ASSESING QUALITY, EFFICIENCY & PERFORMANCE OF VET NETWORKS IN UKRAINE: METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

1. INTRODUCTION: VET DEVELOPMENT AND NETWORK OPTIMIZATION IN URKAINE

The MoES and regional VET actors might want to continue carrying out a necessary process of VET system optimization. Various provisions of the proposed new VET law effectively place constraints on MoES decision making with regard to the optimization of the VET system, will affect the way in which this is carried out.

The region is the unit for the economic development of the country. Each region has already developed a strategy for its economic development. The ambition is to conceive VET system as a tool for economic development. For these reasons and many others it is possible to argue that the natural unit for the optimization of the VET school system, should be the regional VET school network and that this network should be optimized based on its contribution to the economic development of the region (ETF & MoES Green Paper on VET Decentralization, 2017).

It is well known from experience, that decisions related to the optimization or rationalization of VET school networks are amongst the most difficult and contentious aspects of educational reforms. These decisions involve consideration of a wide range of issues that are political and economic in nature, as well as practical in the way they affect established relations with a wide variety of actors in labour relations, as well as education and training policy.

This is a multiple challenge in the case of Ukraine. Indeed a number of issues are: the need for far-reaching reform of the system, in terms of the decentralization. The introduction of new modes of governance at national regional and local level, at the level of the school and its management, the courses on offer/demand and the teaching techniques employed, teacher salaries and teacher training, as well as the modernisation of institutional arrangements, systems for skills demand anticipation, licensing, Quality Assurance (Q.A), evaluation and monitoring.

Last but not least, the current ambition of the country for granting VET schools with more autonomy on its operations makes these decision more complex as autonomy is a concept that requires high level of professional capacitates in the side of VET school staff in coordination with national and regional decision-makers and goes always hand in hand with accountability practices.

2. MAIN TYPES AND SOME DYNAMICS OF VET INSTITUIONS IN UKRAINE

VET institutions in Ukraine can be divided into two main categories:

a) Professional-technical schools which formally belonging to the sector of professional-vocational education, and
b) Institutions of accreditation level I and II which are formally part of the system of higher education (HE).

However, according to current laws governing the systems there are much specific type of institutions (see table below).

TABLE 1. TYPES OF VET INSTITUTIONS AS PER RELEVANT LAWS

Types of VET institutions as per the Law on VET (1998, Art. 18)	Types of VET institutions as per the draft Law on VET (2019, Art. 32)	Types of VET institutions as per the Law on pre-higher education (2019, Art. 31)
VET school	-	-
VET school for social rehabilitation	-	-
High VET school	-	-
Professional lyceum	Professional lyceum	-
Professional school of arts	-	-
Professional VET school of arts	-	-
High professional VET school of arts	-	-
VET school-agrofirm	-	-
High VET school-agrofirm	-	-
VET school-plant	-	-
Centre for professional VET	-	-
Centre for professional education	Centre for vocational education	-
Training and production centre	-	-
Centre for the training and re-training of workers	Centre for the professional development of workers	-
Training course centre	-	-
Training centre	-	-
-	Professional college	Professional college
-	-	Military college of sergeants
-	-	Professional college with specific learning conditions[1]

Source: ETF own elaboration (1st draft report on VET School autonomy in Ukraine; on-going 2019- unpublished-)

The article 18 of professional education law (1998) sets 16 type of institutions in charge of delivering vocational training programmes. The article 23 of 2019 draft law (*work in progress*) reduce this number to four one. Namely, Professional Lyceum, Centres for Vocational Education, Centre for Professional Development of Workers and Professional College.

Table 2 Evolving number of VET schools and students in Ukraine (1990-2018)

Year	Number of institutions	Number of students	Share related to 1990	Students per institution	Share related to 1990
1990	1246	643,400	100%	516	100%
2000	970	524,600	82%	541	105%
2010	976	433,500	67%	444	86%
2013	968	391,200	61%	404	78%
2017	756	269,400	42%	356	69%
2018	736	255,000	39,6%	347	67%

Source: UKSTAT (Available at: http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2005/osv_rik/osv_u/ptu_u.html)

At this point, it is also useful as a *departure* point to have a look on demography of VET institutions per region, including industrial sectors covered by specialities delivered.

