

Problems of the Education System Development of Ukraine in Times of Crisis

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Abstract. *The article aims to discuss the processes of education system development in Ukraine in times of economic and political crisis. The given material will help to understand the situation existing in all branches of education: secondary, vocational and higher education. Great attention has been paid to the necessity of cardinal changes in administration of the field for improvement of the general situation in Ukraine. The reasonability of the implementation of the external independent evaluation of higher educational institutions' graduates has been ascertained. The author has proved the necessity for the principal reformation of the vocational education system. The ways to Ukraine's observance of the Bologna Process agreements have been suggested.*

Keywords: *pre-school education, compulsory secondary education, vocational education, higher education, labour turnover, external independent evaluation.*

Raktažodžiai: *ikimokyklinis ugdyimas, privalomas vidurinis mokymas, profesinis mokymas, aukštasis mokslas, darbo rinka, išorinis nepriklausomas vertinimas.*

Introduction

Positive changes in the Ukrainian community require systematic reformation of the national system of education. Under present-day conditions these processes are greatly affected by the fact that the country is suffering from the economic and political crises. Therefore, the aim of this work is to study the tendencies in the development of preschool, general comprehensive, vocational and higher education and to determine prospects of their further development.

One of the most destabilizing factors in Ukraine during its independence period has been a frequent change of governments. Accordingly, there followed a change of ministers of education, whose personality influenced the development of education in Ukraine. All the aforementioned factors had a dramatic impact on personnel policy at the regional levels and reached its climax after 2004.

To support this statement, the scientific literature views these too frequent changes of governments and education managers as one of the main reasons to the

inefficiency of educational reforms in Ukraine. This provided an opportunity to initiate a reform, but never to fully realize it or achieve the stage of analysis, summarizing and creating a refined plan of the reform implementation. On average this process requires 6-8 years [3; 13].

Today it is evident that quality changes in education directly depend on availability of highly qualified managerial personnel. They highlight that it is urgent to rationally place and fluctuate the personnel at all levels of the administrative vertical [15, p. 161]. Obolenskyi writes that under the conditions of implementation of constitutional principles of a democratic, legal, social state and formation of a civil society, the major issue is that of improving personnel provision of the public apparatus with highly qualified and skillful specialists [8, p. 331].

The problem of high-quality training of specialists for the system of public service and local self-government is acute for most countries of the world.

Personnel processes in the system of education administration

A. Khokhlov points out that in the early XXI century only two thirds of the servants holding public offices in the Russian Federation had higher education, a little less than 2% of them had a PhD degree or a DSc degree. Therefore, the qualification level of public servants required improvement. The author emphasizes that the reason for management inefficiency in Russia in the first place should be seen in the system of education, and in the system of specialist training for public and municipal administration bodies [14, p. 139-144]. Ukraine is facing a similar problem with only 80.5% of public servants having complete higher education and less than 1% – a PhD degree or a DSc degree [2].

At the same time we have rather unfavorable statistics. For instance, during the last few years Zhytomyr region has undergone a change of 71% of heads of departments and boards of education; Cherkasy region – 60%; Chernihiv region – 56%; Transcarpathian region – 55%; Kyiv Region – 50%. During the same period the heads of six districts of Chernihiv region have been changed twice, and at Mukacheve city department of education of Transcarpathian region, the head of the department has been changed annually for eight years on end. Considerable personnel changes have taken place in the headmaster corps of comprehensive schools. In particular, more than 20 school headmasters have been dismissed from office in Mukacheve city department of education since 2004. The staff members appointed to the free positions as a rule were not registered in the employment pool and, therefore, the majority of them lacked sufficient levels of administrative competence, which negatively affected the work of comprehensive educational establishments [15].

The personnel policy is an important aspect of regional development and has to prevail in preparation of the regional development programs [6; 10; 11]. Nowadays the issue of further improvement of personnel statistics in the system of education is rather pressing, as these statistics require cardinal reconsideration to be suitable for wide use in conducting scientific research [5].

In the course of our study some personnel statistics have been analyzed on the example of the system of education management in Kharkiv region, one of the most high-capacity regions of Ukraine. Comparison of the number of public servants in district (city) departments (boards) of education (district department of education (at the Board of Education)) with the number of the children contingent they serve proves that today we lack a system of proportionate personnel provision thereof. While only 3 public servants work in the district department of education in Balakliiskiyi district where 15,268 children live (5,089 children for each public servant), in Barvinkivskiyi district the needs of 4,118 children are served by 4 public servants of the district department of education (1,030 children for each public servant). In Izium city 7,289 children are served by 8 public servants (911 children for each public servant). "It should be stressed that these public servants have approximately the same salary with the work load varying 5 times. Similar examples can be given for Kharkiv city where in Zhovtnevyi district 10 public servants work to serve the needs of 7,835 children (784 children for each public servant) while in Dzerzhynskiyi district 20,861 children are served by 7 public servants (2,980 children for each public servant).

