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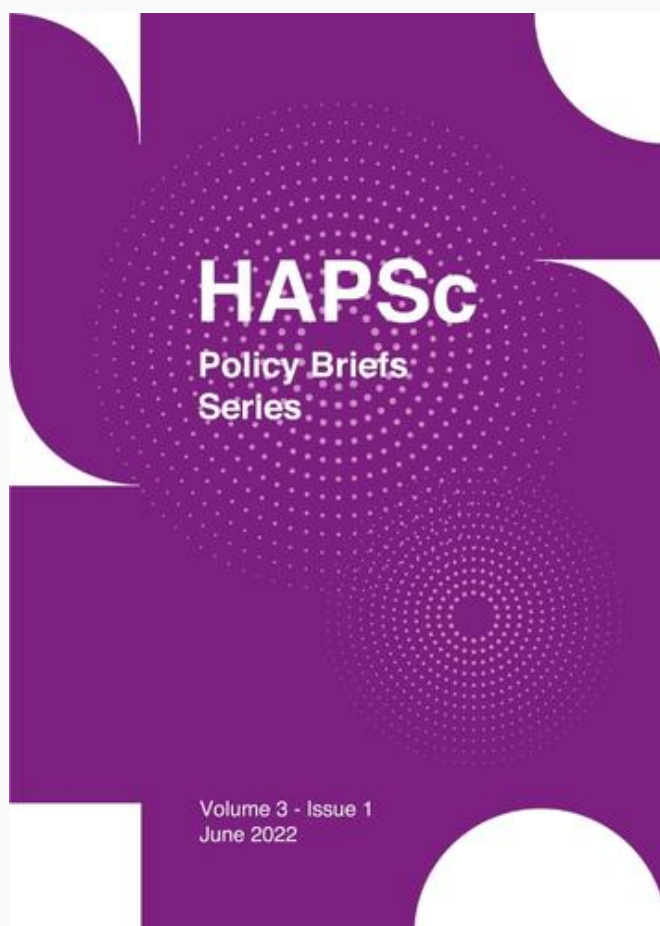
HAPSc Policy Briefs Series

Vocational Education and Training (VET) School Autonomy and Accountability: An analytical framework to contribute on moving forward VET policies and system in Ukraine

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Vocational Education and Training (VET) School Autonomy and Accountability: An analytical framework to contribute on moving forward VET policies and system in Ukraine[1]

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Abstract

In the last years, the evolution of decentralization in education in Ukraine, whether in the field of general education or vocational education and training (VET), has created effective political will and good synergies to address systemic reforms. However, the steadily decreasing number of VET institutions, students -and teachers- testify to the need to further reform the VET system. In the context of its effort to make the VET system both more attractive for students and the labour market through decentralization, Ukraine is facing the challenge of advancing VET school autonomy and accountability regarding managerial, financial and pedagogical functions. Increasing vocational school autonomy has been considered a key policy driver for decentralization process. School autonomy (managerial, financial, and pedagogical autonomy) might enable schools to support on such ambitious goal. The European Training Foundation (ETF)[3] working very closely with Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2019-2020) explored-in pilot basis-how to make possible moving towards VET school autonomy and accountability in Ukraine, from a governance perspective of the VET system. The analytical framework is a result of desk research, focus groups in three Ukrainian regions (Poltava, Kharkov and Odessa). Further, it helped to implement national survey-online- in 24 Ukrainian regions Key outcome is an *Analytical Framework for VET School Autonomy and Accountability*[4]. The purpose of such tool has been to provide a clear description of the suggested distribution of tasks among stakeholders at the different levels of the education system (practitioners and policy makers). This might support the decision-making authorities, i. e. first and foremost the Ministry of Education and Science) in their efforts to advance VET school autonomy and accountability in Ukraine to advance in policy agendas and continue improving effectiveness -and efficiency of VET system.

Keywords: VET, Ukraine, ETF.

Introduction

Ukrainian government (June 2019) adopted a concept in order to address *Modern* Vocational Education and Training (VET) (2020 up to 2027), to support the implementation of necessary reforms[5]. The concept identifies the following three priority tasks:

▪ Further decentralisation of VET by increasing school autonomy, optimising VET provider networks and ensuring the acquisition of vocational qualifications in a lifelong learning (LLL) context;

▪ Aligning VET provision with regional labour market needs;

▪ Improving the quality of VET, through competence-based and flexible provision; by improving the status of VET teachers and trainers and attracting professionals from industry to teach in VET institutions; and developing cooperation and different forms of interaction and partnerships with employers and the private sector to increase the relevance of VET.

