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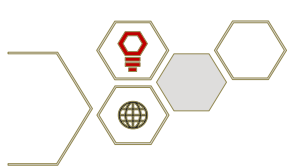
Legal foundations for reforming public education in the Ukrainian SSR (1953–1960)

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Abstract. Following the significant political changes of 1953–1954, a gradual transformation of the education system throughout the Soviet Union began, but this was particularly pronounced in the Ukrainian SSR. After Stalin's death, the policy of de-Stalinisation initiated by Khrushchev laid the groundwork for large-scale reforms with one key reform area being education. In much of the social science scholarship, this reform has been examined primarily from pedagogical or socio-economic perspectives, whereas its political and legal dimensions have received comparatively little attention. This article analyses the legal, ideological and institutional foundations of public education system reform in the Ukrainian SSR during de-Stalinisation to ask these changes affected the structure, content and functions of schools. **The methodological basis** of the article consists of historical-legal, comparative-legal, and structural-functional methods, which made it possible to trace the relationship between political decisions, socio-economic needs, and changes in the educational policy of the Ukrainian SSR during the period of de-Stalinisation.



Sources were selected based on the principles of representativeness and reliability, using regulatory and legal acts, party documents, and publications of official reports of the Ministry of Education of the Ukrainian SSR. Statistical data were analysed using a historical-dynamic method, which made it possible to identify trends in education coverage, student performance indicators, and the development of the network of educational institutions in the 1950s and early 1960s. The combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative interpretation of sources made it possible to reveal not only the formal indicators of the reforms, but also their real social impact. **The results** show that the 1958 reform, enshrined in the USSR Law and the Ukrainian SSR Law of the same name ‘On Strengthening the Connection Between School and Life and on the Further Development of the Public Education System,’ was twofold. **The research concludes** that the 1958 reform was a manifestation of Soviet modernisation policy aimed at forming a ‘new man’ — a disciplined worker loyal to the party and the state. Thus, the reform demonstrated the duality of the Soviet educational project, in which modernisation aspirations were combined with ideological control and the subordination of education to political goals. This work contributes to legal history by offering a comprehensive analysis of the 1958 reform as a legal instrument through which the Soviet state pursued its political and ideological objectives in the field of education.

Keywords: education reform, labour polytechnic school, de-Stalinisation, child rearing, vocational training, polytechnic education.

Правові засади реформування народної освіти в Українській РСР (1953–1960 рр.)

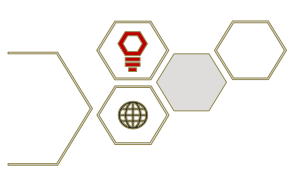
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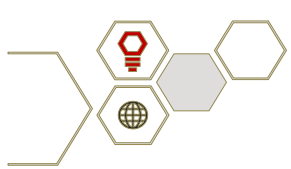
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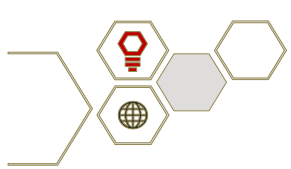
Анотація. Після значних політичних змін 1953–1954 рр. у всьому СРСР розпочалася поступова трансформація системи освіти, але особливо вираженою вона була в Українській РСР. Після смерті Й. Сталіна політика десталінізації, ініційована М. Хрущовим, заклала основу для масштабних реформ, однією з ключових сфер яких була освіта. У більшості соціально-наукових досліджень цю реформу вивчали переважно з педагогічної чи соціально-економічної точки зору, тоді як її політичні та правові аспекти отримали порівняно мало уваги. У цій статті аналізуються правові, ідеологічні та інституційні засади реформи системи народної освіти в Українській РСР в період десталінізації, щоб з'ясувати, як ці зміни вплинули на структуру, зміст та функції шкіл. **Методологічну основу** статті становлять історико-правовий, порівняльно-правовий та структурно-функціональний методи, що дали змогу простежити взаємозв'язок між політичними рішеннями, соціально-економічними потребами та змінами в освітній політиці Української РСР у період десталінізації. Відбір джерел здійснювався за принципом репрезентативності та достовірності, із залученням нормативно-правових актів, партійних документів, а також публікацій офіційних звітів Міністерства освіти УРСР. Статистичні дані аналізувалися з використанням історико-динамічного методу, що дозволило виявити тенденції у рівні охоплення освітою, показниках успішності учнів та розбудові мережі навчальних закладів у 1950-х – на початку 1960-х рр. Поєднання кількісного аналізу з якісною інтерпретацією джерел дало змогу розкрити не лише формальні показники реформ, а й їхній реальний соціальний ефект. **Результати** показують, що реформа 1958 р., закріплена в Законі СРСР та однойменному Законі УРСР «Про зміцнення зв'язку школи з життям і про подальший розвиток системи народної освіти», мала подвійний характер. Дослідження робить висновок, що реформа 1958 р. була проявом радянської політики модернізації, спрямованої на формування « нової людини » — дисциплінованого робітника, відданого партії та державі. Таким чином, реформа продемонструвала двоїстість радянського освітнього проекту, в якому



