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## DECENTRALIZATION OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN UKRAINE

### ДЕЦЕНТРАЛІЗАЦІЯ ОСВІТНЬОЇ СИСТЕМИ В УКРАЇНІ

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#### ABSTRACT

The article considers the main aspects and problems of transforming an educational network in the current context of decentralization. Reference is made to the urgent need of restructuring the responsibilities in education management between the center and regions providing the latter with independence in finances, organization and management at the regional level. It is emphasized that extending powers of the local executional bodies in management of educational institutions is the primary purpose of decentralization process. There was examined a pattern of decentralizing the basic education in Poland, according to which it was recommended to oblige the local self-government bodies to implement the education politics according to the local needs, finding the school administration and continually appraise the quality of education. It has been observed that currently the essential functions of state in education are assigned to the regional state administrations, regional and local educational departments. The local authorities are burdened with responsibilities of financing and providing the social security for children, defining the network of training institutions, maintaining their records and performing control over their activities. The author points out that at present the local and regional authorities duplicate the functions of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, which is non-effective. The author believes that the local government officials are able to perform political management well up to the officials of educational departments and administrations. However, prior to assignment of new obligations, it is necessary to develop and implement an effective retraining program for personnel and staff of the municipal structures. There have been reviewed the results of the pilot project: «Decentralization: education reforms at the local level», which experts had been analyzed the consistency of educational network. It pointed to the major areas of concern for the education reforms in local communities, namely a

*significant expense side of budget for education financing, low level of education in rural students according to the data obtained from the independent external assessment, and lack of subject oriented teachers. The author makes a conclusion that the purpose of decentralization in education should be an overall improvement of educational services and be based upon the following basic principles: students' right to have a free choice of educational institution, equal access to good-quality education services, decent conditions to develop their abilities, improving the quality and efficiency of the educational process, effective use of types of resources.*

**Key words:** decentralization, transformation, education, educational system.

Introduction. Decentralization is the process of transferring powers and financial resources from state power to local self-government bodies. The reform began in 2014 and already has certain results, including in the field of national education, which contribute to its modernization. The importance of educational reform is undeniable. It is an obvious fact that Ukrainian education in the state it was in before the reform did not satisfy both the demands of the modern individual and society, not to mention the economy and world trends. Radical changes in this field have the main goal of providing high-quality education starting from primary school and ending with higher educational institutions.

Research methods and techniques. The main research method of this article is analytical. The formation of conclusions is possible under conditions of careful analysis of the current state of the problem.

Results and discussions. In Ukraine, taking into account the process of changes in society, gradual decentralization is necessary in the management of the educational system. A redistribution of responsibilities between the center and the regions is needed, because the old reforms do not change the activities of state educational institutions. It is necessary to make transformational changes in the system of accountability and subordination of educational institutions at the regional level.

Management methods since Soviet times have been distributed in such a way that the main governing body in decision-making remains the state government. According to the Law of Ukraine «On Education», the majority of powers remain with the Ministry of Education of Ukraine. The strategic task of the State Program «Education» («Ukraine of the 21st Century») is: reform of education management, termination of state management and transition to state-public management; redistribution of functions between local, regional and central management bodies; ensuring self-governance of educational institutions and scientific institutions. Local and regional authorities now duplicate the functions of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, which is, in our opinion, ineffective.

The redistribution of responsibilities between the center and the regions is necessary because the old reforms do not change the activities of state educational institutions. It is necessary to make changes in the system of accountability and subordination of educational institutions at the regional level, first of all, to change the financing system.

With the support of the «U-LEAD with Europe» Program, on August 21, 2018, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Ukraine held its largest

national conference dedicated to the start of the implementation of the ambitious New Ukrainian School.

From the Polish experience of decentralization of management of basic education, it is possible to highlight the main provisions for the development of decentralization of education management in Ukraine, namely: – empower educational institutions to conduct self-analysis of school performance and involve the public in planning its development; – to oblige local self-government bodies to implement educational policy in accordance with local needs and financing of school management, to analyze the quality of education, to identify the main problems of education and to involve the community in solving them. At the national level, the responsibilities of financing local self-government bodies, improving the qualifications of teachers, state policy in the field of educational programs and textbooks, and ensuring a transparent mechanism for monitoring the quality of education remain.

Decentralization reform is closely related to education reform. Under the conditions of the growth of social mobilization, the development of technologies and changes in communications, there was a need for reforms, the need to quickly learn and be able to adapt. Educational reform consists of two main directions: changing the content of education, as well as optimization and development of educational networks. The development of the sphere of education and personality development requires the development of general and professional culture, taking into account both national and international requirements.

Decentralization opens up new opportunities in the field of education. In order to understand what exactly we are talking about, it is worth realizing what the process of decentralization is in general and how it is related to education.

Thus, the decentralization reform is aimed at creating capable and self-sufficient territorial united communities at the basic level. The most important authority that the community receives is the ability to make and implement decisions. If we talk, in particular, about the education system, with sectoral decentralization in mind, we should not forget that the state, in addition to granting powers, must also provide resources for the possibility of their implementation. This is one of the state obligations. However, another, no less important aspect of decentralization is providing communities with opportunities to earn money and dispose of it at their own discretion. That is, it is a state guarantee.

One of the key changes in the course of the decentralization reform was the creation of support schools in communities. In some cases, the question of closing a school is quite obvious. Thus, in one of the villages of Novobogdanivsk united territorial community of Zaporizhzhya region, a one-level school was closed in 2019, because as of September 1, 2019, only 5 children were studying at the school and 2 teachers were working. Now children are driven to a modern support school in the village of Novobohdanivka, and teachers are successfully employed in this same school. The economic and social effects in this case are obvious.