A new draft Law on VET has been prepared. This is still an on-going task (ETF 2020a). All these key policy aspects steered a cooperation among European Training Foundation (ETF) with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (Directorate of Vocational Education and Training) to explore -in pilot basis- how to move towards VET school autonomy and accountability in Ukraine by looking at the distribution of tasks and responsibilities at the different levels of the VET system (2019-2020). In this policy context, the issue of VET School Autonomy is playing a prominent role in the sphere of Ukrainian policy dialogue/making for two key facts:

▪ Enrolments in secondary VET have been rapidly declining in the last five years. The drop has been sharper among students who have completed secondary general education in full (after 11th grade) (Figure 1).

▪ Continuous decline of VET institutions (PTUs). The number of schools dropped by 10% from 824 in 2015 to 743 in 2019. Obviously, this has had an impact on the number of VET directors (Figure 2).

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[5] See: https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-shvalennya-koncepciyi-realizaciyi-derzhavnoyi-politiki-u-sferi-profesijnoyi-profesijno-tehnichnoyi-osviti-suchasna-profesijna-profesijno-tehnichna-osvita-na-period-do-2027-roku-i120619
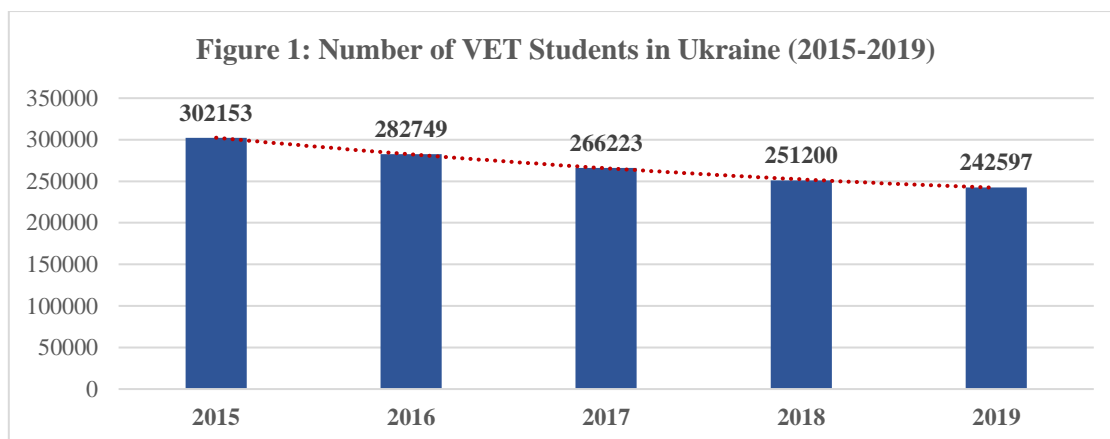
Figure 1: Number of VET Students in Ukraine (2015-2019)

Source: Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of Ukraine (2020)

Figure 2: Number of VET Schools in Ukraine (2015-2019)
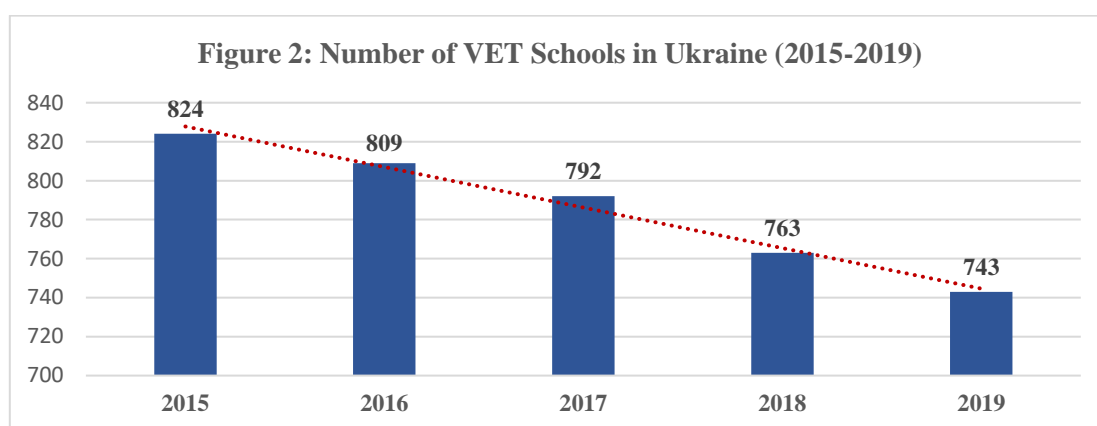
Source: Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of Ukraine (2020)

Conceptual framework and methodology

There are several definitions of school autonomy[6] but generally it means granting schools certain rights, primarily the right to make decisions. Those rights regard different areas, such as staffing, teaching contents, finances, pedagogical practices, staff assessment. School autonomy is exercised within the policies set at the central level. School autonomy results in a shift of rights and responsibilities of bodies associated with the school, such as the School Council. School autonomy exists to different degrees and schools may be autonomous to varying degrees with regard to different aspects. School autonomy does not preclude approval of certain decisions from higher authorities. School autonomy entails responsibility and accountability (ETF 2020b).