прагнення до модернізації поєднувалися з ідеологічним контролем та підпорядкуванням освіти політичним цілям. Ця робота робить внесок у юридичну історію, пропонуючи всебічний аналіз реформи 1958 р. як правового інструменту, за допомогою якого радянська держава переслідувала свої політичні та ідеологічні цілі у сфері освіти.

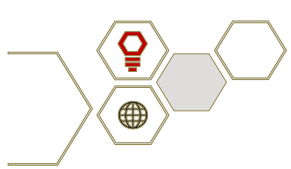
Ключові слова: реформа освіти, трудова політехнічна школа, десталінізація, виховання дітей, виробниче навчання, політехнічна освіта.

Problem statement. The 1958 educational reform in the Ukrainian SSR reflected the political, social and ideological changes brought about by de-Stalinisation. The adoption of the Law ‘On Strengthening the Connection Between School and Life and on the Further Development of the Public Education System’ was an attempt to combine the modernisation aspirations of the Soviet state with the need to train skilled labour and, at the same time, to ensure the ideological education of the ‘new man’. In much social scientific literature, this reform is viewed through a pedagogical or socio-economic prism, while its political and legal dimensions remain insufficiently researched. There has been insufficient analysis of the legal mechanisms by which the Soviet authorities ensured the implementation of the principles underpinning ‘connecting school with life,’ or of the ideological foundations that determined the direction of reforms in education. Given the paucity of research on how the soviet state used law as a tool of social engineering in education, there is a need to understand how the law was used to shape labour discipline, political loyalty and collectivist values through the education system. Studying this issue allows for a deeper understanding of the interactions between politics, ideology and law in the educational processes of Soviet Ukraine, as well as determining the place of the 1958 reform in the evolution of Soviet legal policy in the field of education.



Analysis of recent research. The issue of educational reform in the Soviet Ukraine during de-Stalinisation has repeatedly been the subject of research. Many scholars have addressed this issue, including L. Berezivska, D. Caroli, I. Kanevska, O. Lyubar, O. Marchuk, L. Pyrozhenko, L. Samchuk, O. Sukhomlinska, I. Ulyukaeva, and others. O. Marchuk analysed the 1958 reform in the context of the all-Union educational policy, emphasising its ideological nature and the Russification of the Ukrainian education system. L. Berezivska researched the history of educational reforms and counter-reforms in the 20th century, considering the 1958 reform as an attempt to combine modernisation with political regulation of the educational process. I. Ulyukaeva focused on the transformation of the content of general secondary education and the changing goals of Soviet schools during de-Stalinisation. O. Sukhomlinska analysed the pedagogical thought of the time, paying attention to humanistic approaches and V. Sukhomlinsky's contribution to rethinking the role of the school. O. Lyubar studied the general trends in the development of schooling in Ukraine in the 1950s and 1960s, in particular the institutional consequences of the introduction of eight-year education. L. Pyrozhenko researched changes in the content of school education, focusing on polytechnic education and its impact on pedagogical practice. L. Samchuk and I. Kanevska viewed the educational policy of the Soviet state as an element in the formation of a new social paradigm of education. D. Caroli analysed the development of the Soviet and Ukrainian education systems in the context of Sovietisation, language discrimination and internationalisation. Overall, these studies have created a multidimensional picture of the 1958 reform as a complex socio-political and political-legal process that combined the desire for modernisation with the state's ideological control over education.