Chart 1. VET Institutions in Ukraine: Demography, Size and Economic Sectors (2017)
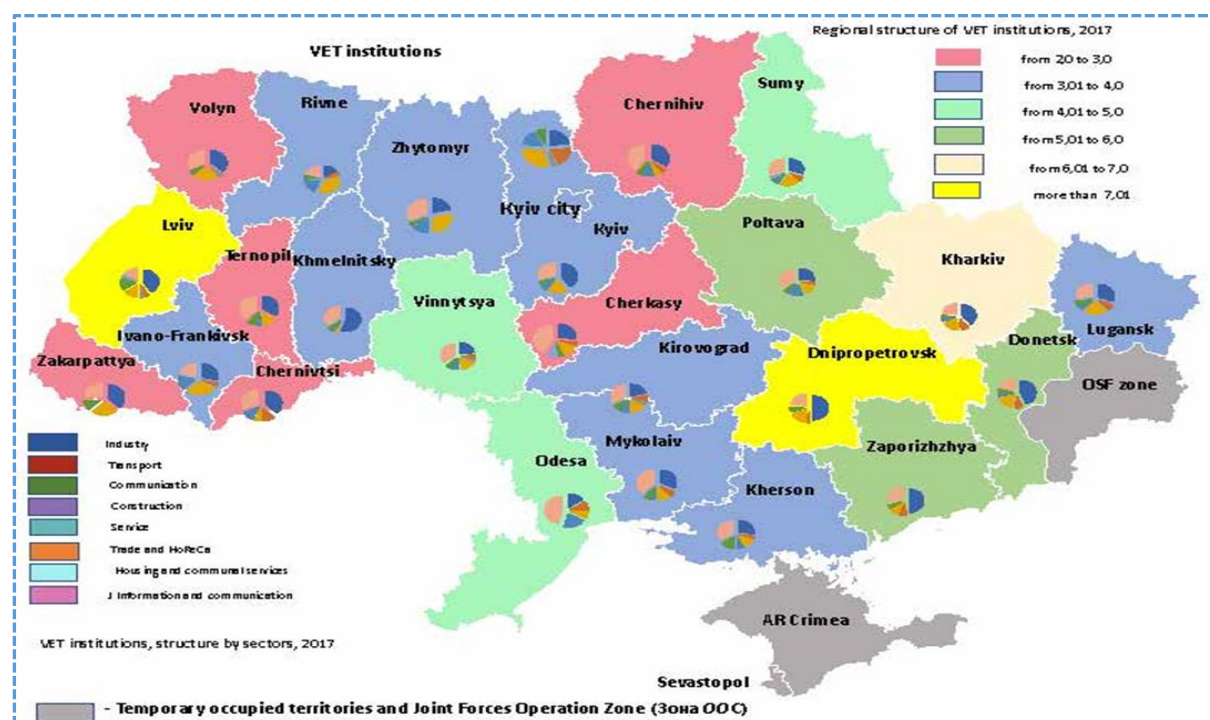
Source ETF (2018 VET Centres of Excellence advisory report- forthcoming publication-)

Among other issues, the map shows in a nutshell that VET institutions in Ukraine are mostly concentrated in industrial centres with –some- developed infrastructure (e.g. Dnipropetrovsk & Lviv oblasts). In 2017, out of total 756 institutions, 58 (7.7%) and 59 (7.8%) were located in these two regions. Total numbers in 10 oblasts are larger than the country average (~30 VET Centres per Oblast). In Zakarpattya and Chernivtsi are almost two times less.

3. MAIN STEPS TO SUPPORT METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESING QUALITY, EFFICIENCY AND PERFORMANCE OF VET SCHOOL NETWWORKS IN UKRAINE

The previous section shows that it is very important to gather good evidence addressing context of the intervention to cope with optimization and rationalization processes. These issues and basic indicators presented should be carefully taken into account in more detailed way, for coordinating dialogue and decision-making. This can be done steering a *step-by-step* approach. This might be done *in cascade* or just developing and coordinating steps in horizontal manner.

▪ **STEP 1: Addressing how to solve the issue of land property of VET schools.**

The question of school property is one of most chronical and challenging problems of VET Ukrainian sector. Legally, the VET school property, that is buildings and land, belong to Ukrainian state. However, VET schools are administered by the regions. The procedures for changing the use of the property are defined in the laws and are complex to implement. The process in on its way to be resolved. However, time is passing by without an effective and acknowledged solution to the issue. Speed up lobby process and technical works for having a sound legal solution is a must for VET sector.

In all of the cases, this is a first *transversal* step to be walked alongside the process as in a merging and/or closure process some schools with good potential for developing modern/excellent facilities' could be penalize for such *exogenous* factor. This is also a tricky issue, which can hampers, for instance, the process of granting with more autonomy VET institutional networks.

▪ **STEP 2: Agree on a battery of context, performance and/or outcome indicators.**

Context, performance and outcome indicators are essential for understanding the features of VET system. They provide structural picture on milestones or deficits of the VET network. For instance, indicators presented below, as an example, should be carefully desegregated (or even transformed into composite ones) to inform on performance, quality and efficiency of current network of VET institutions. This might be done, for instance, observing trends on following indicators during last 5 years:

✓ Evolution of regional number of graduates per VET institution.
✓ Evolution of budget execution of VET Centers.
✓ Evolution of investments in equipment's done by VET schools.
✓ Contribution of school on schooling VET graduates (percentage).
✓ Occupational fields in sectors covered by VET school by number of graduates.
✓ Employment rates of graduates in the labour market shorted by VET institution.
✓ Employment rates of graduates by sectoral occupations in the regions.
✓ Employment rates of graduates trained by VET school employed in other regions.
✓ Employment rates of graduates trained by VET school employed abroad
✓ Evolution of number of Students in apprenticeships in companies by VET institution.
✓ Number of companies cooperating with VET institutions and specialties.
✓ Correlation between VET provisions delivered by schools and priority economic areas in the regions.
✓ Implementation rates of VET budget expenditures shorted by operations done in the school.
✓ Etc.