The participatory working methodology to pilot an analytical framework on VET School Autonomy and Accountability- in pilot basis – is summarized below:

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[6] See references section for learning on such definitions. In particular: EU (2014), Neeleman (2019); ETF (2021) and World Bank (2015).

TABLE 1 . ETF & MoES OF UKRAINE PROJECT ON VET SCHOOL AUTONOMY & ACCOUNTABILITY: MAIN STEPS AND OUTCOMES		
STEPS & KEY TASKS	**DESCRIPTION**	**REMARKS**
PHASE 1: PILOT EXERCICE (3 & 4th Q 2019)	▪ ETF Desk research ▪ Focus groups: MoEs selected 3 pilot regions (Poltava, Kharkiv, Odessa). Questionnaire validation with regional peers. ▪ Draft report: main findings on 3 regions	▪ Testing questionnaire in pilot groups (20- 25 people each). ▪ Shaped draft of analytical framework.
PHASE 2: ON-LINE SURVEY (4th Q 2019-1st Q 2020)	▪ On-line Survey 24 Ukrainian regions ▪ 1st Draft Report key national survey-descriptive- results at national level. ▪ 1st Final report: End of February 2020. ▪ Data analysis report	▪ Final sample: 963 respondents to questionnaires. ▪ The survey(questionnaire) includes 41 questions- with 276 sub questions-.
PHASE 3: DISCUSSION & DISEEMINATION OF RESULTS [7]	▪ Policy discussion (*lab*): acknowledgment & appropriation of results by MoES & Ukrainian VET Community : consolidated evidence to support discussion on Policy issues *vs*. policy options ▪ Strategic use of findings by Ukrainian MoEs & VET Community.	▪ MoEs strongly support to disseminate results in National meeting (2nd half May 2020). ▪ EU practice to mobilize in the country: Poland, Estonia, Austria.

The background issues translated into policy research domains-and questions- worked by informants are:

▪ Roles, functions and composition of VET schools councils or boards[8].

▪ Powers of school directors, teachers and other staff policies.

▪ Regional component role on the issue of having more autonomous VET school networks.

▪ Methods and ways of coordinating mobilization and allocation of funding for boosting VET quality programs (e.g. academic wages, formula funding, multi-channel sources of funding, and for fund-raising to support VET schools operations (e.g. income generation).

▪ Role of VET schools in cooperation with other stakeholders shaping curricula as well as on facilitating and implementing student assessments of learning process and outcomes. This takes into account the role of Centers of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs)

▪ Tasks of VET schools in planning and coordination with other layers (national and regional) for implementation of VET quality assurance.

▪ VET school capacities for networking with private sector and social partners to address, for instance, development of work-based learning approaches (WBL).

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[7] This phase (planned on-site) could not be implemented, unfortunately, due to COVID pandemic.
[8] *School councils* is a term used in this work. Other terms frequently used are "school board" and/or "executive council".

- Teachers and trainers –expanded roles on learning and curricula design processes, as well as on their professional development within the context of increased school self- governance.

Analytical framework on VET School Autonomy and Accountability in Ukraine

All these steps, based on country intelligence, primary information - and international practices - analysis -, allowed to approach an *analytical framework* for addressing how to implement VET School Autonomy and Accountability policies in Ukraine. VET School Autonomy on this Analysis is clustered on managerial, financial, and pedagogical autonomy, whilst focussing on selection of different types of VET stakeholders and VET providers).

In the framework the key policy layers and main stakeholders are:

- National (Ministry-MoES).

- Regional VET- (Regional Government/ Regional Council).

- VET Providers: VET School Directors/ Teachers /Workshop instructors/Masters).

This has been aligned to current VET system and policy context to guide Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (working with VET Community-fit for purpose).