The educational level of the heads of district (city) departments (boards) of education has also been analyzed. It should be pointed out that almost all of them have higher pedagogical education and a qualification of a teacher. At the same time, the absolute majority of the heads in office have no training as education managers. Of 42 heads only the head of Krasnokutsk district department of education has a Master's qualification in public administration and graduated from National Academy of Public Administration attached to the Office of the President of Ukraine in 2001. The head of Dzerzhynskiyi Board of Education holds a Master's degree from Kharkiv National University of Economics and has the qualification in public service, specialty - administrative management. Four heads of the district departments (boards) of education received a Master's Degree from Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University with qualification in educational establishment management.

In the course of the study we have also analyzed the materials regarding the appointments of the heads of district (city) departments (boards) of education for the post-World War II period. The results we have obtained show that the dynamics of the management personnel appointment has considerably worsened, which cannot but affect the quality of education at the regional levels. Before 2000 the period in office of the heads of district departments of education was very large – 5-20 years. The situation particularly worsened after 2000 when the average period in office of the heads of the local departments (boards) of education did not exceed 2-3 years. A similar situation is observed in many other regions of Ukraine.

Thus, the situation Ukraine is facing now concerning the appointment of the managerial personnel in education (including Kharkiv Region, as an example) can be defined as a personnel crisis. Among the priority tasks regarding the improvement of the situation the following can be named:

- Creating an efficient system of selection and appointment of managerial personnel in the system of education;
- Ceasing the practice of personnel dismissal from office for reasons that do not relate to their professional competence;
- Hearing of the question of education staffing at the panels of regional public administrations twice a year;
- Hearing of the question of staffing of the education management system at the panel of the Ministry of Education and Science once a year with the deputy heads of the regional public administrations on humanitarian issues invited;
- Developing a complex program to stabilize staffing processes in the system of education management in Ukraine;
- Modernizing the process of raising qualification of the personnel in accordance with the current demands.

Today it is obvious that Ukraine cannot count on significant improvement in education quality without working out a consistent policy regarding the appointment of public servants – managers of education at the local level. This issue originates from a different problem – major for Ukraine – which is depoliticization of education. Despite the fact that under the Article 8 of the *Law of Ukraine on Education*, political parties, public and religious organizations are forbidden to interfere in the teaching and educational process; engage students to participate in political and religious actions during the teaching and educational process – this provision is systematically disobeyed. This was proved during the presidential election campaign held in Ukraine in 2004 and 2010. Educational establishments are systematically pressurized, and their personnel are orally ordered under the threat of dismissal from the office in case of disobedience. On the other hand, this demonstrates a rather low level of civil consciousness of the teaching staff mostly in general secondary education establishments. In higher educational establishments civic consciousness of the faculty is much higher as is their level of independence. Only elimination of servile psychology resulting from the totalitarian regime of the past will allow making a new step on the way towards a civil society.

Preschool education development

Let us review another series of issues connected with the development of certain branches of education of Ukraine. First of all, this is a preschool education. Paragraph 7 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 244 of March 20, 2008 *On Additional Measures to Increase Education Quality in Ukraine* suggests taking measures to provide at least 75% of children of the relevant age group with preschool education, to ensure scientific and methodical support of preschool education, and to update standards thereof.

Preschool education quality is a complex notion requiring to be investigated on the basis of efficient evaluation procedures. Development of a system of

indices for this process is an urgent need of the time. In our opinion, the number and content orientation of these indices has to be not only expanded further, but also structured by the directions thereof and unified. It is essential to create an efficient system of preschool education monitoring aimed at developing an evaluation system through means of quality metering.

It should be mentioned that the public demand for preschool education has increased, which leads to overloading children in preschool educational establishments in urban areas and results in queuing for children's enrollment thereto. In this context it is worth citing the words of the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, S. Nikolaenko: "Lack of financing in the field makes it impossible to renew preschool establishments in their activity suspended for an indefinite term or to build new ones eliminating at the same time a possibility to independently support and strengthen the scientific and resource base thereof by enlarging the didactic training equipment (toys, methodical and children's literature, other means of education and training), to carry out repair works, to renew hard and soft inventory, etc. Kindergartens have almost no modern study guides for educators, nor there is educational literature, fiction works for the preschoolers" [7, p. 11].