In addition, gathering this type of information is very useful to support steps 3 and 4. In concrete, for minimizing subjective information that could be gather from the side of the VET schools.

According to such set of indicators, perhaps, a wise option would be to conduct an **overall evaluation of VET sector in the country**. This can open further room for identifying strategic axis and objectives to fulfil in order to articulate and **operational –national and regional- strategic plans**. The exercise can be also profited to propose **performance-based funding indicator** to support starring new institutions in the new period.

☆ **STEP 3: Speed up dialogue process for delivering guidelines for optimizing and/or rationalizing regional VET networks**

For example, school optimisation/rationalization and/or restructuring at upper secondary- VET- level could be piloted following criteria for doing so. This can be done for all regions or just for some pilot regions or large cities/municipalities. Big education providers might offer both academic and vocational pathways for students (after 9th grade) whilst former independent provided can be merged by the biggest one. Further options, on *what to do* with closed schools might be discussed in the country.

The non-utilized schools, such as perhaps vocational lyceums and/or colleges, would be further subject of merging or closing. However, these criteria might be further elaborated in a common framework on which the rules of the game are clearly delineated for all in comprehensive, transparent and accoujntable manner. The **way of approaching and delivering guidelines** might also help on building consensus and trust on MoEs in VET community on the difficult decision of closing VET establishments. In principle, two type of guidelines can be identified:

▪ Guidelines for Professional-vocational education institutions coordinated by MoES, produced in cooperation with VET community. This exercise should be prioritized.
▪ Guidelines for Institutions with accreditation levels I & II (VET and HE authorities). This might be optional.

In summary, conducting a process to deliver guidelines for restructuring VET networks is an opportunity for creating ownership in the process within VET community. The method might also including self-

assessment tool used by regional and school actors in order to identify final criteria to be drafted in such guidelines.

- **STEP 4: Agree on methodology for assessing performance, quality and efficiency of VET providers.**

This is the pre-final step as the others are providing smooth preparation of the ground for carrying out exercise that is more *scientific*. This is because the exercise should be based on collecting primary information, which can be organised following different methodological ways.

First, it is necessary to consider that this exercise is complex for Ukraine for the length of the country and VET network. In this respect, it is advisable to agree and propose a representative sample as an essential factor. The exercise should rely on good leadership from MoEs working with research/consultant team. First task might be nomination of national and international experts, which have to be involved in a kind of *task force* coordinated by core working team. An example of possible methodological fiche is presented below.

BOX 1 Example of Methodological Fiche

- ✓ **Purpose:** The purpose of the survey is to asses performance, effectiveness and quality of VET Schools in Ukraine.

- ✓ **Universe**: Professional-technical schools which formally belonging to the sector of professional-vocational education, and some Institutions of accreditation level I and II

- ✓ **Target group:** VET school management staff, Regional education departments, Regional VET councils

- ✓ **Expected results:** The survey is expected to deliver primarily quantitative data on external and external factors (efficiency/effectiveness) of VET providers in Ukraine

- ✓ **Use of results**: The results will be used to support merging, closing or just creating new VET schools in Ukraine (e.g. to transform some establishments into Centres of VET Excellence).

- ✓ **Regional coverage:** The survey will be conducted in all regions ("oblasts") of Ukraine. A pilot sample of priority regions might be selected to kick start the research exercise.

- ✓ **Survey sample:** Around 550 informants (24 regions, average of 6 VET schools per region, 4 responses per school (1 director, 1 management staff 2 teachers/workshop instructors). 24*6*4= 576.

- ✓ **Research instruments:** The survey will be conducted with the use of a questionnaire which can be split in two parts: Assessment indicators and interview assessment. Some strategic focus groups could be used for validating or even elaborate further information.

- ✓ **Timeframe:** The survey is expected to be conducted during second half of 2020.

- ✓ **Implementation of the survey:** the survey could be impelelemnted on-line or piloting some regions on face-to-face basis (budget implications to be considered).

- ✓ **Organizational arrangements and responsibilities:** The Core Team, with involvement of MoEs in different key phases, will execute overall survey process. A *task force group* with relevant national and international experts will help on advising and monitoring process.

- **STEP 5 Communicate with VET Community to discuss and validate results**

Dialogue process with VET Community should be launched from the beginning to create engagement and trust. A validation committee can be created with the participation of some regional powers representing Regional VET Networks, which can help later on communicating results (final report).

4. SUMMARY OF MAIN OPTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

☆ Smart *political lobbying* on the follow-up of transfer of property land of VET schools in Ukraine.

☆ Agreeing on a battery of different types of indicators to inform on overall decision making and support management of the working processes.

☆ An evaluation of the overall VET sector or strategic plans can become also outputs based on above exercise.

☆ Guidelines for restructuring VET school networks of Ukraine are an useful tool for contributing on joint vision, consensus and criteria on how to steer optimization/rationalization process.

☆ An agreed methodology for assessing performance, effectiveness and quality of VET networks should be scientific tool for informing final decision-making process.

☆ Ensure good communication with VET Community is essential for ownership as well as to minimize impact of policy decisions.

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