The framework outputs after desk research, working groups piloted in three Ukrainian in regions (oblasts) (Poltava, Jarkov, Odessa) plus using results of survey responses (N=963) gathered in 24 Ukrainian regions (oblasts) which are[9]: Cherkasy, Chernihiv, Chernivtsi, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk (Controlled by Ukraine), Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Khmelnytskyi, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Luhansk (Controlled by Ukraine), Lviv, Mykolaiv, Odessa, Poltava, Rivne, Sumy, Ternopil, Vinnytsia, Volyn, Zakarpattia, Zaporizhzhia, Zhytomyr

All these results are presented in the analytical framework below (see table).

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[9] The study covered all these Ukrainian regions (oblasts) – not included Crimea. These regions integrate territorial political and economic geography of the country, before Russian invasion (24 February 2022), according to international law.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR VET SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN UKRAINE: PILOTING RESULTS FROM A GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE						
AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY CAPACITIES BY FUNCTIONS	**NATIONAL**	**REGIONAL**		**VET SCHOOLS**		
	MoES	**Regional VET Council**	**Regional Education Department**	**School Council[10]**	**School Director**	**Teachers & Workshop Instructors**
MANAGERIAL FUNCTIONS						
Staff management	Designs job descriptions for VET school directors and deputy directors. Designs job descriptions for VET school teachers	-	Selects the director Dismisses the director	Recommends candidates for the position of the director Recommends the dismissal of the director	Hires teachers Hires deputy directors Dismisses teachers Dismisses deputy directors Assesses teacher performance Assesses performance of deputy directors	Have a say in the appointment and dismissal of the director Have a say in the appointment and dismissal of deputy directors

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[10] As for the results of the survey, the following should be represented in the school council: employers, teachers, unions, experts on career guidance, parents, and the Regional VET Council.

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	MoES	**Regional VET Council**	**Regional Education Department**	**School Council**[10]	**School Director**	**Teachers & Workshop Instructors**
Educational planning	Designs medium- and long-term education strategies	Approves strategic documents on the purpose and functioning of the regional VET school network

Promotes VET in the region

Supports forecasting of labour market needs in the region and suggests training in priority occupations

Provides school directors with expertise in autonomy and accountability issues | Implements medium- and long-term education strategies at the regional level | Approves the school development plan

Sets key performance indicators

Provides advice and recommendations on school-autonomous training contents | Designs school development plan

Communicates and leads change

Develops the VET school | Participate in the design of school development plan

Provide feedback on training contents

Provide feedback on the contents of exams |

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ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR VET SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN UKRAINE: PILOTING RESULTS FROM A GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE						
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	MoES	**Regional VET Council**	**Regional Education Department**	**School Council[10]**	**School Director**	**Teachers & Workshop Instructors**
Cooperation with employers	Provides guidelines for the cooperation between the VET system and ESPs	Sets the overall framework and provides methodological support for partnerships with employers in the region Supports the organization of information events for schools and ESPs and highlights benefits of cooperation Supports collecting information on training needs for in-company trainers and promotes providing such trainings	-	Coordinates cooperation with employers Signs agreement with employers	Maintains communication with stakeholders Monitors the quality of WBL	Provide methodological support to in-company trainers
Analysis	Provides methodology and tools for tracer studies Provides methodology and tools for labour market analyses	Supports conducting labour market analyses and ensures that the regional order is based on the data delivered by the analyses	Considers the results of labour market analyses in the implementation of medium- and long-term education strategies	Considers the results of labour market analyses in actions resulting from its functions	Implements tracer studies	-

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	MoES	**Regional VET Council**	**Regional Education Department**	**School Council[10]**	**School Director**	**Teachers & Workshop Instructors**
Quality assurance	Establishes quality criteria Establishes quality assurance procedures	-	Implements quality assurance procedures	Considers the results on quality assurance procedures in actions resulting from its functions	Ensures the quality of training Ensures training of VET school staff in quality issues	Participate in training on quality assurance issues
Legal framework	Provides the legal provision on VET school autonomy and accountability	-	Ensures implementation of the legal framework	Approves legal provisions at the VET school level	Proposes legal provisions at the VET school level	Participate in the design of legal provisions at the VET school level
Licensing and accreditation	Designs legal provisions on licensing and accreditation	Establishes the need for accredited programs at the regional level	-	Suggests training programs for accreditation	Participates in licensing and accreditation processes	-
FINANCIAL FUNCTIONS						
Extra-budgetary funding	Provides legal provision on the funding of VET schools	Establishes the framework for extra-budgetary funding for VET schools Collects proposal to attract extrabudgetary funding	Provides operational support to VET schools in securing extra-budgetary funding	Secures support from external donors	Is responsible for processes generating extra-budgetary funding	Participate in processes related to generating extra-budgetary funding
Procurement	Provides legal provision on procurement issues	–	Ensures adherence to the provision on procurement	Approves procurement needs	Identified procurement needs	Participate in the identification of procurement needs
Budget design	Provides legal provision on budgeting	-	Ensures adherence to the provision on budgeting	Designs and approves the school budget	Participates in the design of the school budget	-