Identification of Unresolved Aspects of the General Problem. Despite a significant number of works devoted to the reform of education in Soviet Ukraine during de-Stalinisation, a number of aspects remain insufficiently covered. First, the political and legal dimensions of the 1958 educational reform are only considered

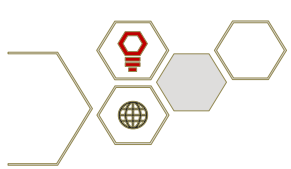


briefly or in the context of the entire Soviet Union in most studies. There has been insufficient analysis of how the legislation of the Ukrainian SSR specified Soviet legislation, how it was implemented in practice, and to what extent it corresponded to the declared goals of modernising education. Moreover, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the mechanisms of legal regulation of the ‘connection between school and life,’ in particular the organisation of vocational training, the protection of minors at work, the legal status of evening and correspondence school students, and the role of local authorities in the implementation of educational policy. A further gap concerns the influence of ideological factors on the content of legal acts on education. We do not fully understand how the educational needs of an industrialised society and the political priorities of a party-state were balanced. Lastly, the question remains open as to how much these reforms contributed to the formation of legal guarantees of equal access to education and social and legal protection for children. Thus, a comprehensive analysis of the 1958 reform as a legal instrument for implementing the political and ideological goals of the Soviet state in education would appear to be a pressing task.

Formulation of this Article’s Objectives (Statement of the Problem). This article conducts a comprehensive political and legal analysis of the 1958 reform in the Ukrainian SSR during de-Stalinisation, with an emphasis on the legal mechanisms, ideological foundations and socio-political consequences of its implementation. The study addresses a gap in research on the legal aspects of this reform, which has so far been largely overlooked.

The main objectives of the article are:

1. To identify the political preconditions for reforming the education system in the Ukrainian SSR in the context of the all-Union policy of de-Stalinisation.
2. To determine the ideological orientation of the USSR law entitled ‘On Strengthening the Connection Between School and Life and on the Further



Development of the Public Education System,’ and the Ukrainian SSR law of the same name.

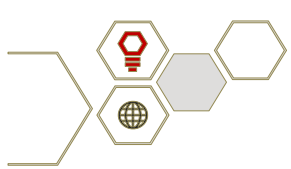
3. To form an understanding of the system and content of subordinate acts that ensured the implementation of the reform in the Ukrainian SSR.

4. To assess the social, cultural and legal consequences of the reform, in particular its impact on the labour rights of minors, access to education and compliance with the principle of equal educational opportunities.

5. To determine the relationship between the ideological principles of the Soviet party state and the actual educational practices that developed in the process of implementing legislative decisions.

Achieving these goals will not only clarify the nature and content of the 1958 reform, but also reveal its dual character — as an attempt to modernise the Soviet school system and, at the same time, establish the party state's control over the educational sphere. The results obtained will contribute to a deeper understanding of the interactions between politics, ideology and law in the field of education in Soviet Ukraine. Understanding these interactions is important both for the historical and legal sciences, and for contemporary research into the evolution of state educational policy.

Main body. Stalin's death and changes in the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet state marked the beginning of a partial transformation of the Soviet state and political system towards moderate liberalisation. Part of this process were gradual changes in the system and content of education in both the USSR and Ukraine. Thus, in the first years after Stalin's death, changes began to be made to the content of educational literature for both higher and secondary schools. In particular, references to Stalin's statements were reduced, and information about Stalin's associates, such as Beria, was physically removed from textbooks and other literature, especially history textbooks. The ideologeme of

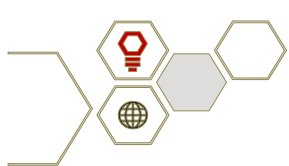


‘collegial leadership,’ which supposedly corresponded to Lenin's legacy, emerged and was actively promoted.

