed in schools where Azeri and Russian are the languages of instruction.

In spite of this rather generous and insightful language policy, there is no place in the standard curriculum for minority children to learn about the minority culture, customs, and arts. We did a content analysis of all the most recent textbooks that have been prepared by the Ministry of Education for the primary and secondary classes to see what references are made regarding ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan. If we were to put all of these textbooks together they would add up to more than 4,000 pages of text. In all of these 4,000 pages we found references to minorities that

amounted to less than two pages of text. In other words, there are almost no references to minority groups in the texts. In terms of teacher training, there is no provision in the professional development guidelines for dealing with ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan. We interviewed several lecturers at the State Teacher Training University and Baku State University, some of whom had written textbooks. History teachers indicated to us they deal extensively with ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan history. In fact, they use a textbook written by Gamersha Javadov, *Small Ethnic Groups and National Minorities in* Azerbaijan, that tells the history of these groups. However, they confirmed that there are no provisions at the universities for sensitizing teacher candidates to minority populations and the teaching of the students of minorities.

In Iran, the policies are also clear and straight forward. Farsi is the language of instruction for all children of Iran, without exception, and it is the language of instruction from the beginning of primary school to the end of compulsory schooling. In the centralized system of education, the curriculum is everywhere the same. Teachers are required to follow the curriculum as outlined by the Ministry of Education. Of course, teachers are encouraged to choose the most appropriate instructional practices, and new initiatives are under way in Iran to develop interactive and participatory learning in the schools, but teachers are expected to cover the content entirely without any opportunity to deviate.

Constitutionally textbooks must be in the Persian language and script. And true to the focus of Iran on religion, the textbooks focuse on Islamic pedagogy through training and purification. The purpose of textbooks is to inculcate sacredness and the attributes that an Islamic person possesses. Curiously, there is a place in the curriculum for approved religious minorities to learn a special kind of religious program, but the things they learn are general enough that they do not appear to foster a particular religion; rather, they foster religious belief in general. The only textbooks allowed are those produced by the Ministry of Education, and there is no place in the Iranian textbooks for the child to learn about his/her ethnic minority culture, history, and literature. We found occasional references to ethnic minorities in Iran, but they were largely negative in character. References to the Jews were inevitably in reference to Israel and the sympathy Jews had for anti-Muslim causes.

Teachers are trained in universities and higher institutes. There are, of course, programs in higher education that deal in one way or another with ethnic minorities, particularly in history and geography, but the pedagogical and professional aspects of the training of teachers do not include any content related to ethnic minorities in Iran. All teachers must have a healthy background in religious studies. A new development is being initiated in 2003. The teacher training college at Tehran and Tabriz University are scheduled to teach the Azeri.

FIELD WORK OUTCOMES

From our visits to the schools, we observed that teachers were uniformly diligent in attempting to teach the prescribed curriculum and textbooks in the national language. For many this was a difficult language and they were at a disadvantage in their ability to communicate, but they did so, in spite of the fact that in the schools we visited the minority pupils were dominant. In other words, both the teacher and the pupils were usually able to communicate better in the ethnic minority language, but they were both attempting to function in a second language.

There were great differences between Azerbaijan and Iran. In Azerbaijan, schools serving the minorities conform, by and large, to the school patterns of the rest of Azerbaijan. That is, there are Russian and Azeri language schools, and they provide the standard curriculum required by the Ministry of Education. However, the minority language instruction is available in the first four grades of primary school, and a number of pupils take advantage of this possibility. In addition, Lezghian is available at the secondary level as an "optional" subject. Teachers treat language instruction as a transitional pedagogical approach, because the children would otherwise not succeed as well if instruction were in Azeri or Russian.

A substantial portion of the students in the schools we visited have teachers who represent the minority population. Our general impression was that the teachers and pupils were proud to belong to their minority population, but that they took for granted there was essentially no place in the formal curriculum for the ethnic group to receive attention. We have seen that the curriculum and textbooks make little provision for a discussion of the culture and how it is to be distinguished from other groups in the Republic.

Our queries as to provisions that are made to deal with the minority culture were usually met with perplexed looks. Azerbaijani educators made it clear that they followed the curriculum as it was issued by the Ministry of Education. There did not appear to be strict sanctions against teaching about the minority culture; rather, the attitude among teachers was more that it was their professional obligation to follow the guidelines laid down by the Ministry.

In our classroom visits, we found references to local conditions, places, and events, but they were not tied to any cultural conditions of the minority population. One math teacher, for example, in an exercise on geometric designs, made reference to streets in the town and how they were laid out. In Kuba, the only incident we observed relating to Lezghian conditions was made by one teacher who was not Lezghian; she chided the children who

misbehaved on one occasion that their behavior did not measure up to the expectations she had of Lezghians.