Today it can be stated that a considerable number of preschool establishments are not working without being withdrawn from the State Register for 1-10 years. The network of compensatory-type preschool establishments is concentrated mainly in the regional centers and cities of regional subordination. At the same time, a tendency is observed towards an increase in the number of educational and training complexes "preschool educational establishment – comprehensive educational establishment", the activity of which is aimed at ensuring succession between preschool and secondary education.

It is also worth highlighting some problems connected with introducing information and communication technologies (ICT) into the system of preschool education. According to Article 19 of the *Law of Ukraine on Preschool Education*, children aged from 0 to 6 are annually registered at their micro-districts. The staff members of preschool educational establishments study the service areas and draw up lists of children that are agreed upon with local administrations and health care establishments. The Departments of Education create a data bank on child population of a district or a city by years of birth and define forms of providing them with preschool education. Under actual conditions there exists an insistent need for automated processing of these data by ICT means. Besides, it should be emphasized that no effective application software to serve the needs of preschool education has been created in Ukraine hitherto, nor there is an automated working place for the head of the preschool educational establishment.

Bringing the monetary norms for child catering defined by the expenses from local budgets in compliance with the natural norms approved by Regulation 1591 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine as of November 22, 2004 remains a persistent problem for preschool education. It is also urgent to solve another

problem connected with inefficiency of formula calculation of expenses on pre-school education, which causes lack of financing for maintenance of preschool establishments.

Relevant issues of compulsory secondary education development

Among the pressing problems facing the general secondary education system development, the transition to a 12-year term of getting a general secondary education should be mentioned. Today, the amount of study load per pupil in Ukrainian schools is about 10,300 academic hours, which on the whole meets the average European educational standards. Different views on this matter exist in society, which caused relevant reaction of various political forces in the course of the presidential election campaign in 2010. For instance, a draft Law of Ukraine on amending several laws of Ukraine as to returning to the 10-year term of acquiring complete general secondary education (registration number 5252 of October 21, 2009) was submitted by People's Deputy of Ukraine A. Hryshchenko, one of the candidates for the Office of the President of Ukraine at the presidential election in 2010. It aroused a strong protest of the Board of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine that unanimously passed an appeal to the Supreme Rada of Ukraine as to impossibility of returning to the 10-year study term in secondary education, as it was at the time of the USSR, for the following reasons:

- The twelve-year study term has preserved children's health, standardized the study load, enabled implementation of a five-day study week while the ten-year study term will provide for returning to a six-day study week which endangers pupil's health;
- Over 100,000 teachers will automatically become unemployed;
- The international community will not recognize school leaving certificates or higher education diplomas as it violates the UNESCO recommendations on the minimum 12-year term for acquiring secondary education;
- 1.5 billion hryvnias has been spent on textbooks. Replacing them will require even more taxpayers' money;
- Profile training in high school will be cancelled. It will be extremely difficult for pupils to enter higher educational establishments [12].

Another problem that caused an ambiguous reaction in society is implementation of the external independent assessment in Ukraine as an element of the public educational policy. The main instrument of this process is testing techniques usage.

Testing to assess knowledge was first applied in Ukraine in late 20s - early 30s of the XX century to solve a number of pedagogical problems. Testing was used again in 50s, 70s, and 90s, but no expected results were obtained because testing methodology was not developed enough. External independent assessment by means of testing was applied in Ukraine again as an experiment since 2002 on the basis of pupils' voluntary participation in Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa and Kharkiv

regions with the financial and expert support by the International Renaissance Foundation. Today, the Ukrainian educators develop their own model of carrying out assessment of school-leavers' study achievements [4].

In 2008 mass external assessment of pupils' study achievements using a new procedure developed by the Ukrainian Center for Education Quality Assessment was carried out for the first time in Ukraine. I. Vakarchuk writes that knowledge assessment in the testing format was in the first place designed to reveal the real knowledge level of school-leavers and to ensure equal and fair access to studying at higher educational establishments [9, p.2].