At that time, educational reform was an objective public interest in the Ukrainian SSR, as confirmed, among other sources, by statistics on the educational attainment of children and young people. Thus, in 1955, a decline in student performance was noted in the Kharkiv region: in the 1951/1952 academic year, performance had been 93.2%, but in the 1953/1954 academic year, it fell to 92.1%.

Shortcomings had been noted in the implementation of polytechnic and vocational training: the number of students was determined to be unsatisfactory. Thus, instead of 35,000 seventh-grade graduates, 28,100 were actually admitted to high school, including 11,700 from rural schools instead of 16,000. [5] To ensure that all children and adolescents received a general education, the Instruction on the Registration of School-Age Children and Adolescents in the Ukrainian SSR was approved. [10] According to this instruction, all children aged 7 to 15 had to be registered in the public education system. In order to plan the number of pupils to be admitted to the first grade the following year, children aged 6 were also registered.

An important turning point occurred in at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Khrushchev criticised the existing education system, complaining that school graduates were unprepared for practical work. [3, p. 89] He further developed this idea at the 13th Congress of the Komsomol in April 1958. [2] Thus, the motivation behind Khrushchev's ideas was to bring the education system closer to the ‘needs of life,’ which was part of a broader campaign to ‘revitalise’ the Soviet system. This bringing closer of education to the ‘needs of life’ was to be achieved by combining education with productive work. In other words, schools were to not only provide theoretical knowledge, but also prepare students to participate in socialist production. The completion of industrialisation created a need for a workforce with a certain minimum level of technical skill. Because of this, schools had to take on the role of providing basic vocational training. All these ideas were reflected in the USSR law ‘On Strengthening the Connection Between School and



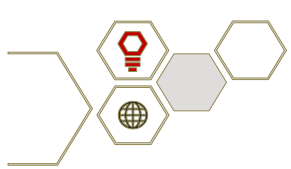
Life and on the Further Development of the System of Public Education in the USSR,’ (hereafter referred to as ‘the 1958 reform’) which was adopted on 24 December 1958.

Following this all-union law, the Ukrainian SSR’s law of the same title [17] was adopted. The ideological basis of this law was identical to that of the all-union law. The law of the Ukrainian SSR was to become the legal basis for the re-organisation and functioning of the general secondary education system.

The resulting changes were widespread. Compulsory seven-year education was replaced by compulsory eight-year education for children aged 7 to 16. The reformed school remained focused on preparing students for work as an incomplete secondary compulsory polytechnic school. This primarily involved instilling in students a love of work and a willingness to participate in the process of building communism. The law also provided for the widespread involvement of students in forms of socially useful work appropriate to their age. This transition was to begin in the 1959/1960 academic year and be completed within three years. In small settlements, primary schools with years 1-4 were retained, after which children were transferred to the year 5 of the nearest schools. Parents or guardians became responsible for ensuring that children received an education, in particular, they were obliged to send their children to school.

Moreover, the law stipulated the organisation of boarding schools with hot meals or regular transport to and from school for pupils living more than 3 km from the school; the expansion of the network of schools and extended day groups; and the establishment of compulsory education funds in schools.

Secondary education was now divided into three streams. The first of these was general education in evening schools for working-class and rural youth, as had been the case before the reforms. These schools were attended by students who had completed eight years of schooling and worked in one of the sectors of the national economy in order to obtain secondary education and improve their professional qualifications. The term of study at these schools was three years. The second was pathway was served by secondary general education polytechnics with vocational



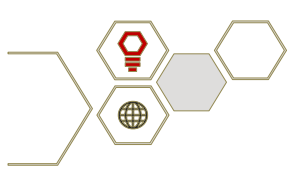
training. Such training also lasted three years. The result of the training was the acquisition of secondary education and professional training for work in one of the sectors of the national economy. Thirdly, students could attend technical colleges and other secondary specialised educational institutions, in which persons who had completed eight years of schooling were to receive general and specialised secondary education.