We did inquire as to the attitude minority members have about themselves, and it was evident that they took great pride in who they were. By way of contrast, in talking with teachers who were not members of the minority group, they expressed some shock when we asked if they were part of that minority, as if such an identity were an insult to them. How do minority members develop such a sense of pride? The local families and community apparently provide sufficient support and reinforcement for the young people, although they have taken efforts to meld the school and community. For example, students of the upper grades of the Udin middle school take Udin language weekly for 2-4 hours planned by the National Curriculum as an "elective" course. At the same time there are a number of choices children can make as part of extra-curricular activities run by all three schools in the village. These include "Study of Udin Customs", "Udin Songs", and "Udin drama" in the Udin language. There are additional materials available to the general public.

In Iran, teachers were unified in their sentiments that a potential advantage of the educational system being highly centralized and the educational programs being highly uniform is that it provides a more equal opportunity. A growing number of Iranian minorities are moving to Tehran in an attempt to better their lot in life.

Teachers complained that even though programs throughout the country look the same as the programs in Tehran, there are better facilities and a wider number of schools that are designed to provide education at a single level, such as pre-primary schools, high schools and pre-university schools.

Teachers recognized that the ethnic minority groups have great difficulty with Farsi, and the people who live in villages are not familiar with it at all. As a result this uniform education tends to disadvantage them. It is unreasonable to insist on a uniform education in terms of curriculum and textbooks, because the ethnic minorities are always at a disadvantage. The situation is so regulated that many children are embarrassed to speak because they are laughed at by Farsi-speaking children, who make fun of their poor language skills and dialect.

Classroom participation is also affected by language requirements. According to our observations and interviews with teachers, Azerbaijani children did not participate as actively as Farsi-speaking children in class discussions and they even failed to be as involved in science experiments and demonstrations. This difficulty is especially acute in the early years of schooling. By the end of secondary school, Azeri-speaking young people appear to have become quite competitive with Farsi-speaking youth.

All classes and lessons are related to the whole country and books and lessons never discuss local problems. Teachers invariably hold

to the curriculum and textbooks as they are distributed by Tehran. We might note that research projects even at the university in Tabriz are expected to focus on the whole country and are not expected to focus on local and ethnic problems. Researchers do not even acknowledge their understanding of differences in the country as a whole.

We inquired of the teachers about their attitudes about being Iranian and Azerbaijani and Kurdish. Almost all of them expressed some pride in being both, although there appears to be an age factor in the equation. That is, younger teachers appear to have a greater sense of pride in being Iranian than the older teachers. However, none of the teachers expressed outright hostility toward being Iranian, even though they were uniformly proud to be Azerbaijani or Kurdish. An important element in the development of Azerbaijanis concerning their self-identity is the presence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In the past they had no place with which they could easily identify, but in the last twelve years they have had close relationships with a country with which they can identify and relate to.

In spite of this, the nationalistic educational mission of Iran has had a noticeable effect on the minority people. They constitute an important part of Iran and their identity is strongly with the country. Significantly, Azerbaijanis in Iran are not visible within the radical political movements of the day. We found some

educators who said they were waiting in the wings until the right time, but others clearly were not interested in radical activities. However, it is less clear how they are able to maintain such a strong sense of personal identity as Azerbaijanis.

THE CHALLENGE OF CURRENT MINORITY EDUCATION POLICIES

The school in Azerbaijan and Iran is a nationalizing institution. That is, the school and education are seen as prime agents for developing national consciousness and safeguarding national unity. In Azerbaijan, the focus on national unity is obviously necessitated by the fact that Azerbaijan only recently became an independent, autonomous nation state. Prior to the 1800s it consisted of a set of small Khanates, but then was brought under the umbrella of Russia in 1828. In 1920 it became a part of the Soviet Union. Independence is now only a dozen years old. There is a natural interest on the part of the state to forge a sense of being Azerbaijani. According to the Minister of Education, Misir Mardanov, a primary agent to accomplish this task is the school.

There is an additional explanation for the focus in the schools on helping young people become Azerbaijani. The first public schools in the country were established by the Soviet Union about 1920. Consequently, the only public schools Azerbaijan has known are Soviet Schools, which were consciously and deliberately oriented

toward the making of the "Soviet person." Azerbaijanis have no other models of schooling in their history on which to build, so they clearly have emulated the Soviet model by emphasizing the national model and neglecting local and ethnic issues.

Finally, the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis, which has resulted in the occupation of approximately 20 percent of Azerbaijan territory by Armenians, emphasizes the potential tragedy of severe ethnic divisions within a country. State leaders are doing everything in their power to prevent such divisions from leading to declarations of secession.