At the same time, the practice of external independent assessment that is consecutively forming in Ukraine has defects as regards to both its content and organization and needs to be systematically improved. Analyzing its implementation, attention should be paid to some fundamental deficiencies in this work. The most critical of them is inconsistency between the educational legislation and the actual regulatory base as to implementation of the external independent assessment system in Ukraine. To standardize this issue, it is necessary to urgently make amendments to the *Law of Ukraine on Education, Law of Ukraine on Higher Education, Law of Ukraine on General Secondary Education, etc.*

It is also inadmissible that, as opposed to developed world countries, it is not certified professionals who are engaged today in the Ukrainian education assessment processes, but, for the most part, officers who acquire necessary knowledge in the course of their current work. The problem is that the higher educational establishments in Ukraine do not, till now, prepare specialists in the field of pedagogical measurement. At the same time, it is indicated in the materials of the Ukrainian Center for Education Quality Assessment that, due to the increase in number of people involved in carrying out the external independent assessment (people responsible for testing facilities, instructors, and other participants of the process) and their lack of adequate experience, violations of the procedure for carrying out external independent assessment took place which did not influence the results but should be avoided in future. Therefore, it is necessary to review the practice of training and certifying persons involved in carrying out external independent assessment.

An important constituent of successful carrying out of external independent assessment is marking the test participants' scripts. First of all, it concerns marking open questions, wherefore examiners are involved. As of today no mechanism has been elaborated for their involvement and payment for their work. This was a problem in 2007 and has remained as such till now.

Much is written today about equal access to quality education. A constituent part of this process is to ensure equal conditions for all school leavers when carrying out external independent assessment, namely in observing the citizens' constitutional right to choose their education language. This problem also remains unsettled due to its political context.

Tendencies as to financial provision of secondary educational establishments and preschool institutions in Ukraine will also be analyzed on the example of Kharkiv region. Financing in 2009 had the following sources:

- inter-budget transfer defined by the Ministry of Finance of Ukraine on a formula basis;
- proper incomes of local (including regional) budgets;
- a special budget fund directly involved by educational establishments.

The inter-budget transfer of 2014.8 million hryvnias (251.9 million US dollars) was allotted from the Ukrainian state budget for 2009 for educational purposes in Kharkiv region on the assumption of an annual upkeep cost of 4755.94 hryvnias (594.5 US dollars) per pupil and of 5582.82 hryvnias (697.9 US dollars) per child in a preschool establishment. Compared to 2008, general cost has grown by 11%, including the 16% upkeep cost increase per pupil and the 11.9% upkeep cost increase per preschooler.

The education cost share added to the overall budget expenses during the past years has grown annually: 2006 – 35.7%; 2007 – 36.0%; 2008 – 36.4%; 2009 – 38.4%. Target funds have been allocated from the state budget to equip comprehensive secondary schools with natural and mathematical and technical study rooms for the fourth year on end. The region has received 3414.4 thousand hryvnias (426.8 thousand US dollars). A positive tendency should be pointed out in decentralizing these payments directly to districts, which enables local administrations to define, in concert with the establishments, the constituent part of a study room to the extent of the real necessity. At the same time, the increase in absolute indices under the conditions of hryvnia exchange rate drop is rather relative.

The educational payments made in 2009 (average per region) were structurally allocated as follows: salary payments – 66%; payments for energy sources and utilities – 14.5%; catering and social security – 13.3%; management and material and technical maintenance of the establishments – 6.2%.

Reformation of vocational education

The reforming of vocational technical training that functions under the conditions of systematic lowering of students' contingent, changing of labor-market requirements, maintaining a great number of buildings filled mainly with outdated equipment is on the agenda of the further development of the education system in Ukraine. Analyzing the situation on the example of Kharkiv region it is necessary to point out that about ten from fifty vocational technical training establishments have the capacity of less than three hundred students each, with a tendency towards further drop in their number. They are for the most part represented by agricultural educational establishments situated in rural areas.

The management system of vocational technical training is morally outdated. In 2007 the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine tried to carry out an experiment as to transferring vocational technical training establishments of Kharkiv region, Lviv region and Kyiv to being financed from regional budgets. It

resulted in a wide range of issues becoming more acute. Moreover, the experiment was not defined within the framework of legislation, nor were specified its time limits, objective and expected results. The course of the experiment was not properly reported in the scientific and pedagogic literature. No powers concerning the property of the vocational technical training establishments distributed between the state budget and the regional budgets were defined either, which consequently influenced the problem of appointing managerial personnel for vocational technical training. The vocational technical training establishments were financed through subvention, but the financing did not provide for any possibility of change in the amount of subvention pro rata the reasonable augmentation of specific charges (e.g., payment for utilities) during the financial year. Another problem arose – that of centralized financing of vocational technical training establishments under individual programs of the Ministry. Financing of the state budget debts which cannot be carried out at the expense of other budgets became another problem. There also arose problems concerning the status of the centralized accounting departments of vocational technical training, etc.