Education was also provided in certain specialist secondary schools. These schools taught vocational training in other languages, and some schools selected children talented in music, choreography or fine arts. There were also boarding schools, and special schools for children and adolescents with physical and mental disabilities. These boarding schools were also organised as eight-year schools combined with secondary general polytechnic schools with vocational training.

The law also provided for the transformation of the upper grades of schools (for 16- to 18-year-olds) into various types of urban and rural secondary general education colleges. Also, secondary polytechnic colleges with vocational training were established both together with eight-year schools and separately as part of grades 9-11. This reform also began in the 1959/1960 academic year.

Special attention was paid to industrial training. Workplaces were allocated for students to undergo training at industrial enterprises, construction sites, and other places of work with qualified employees acting as mentors. Urban and rural vocational schools were established to provide vocational training for young people who went into production after completing eight years of schooling. These institutions specialised in various industries and carried out educational and training work with young people participating regularly and actively in labour and in close cooperation with enterprises, construction sites, state farms and collective farms. The state education of preschool children was not overlooked either. A network of preschool institutions was expanded to create conditions for working mothers.

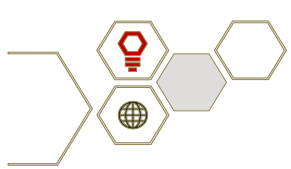
To encourage the combination of work and study, preferential conditions were provided for students who successfully studied without interruption from work in



schools for working and rural youth – evening (shift, seasonal) and correspondence secondary general education schools. [9] Thus, a reduced working day or reduced working week was provided for students in grades 9-11, and the time when an employee was released from work for the sake of study was paid in part, namely at the rate of 50% of the average salary for that time, but not less than the minimum wage. Such students were also granted paid leave of up to 20 working days to take final exams, and exemption from work during the school year for part of the working day (up to 50% of their salary). Companies were required to create conditions for combining work and study (dormitories, meals, study rooms, access to libraries, etc.) and were prohibited from sending such students on business trips or requiring them to work overtime during the study period. By 1 September 1960, personnel, regulations and conditions had to be prepared for the large-scale implementation of this form of educational organisation.

Alongside the focus on vocational and industrial training, students were also encouraged to learn self-sufficiency. In accordance with 1958 USSR reform, a resolution was adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR [14] that for the expansion of self-service by students in educational institutions. This included cleaning classrooms, growing trees, working in cafeterias and dining halls, and participating in the repair of furniture and school buildings, and other maintenance tasks.

Since labour was the basis of the policy of ‘connecting school with life,’ it attracted a lot of attention from the authorities. In 1960, the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR adopted a resolution ‘On the state of and measures to improve occupational safety for pupils in general education schools,’ [7] which identified numerous violations of safety and hygiene conditions faced by students in years 9–11 while working in school workshops and in production, and indicated which authorities should take what measures to improve the situation (providing students with protective equipment, special clothing, conducting training sessions). It should be noted that this resolution was a signal of a systemic problem, the scale of which could

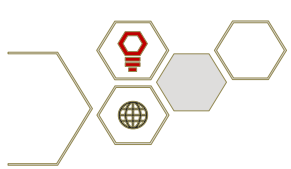


not be ignored. The document indirectly acknowledges the failure of previous regulatory mechanisms, as violations were found in dozens of areas, including cases of student labour in premises unsuitable for work, with unprotected electrical appliances and faulty equipment. A broader analysis of this resolution in context shows that the legitimacy of using child labour in such conditions, even as part of the educational process, was not questioned. Thus, the resolution attests to the systemic inability of the Soviet state to place child safety above economic expediency and ideological slogans.

A number of regulations [11] were issued to ensure the functioning of the ‘connection between school and life.’ Thus, the act ‘Regulation on Eight-Year Education’ stipulated that school covered years 1-8 and functioned as a compulsory form of education for children aged 7-15. To ensure that parents could work, schools with extended hours were established, as well as extended stay groups with meals and extracurricular activities. The main theme of the Regulation was the ‘combination of education with productive work,’ namely, compulsory participation in work on educational and research sites, in workshops, hospitals, state farms, and nurseries. In other words, vocational training was implemented from the first years of studying, which indicated an attempt to integrate children into the economy even before they reached adulthood.