Azerbaijan takes pride in its multi-ethnic tradition, and even though its multi-ethnic population has waned in the last half century in terms of numbers, the people of Azerbaijan continue to see themselves as multi-ethnic. The nationalist focus of its schools might one day be brought into harmony with that perspective and one day recognize that its strength lies in its multiculturalism to the point that the schools focus their mainstream programs of instruction on this historical legacy.

In Iran, the focus on national unity is more acute. The mainstream Farsi population is barely dominant in terms of numbers. And the two major minority groups in the country, Azerbaijanis and Kurds, pose a threat to break away from Iran, unless a sense of nationalism is constantly instilled in them. The charge of the schools is to give all citizens of Iran a similar schooling which gives

the state subjects a similar sense of cultural heritage, history, and a common language. Finally, similar schools are intended to build a sense of patriotism and devotion to the country.

The policies of a nation state are only realized if fully implemented, and one aspect of our project was to determine if national policies played themselves out in the schools. The answer to this issue is simple and clear. In both Azerbaijan and Iran all of the teachers we interviewed and the schools we visited were dedicated to the national curriculum and instruction according to the textbooks. They maintained that they held to the program of the school and did not deviate in any way from it. There were clear differences in Azerbaijan and Iran in the reasons why teachers held to the mandated program of studies.

In Azerbaijan, teachers had learned from their own schooling and from their teacher training that is was their professional responsibility to adhere strictly to the curriculum and the content of the textbooks. They had learned their responsibilities well, and did not question doing so.

In Iran, teachers also felt a professional obligation to teach according to the national program of studies. They saw themselves as dedicated professionals, who were interested in the welfare and growth of their pupils. However, teachers representing minority populations also indicated that their dedication to the state program was dictated not only by a professional responsibility but

by a clear threat that if they did not they would suffer serious consequences and even loose their jobs. They felt a greater sense of state oversight and control than was the case in Azerbaijan. One consequence of such strict oversight is that teachers tend to become mechanical in what they do. They forget how to exercise their creative abilities and take students off in wonderful and wondrous directions not anticipated by the program.

There is consistency between central policy and practice in the field. Of course, this consistence is tempered by the use of the mother tongue in the schools, when it appeared appropriate to help the pupils better learn the content, but this was always in the context of wanting to communicate the national curriculum and textbook content more adequately, rather than try to instill a greater sense of appreciation for the local language and culture. Apparently, teachers in both Azerbaijan and Iran have learned the intended lessons of their own schooling well. They are not inclined to object to the school as a unifying and nationalizing instrument. And we sense that that the policies of both countries are working, in that ethnic minority groups are being drawn into greater participation and identity with the national culture. In this regard, the policies may be seen as a success.

However, success does not come without severe costs. We don't intend to begin an account of human rights violations rendered against those who object to the national policies. The autonomy of

any state is difficult to challenge. We think Azerbaijan has the easier task. It already recognizes the pedagogical advantage of instruction in the mother tongue for the very young in its schools. The next step ought to be quite easy—building into the curriculum a way for minority groups to see themselves as a vital and integral part of the Azerbaijan nation. Iran remains so insecure in its nationalistic aims that it may find it necessary to continue to stress unity to the complete exclusion of diversity, but one day it must begin to forge a school system based on the strength of diversity as well as unity.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

We wish to make a number of specific recommendations to policy makers.

Azerbaijan:

- We encourage the Azerbaijan ministries responsible for extra-curricular programs that enhance the cultural awareness of minority students, to support and develop them.
- Minority languages currently taught only in primary school ought to be taught in secondary school as well, and textbooks for secondary school instruction of minority languages developed.

- It would be necessary to provide appropriate higher education studies to prepare teachers to teach minority languages in secondary school.
- Textbooks prepared for minority languages are presently of much poorer quality than other textbooks published by the Ministry of Education. They ought to be made much more attractive and useful for young children.

IRAN:

- Schools where Azerbaijani and Kurdish children dominate the school population ought to provide language instruction at the primary school level.
- Textbooks for the teaching of minority group language instruction ought to be developed.
- Prospective primary school teachers ought to receive instruction that will assist them in teaching the minority language.

We would make some general policy observations:

- Current minority educational programs in Azerbaijan target children of specific minority groups and teach them their language and culture. The next step ought to be taken, to teach all Azerbaijani children about the rich multicultural

environment in which they live and the important contribution all cultures make to Azerbaijan.

- The international community could benefit from insights about the consistency of the educational program of both Azerbaijan and Iran in its language of instruction, curriculum, language development, and teacher preparation program.

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