According to the results of 2009 – the third year of the experiment carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine as to transferring vocational training establishments to being financed from regional budgets – a positive dynamics is observed. The carrying out of the experiment contributed to ensuring social security for vocational training staff (timely salary payment, holiday pay according to article 57 of the *Law of Ukraine on Education*), enhancing the material and technical base of the establishments, discharge of debts for consumed energy sources, widening students' nutrition, financing health improvement of orphan children, mobility in using budget funds. Besides orphan children and children deprived of parental custody, the funds assigned in 2009 for maintaining vocational training establishments enabled catering for children from low-income families and children living in hostels.

At the same time, the issue of optimizing the network of vocational technical training establishments and creating higher educational establishment complexes is being solved very slowly. There is no actual coordination with the structures of the National Job Center, and so forth. Thereby, today it is necessary to make a final state-level decision as to the integrated reformation of the vocational technical training system, its updating based on up-to-date principles, a qualitative renewal of the material and technical and personnel potential of this industry playing a key role for the production sphere of the country.

Current problems of higher education

The implementation of tiered education, understandable on the labor-market and complying with the European format – a three-cycle training system for higher education specialists: Bachelor, Magister and Philosophy Doctor (Ph.D.) – shall become an important stage in solving the problems of higher education in Ukraine,

according to I. Vakarchuk. He emphasizes the need for a terminologically clear definition of the following notions:

- short-cycle qualifications (an associate) for the students who have undergone the appropriate training in junior colleges;
- first-cycle qualifications (a bachelor) with a specific profile of an academic or professional training program;
- second-cycle qualifications (a master) with diversification of programs by the criteria of academicism and professionalism, e.g., an academic master and a professional master;
- integrated master qualifications by individual majors (medicine, veterinary science, art and pedagogical schools, etc.);
- third-cycle qualifications (a candidate of science or a doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) as a degree given after successful completion of an appropriate research program [1, c. 14-15].

At the same time, one of the main problems of higher education in Ukraine is its quality. Today we can state that the most prestigious higher educational establishments, including those existing and developing for centuries, have low indices compared to the actual world ratings. The reason is not only imperfect licensing and accreditation, but also lack of impartial external assessment of students' knowledge by independent institutions, low academic motivation of students, an outdated resource base of the absolute majority of higher educational establishments, corruption in high schools, and insufficient education individualization. Now a graduate in Ukraine is unable to take full advantage of the benefits provided by the Bologna Process.

The problem of scientific support of reforms in the educational system remains acute. This issue is mostly discussed in scientific literature rather than implemented in practice. Appropriate examples can be given for all the links of the educational system, but it is the general secondary education system that lacks scientific support in the first place. Many processes in the system being uncontrolled result in lowering of the knowledge level of school leavers and substantially influence the education level in higher educational establishments.

Conclusions

To solve many urgent problems in the system of education of Ukraine, the priority shall be given to enhancing the management system thereof. In the first place it concerns the regulatory base which regulates the activities of educational authorities in regions. It is necessary to definitely solve the problem of decentralization of pre-school, general secondary and vocational technical education management. Higher education also needs some important changes. First of all, a decision shall be made on placing a great number of higher educational establishments training personnel for regional labor-markets under the regional administration authority, which will enable effective optimization of the system according to the actual needs. More advanced higher educational establishments, and universities in the first place, shall develop autonomously and through creating R&D centers at them, etc.

An important aspect of improving the education management system is making management decisions considering the data from the education quality monitoring developed on the basis of the criteria of the EU member-states. Further development of Ukraine as a European state is not possible without improving the education quality based on the mechanisms existing in developed countries, having political will and making appropriate management decisions, and creating an efficient civil society.

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Ukrainos švietimo sistemos plėtojimo krizės metu problemos

Anotacija

Straipsnyje analizuojami Ukrainos švietimo sistemos plėtojimo procesai ekonominės ir politinės krizės metu. Pateikta medžiaga gali padėti vertinant situaciją visuose švietimo lygmenyse – vidurinio ir profesinio mokymo bei aukštojo mokslo. Pagrindžiamas švietimo sistemos administravimo esminių pokyčių būtinumas, siekiant pagerinti bendrąją Ukrainos situaciją. Akcentuojamas aukštųjų mokyklų absolventų išorinio vertinimo tikslingumas. Pagrindžiamas profesinio mokymo sistemos esminio reformavimo būtinumas. Siūlomi būdai, kaip, laikantis Ukrainos sutarčių, toliau plėtoti Bolonijos procesą.

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