The second act of the aforementioned resolution approved the Regulations on Secondary General Education Polytechnic Schools with Vocational Training. Vocational training, which was introduced as early as year 9, took centre stage. Students not only received theoretical training, but also worked in workshops, at basic enterprises, and even took qualification exams. In this way, schoolchildren were integrated into the labour process from an early age. In fact, learning ‘for work’ took precedence over learning ‘for life.’

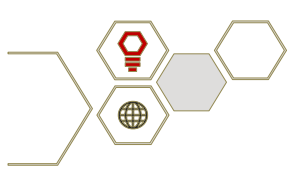
The third act approved the Regulations on Evening Secondary General Education Schools for Working-Class and Rural Youth and Part-Time General Education Schools. Analysis of this document shows that schools here were not



autonomous institutions of knowledge, but rather an ‘organic continuation’ of the labour process. Students studied after their shift or without interruption from production, and the educational process was organised according to the logic of factory discipline. In other words, the very basis of the school was to serve as a ‘tool’ for improving the qualifications of the labour reserve, rather than for developing critical thinking.

Regulations on ‘Schools with Longer Days’ [8] was the last act adopted in that period. This document not only set out the organisational basis for longer school days for kids aged 7 and up, but also clearly laid out the goals for moral, political, aesthetic, and work education in line with communist ideology. It was envisaged that children would be involved in work from an early age (starting from 8-years’ old they attended labour clubs and from 9-years’ old they participated in training workshops).

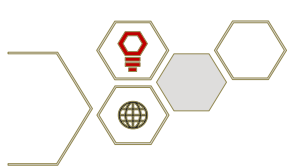
To ensure parents’ productivity, the communist party needed to provide extra care for younger children. In the context of growing industrialisation, the mass entry of women into the labour market and urbanisation, this decision had significant social importance. Thus, extended day groups were organised [15] and nurseries were established. [13] The resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR ‘On the organisation of extended day schools’ regulated the creation of extended day schools for pupils in years 1–8, especially in cities, workers' settlements and rural areas. In such schools, teachers supervised children after their main classes, children received meals and rest, and for children in years 1–2 and weakened children, even a daytime nap was provided. As for nurseries, according to the regulations, children from 2 months to 7 years of age were admitted to these institutions. The regulations established technical standards (e.g., number of rooms, groups, number of children in each group), the length of stay for children (9, 10, 12 and 24 hours a day), types of nurseries (e.g., 24-hour boarding schools, for children with physical disabilities, sanatorium-type), the procedures for enrolling and dismissing children, staffing, and other administrative standards.



Thus, analysis of these provisions leads to the conclusion that they were all designed to shape a model of labour discipline for students as future workers. They were adopted during a period of intensification of Soviet ideology and the formation of a 'new man' through the education system. These provisions are thoroughly imbued with communist ideology, in which the school was seen not simply as an institution of knowledge, but as an instrument of 'communist education,' where education was closely linked to labour activity, corresponding to the Soviet paradigm of 'man as a cog in the system' rather than a self-actualised personality.

In 1960, there were 4,770 permanent kindergartens in Ukraine, attended by 330,670 children. In total, more than 1,000,200 children were educated in permanent and seasonal preschool institutions, 852,000 of them in collective farms. Between 1959 and 1962, 2,049 new kindergartens were opened, providing 322,000 places. In 1963, 1,168 kindergartens were put into operation. [16, p. 331]

Money was redirected with new foci. The provisions of The 1958 Law in the Ukrainian SSR regarding the creation of funds for compulsory education were implemented in a corresponding resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR. [12] Funds for compulsory education were made available for basic resources, such as clothing, footwear, textbooks, school supplies and so on. Moreover, funds were directed to welfare, such as for food or one-time financial assistance to orphaned students, children of disabled veterans of the Great Patriotic War, or other low-income students who had not been raised in state orphanages or boarding schools. There was also money for improving the health of students through sanatoriums, rest homes, and pioneer camps and for the organisation of cultural trips, excursions, hikes and other cultural events. The system sought to inspire by awarding bonuses to students who had distinguished themselves in the work of school collectives by performing socially useful work. Lastly, money was available for students who studied at music schools or attended music clubs in general education schools.