It is understandable that the idea of creating support schools infuriates rural teachers, some of whom will lose their jobs, but such optimization is

necessary in the context of the budget deficit and the low quality of knowledge of students in small schools. The creation of renovated and equipped support schools, where children from the nearest settlements are transported at the expense of united territorial community funds, is a priority direction of state regulation of education in conditions of decentralization. In the last few years, all the main investments in the infrastructure of schools have been prioritized specifically for reference schools.

The continuation of budget decentralization, which began in 2014, is, in particular, bill 3614. It provides that all communities will switch to budgetary relations. That is, those resources that the communities earned on their own, and did not receive from the state, they will be able to use at their own discretion.

Issues related to the education system can now be decided at the local level. This can be, for example, the opening of a parallel class with teaching in another language, in particular, the language of a national minority, or holding extracurricular educational or educational activities.

It is worth noting that this is an educational program, not an educational one. It depends on a specific educational institution, and not on a unified program or district. That is, each educational institution, regardless of whether it is a school, gymnasium or lyceum, chooses its educational program independently.

Most of the united territorial communities of Ukraine are currently reforming educational networks under the project «Decentralization: reforming education at the local level» of the public organization Center «Dobrochyn». The project was created to help communities with the financial support of the Embassy of Great Britain in Ukraine and was implemented in five regions: Kherson, Odesa, Chernihiv, Volyn and Luhansk. It has a recommendatory nature for reforming education in communities. The project takes into account the opinion of each individual target group, from students and their parents to local authorities. Ensuring equal access to quality educational services is the main goal of education reform.

The principles of decentralization in education management are based on: financial motives (the central government does not fully finance the requirements of the education sector); efficiency motives (allowing individual decisions to be made at the local level reduces costs for achieving results); political motives (use to increase the role of the public in decision-making, just like in most countries).

In our opinion, the financial aspect of the decentralization of the education system in Ukraine is the main one, because not all communities are currently financially capable. The main goal is to reduce the costs of maintaining educational institutions along with improving the quality of educational services. For this purpose, the process of creating support schools is actively underway in Ukraine. The problem with a small number of students in small towns and villages will be solved with the help of this optimization of the school network. In our opinion, reducing the number of schools in villages by merging schools and using buses to transport children

to the nearest schools was an acceptable solution. This process will allow to save funds spent on the operation of premises in vacated schools, and direct them instead to the modernization of those schools that remain.

Conclusions. The principles of decentralization, provided that they are considered and rationally implemented, are aimed at optimizing the education system and can largely ensure its modernization in accordance with the requirements of modern society. Given the fact that the decentralization reform is currently actively underway, its principles will continue to modernize the national education system. These changes will require further study. In our opinion, decentralization in education should aim at continuous improvement of educational services and be based on the following basic principles:

- children should be able to choose their own educational institution;
- every child, regardless of place of residence, has the right to equal access to quality educational services;
- children with special educational needs must have decent conditions for the development of their own abilities;
- educational services should be diverse, taking into account individual needs;
- the quality and efficiency of the educational process should be improved, primarily in the results of external independent evaluation; material, financial and personnel resources of the community should be effectively used to improve the level of education in Ukraine.

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#### **АНОТАЦІЯ**

У статті розглядаються основні аспекти та проблеми трансформації освітньої мережі в сучасних умовах децентралізації. Наголошується на нагальній потребі реструктуризації відповідальності в управлінні освітою між центром і регіонами, надаючи останнім самостійність у фінансах, організації та управлінні на регіональному рівні. Зазначається, що основною метою процесу децентралізації є розширення повноважень місцевих органів виконавчої влади в управлінні закладами освіти. Було розглянуто модель децентралізації базової освіти в Польщі, згідно з якою було рекомендовано зобов'язати органи місцевого самоврядування здійснювати освітню політику відповідно до місцевих потреб, знаходячи керівництво школи та постійно оцінюючи якість освіти. Зауважено, що нині основні функції держави в освіті покладено на обласні державні адміністрації, обласні та місцеві управління освіти. На органи місцевого самоврядування покладаються обов'язки щодо фінансування та соціального захисту дітей, визначення мережі закладів освіти, ведення їх обліку та здійснення контролю за діяльністю. Автори зазначають, що нині місцева та регіональна влада дублює функції Міністерства освіти і науки України, що є неефективним. На думку авторів, посадовці місцевого самоврядування здатні здійснювати політичне управління так само, як і чиновники освітніх відділів та управлінь. Але до покладання нових обов'язків необхідно розробити та впровадити ефективну програму перепідготовки персоналу та працівників муніципальних структур. Розглянуто результати пілотного проекту «Децентралізація: реформи освіти на місцевому рівні», експерти якого проаналізували послідовність освітньої мережі. Було вказано на основні питання, що викликають занепокоєння щодо освітніх реформ у місцевих громадах, а саме: значну видаткову частину бюджету на фінансування освіти, низький рівень освіти сільських учнів згідно з даними незалежного зовнішнього оцінювання та відсутність предметної орієнтації вчителів. Автори роблять висновок, що метою децентралізації освіти має стати загальне вдосконалення освітніх послуг і ґрунтуватися на таких основних принципах: право студентів на вільний вибір закладу освіти, рівний доступ до якісних освітніх послуг, гідні умови для розвитку своїх здібностей, підвищення якості та ефективності освітнього процесу, ефективне використання видів ресурсів.

**Ключові слова:** децентралізація, трансформація, освіта, освітня система.