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	MoES	**Regional VET Council**	**Regional Education Department**	**School Council[10]**	**School Director**	**Teachers & Workshop Instructors**
Use of financial resources	Provides legal provision on the use of financial resources	-	Ensures adherence to the provision on the use of financial resources	Participates in training on financial issues Ensures the proper use of financial resources by the VET school	Decides on spending of funds for the daily operation of the school Participates in training on financial issues	-
PEDAGOGICAL FUNCTIONS						
Training contents	Sets framework for skills development (hard and soft skills) Provides curricula Provides regulation on the requirements for and approval of textbooks	Identifies priority training contents at the regional level and supports delivery of training	Approves priority training contents at the regional level	Approves school-autonomous training contents	Makes suggestions on school-autonomous training contents Ensures employer participation in the development of suggestions for school-autonomous training contents	Participate in the identification of school-autonomous training contents Participate in the design of teaching and learning materials

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ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR VET SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN UKRAINE: PILOTING RESULTS FROM A GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE						
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	MoES	**Regional VET Council**	**Regional Education Department**	**School Council**[10]	**School Director**	**Teachers & Workshop Instructors**
Assessment	Provides legal provision on assessment Provides national framework criteria	-	Ensures adherence to the legal provision and the national framework criteria for assessment	-	Is responsible for the proper organization of exams	Provide feedback on the relevance of current assessment criteria Design assessment criteria at the school level based on national framework criteria Participate in training on assessment Provide methodological support to in-company trainers in assessment issues
Career counselling for students	Provides legal provision on career counselling for students	Supports the establishment of career counselling services at the regional level	Ensures adherence to the legal provision on career counseling for students	Monitors quality of career counseling services at the school level	Ensures implementation of career counseling services at the school level and/or students' access to services at the regional level	May qualify as career counselors

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	MoES	**Regional VET Council**	**Regional Education Department**	**School Council[10]**	**School Director**	**Teachers & Workshop Instructors**
Teaching and learning processes and conditions	Provides legal provision on pedagogical approaches (e. g. the adoption of competency-based training) Sets minimum standards for teaching and learning conditions	-	Ensures adherence to the provision on pedagogical approaches Ensures that VET schools meet minimum standards for teaching and learning conditions	Assesses teaching and learning conditions in the VET school Ensures access for children with special educational needs	Ensures the implementation of the legal provision on teaching and learning processes and conditions	Analyze teaching and learning processes Make recommendations for the improvement of teaching and learning processes Act as role models for students
Teacher professional development	Provides legal provision on TPD Identifies TPD needs Develops a medium- and long-term TPD strategy	Supports the identification of TPD needs	Organizes regional TPD courses	-	Participates in the identification of TPD needs Organizes regional TPD courses in the school Nominates experiences teachers as trainers in TPD courses	Participate in the identification of TPD needs Provide feedback on the relevance and impact of TPD courses Experiences teachers act as trainers in TPD courses

Conclusions

Among many others take aways from this pilot action, key conclusions are:

- The paper does not discuss pross and cons of policy decision on VET School Autonomy and Accountability. Overall, the objective of this work has been to propose a working framework for testing such policy option in Ukraine.

- The analytical framework -pilot- presented in this paper – is linked to a governance perspective and is proven to be relevant and useful. Findings show that it works for further supporting policy - analysis, discussions, and learning-. This should be done by correlating

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both, distribution of responsibilities among policy layers and relevant VET staff/practitioners, to be engaged. Managerial, financial and pedagogical functions are those relevant ones to target VET School Autonomy and Accountability. This means, for example, to deliver a cross-analysis (matrix) based on these key three functions on VET School Autonomy- and Accountability, shorted by different stakeholders (National Regional, School board, Directors, teachers & workshop instructors) and spatial levels (National, Regional & VET schools).

- The analytical framework might further support other countries worldwide, which might further work on such a strategic issue (policy makers, practitioners as well as research/experts community).

- Overall, these findings inform on the need to deliver a differentiated analysis on Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) role. This issue might support on streamlining policy discussions, to address high quality VET network optimization-and provision-reform in the country.

- Other key actions might be needed to reform network in the country (e.g. conducting evaluation-and audit-of VET sector; facilitating guidelines for restructuring VET school networks; issuing methodology for assessing performance, effectiveness and quality of VET network; strategic communication plan to motivate -and build trust on- VET Community etc.).

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