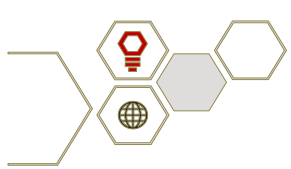


Conclusions. Khrushchev's wish that education should be 'closer to life', was made manifest by promotion of polytechnic education in the 1958 reform. Since the early 1950s, there had been a growing imbalance between the number of secondary school graduates seeking higher education and the need for skilled labour at various levels. The educational reforms of 1958 aimed to combine general and polytechnic education with vocational training in such a way as to direct most young people over the age of 15 directly into 'production.'

However, scholars see some ambiguity regarding the effectiveness of these reforms. Thus, Marchuk points to its all-Union character and the Russification of the Union republics, including the Ukrainian SSR. [4, p. 117-119] Berezivska sees manifold positives in this reform: among others, she lauds the partial democratisation of school life and education management, the intensification of pedagogical research to ensure the scientific basis of the reform, the emergence of teacher-training colleges (*avtorska shkola*¹) that contributed to pedagogical creativity, the activation of students' learning activities in the classroom, and thus the creation of Sukhomlynsky's humanistic concept of education. However, Berezivska also notes that school reforms were incomplete. Whilst there was no lack of professional resources: the pedagogical, legal, and material and technical support for the implementation of the reform were all solid, socio-political reasons curtailed the reform dramatically—the Brezhnev Era of Stagnation saw cessation of reform in all areas of public life. [1, p. 11] Indeed, one of the saddest aspects of this reform was the reduction of general secondary education from 11 to 10 years.

Despite these ambiguities, the educational reform of the second half of the 1950s in the Ukrainian SSR clearly became one of the key instruments for implementing the policy of de-Stalinisation and modernisation of Soviet society. Its content and directions were directly related to the political processes that took place after the death of Stalin and to Khrushchev's desire to give the Soviet system a 'new

¹ The term '*avtorska shkola*' refers to an educational institution that operates according to an original pedagogical system created by a specific teacher or group of teachers; such schools became centres of pedagogical innovation and creative exploration in the context of the partial democratisation of education in the late 1950s and 1960s.

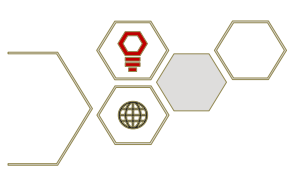


lease of life.’ The USSR law and the Ukrainian SSR law of the same name ‘On strengthening the connection between school and life and on the further development of the public education system’ of 1958 enshrined the idea of combining education with productive labour, which embodied the ideological approach to the formation of the ‘working person’ as the basis of socialist society.

The reform contributed to expanding access to education – the introduction of compulsory eight-year schooling, the development of boarding schools, extended day groups, and preschool institutions. At the same time, it aimed not only to raise the educational level of the population, but also to meet the economic needs of the state for a skilled workforce. The institutional structure of the new system (eight-year schooling, polytechnic vocational schools, evening and correspondence schools for working youth, and vocational technical schools) shaped students as future production workers rather than as autonomous individuals with critical thinking skills.

Despite the positive trends, namely the attempts to democratise internal school management, the development of pedagogical research, and Sukhomlynsky-style humanistic initiatives, the reform had a number of contradictions. Its implementation was accompanied by Russification increased ideological control over the content of education, a reduction in the length of schooling, and neglect of child labour safety issues. As a result, instead of creating a child-centred education system, a model focused on industrial discipline and economic expediency was established. Thus, the 1958 reform revealed the duality of Soviet education policy: a combination of modernisation aspirations with a rigid ideological framework. It showed that the Soviet state viewed schools not as autonomous institutions of knowledge, but as mechanisms for shaping the ‘new man’ — a citizen prepared for work and loyal to the system, who was to serve not only society, but above all, state ideology.

An analysis of the 1958 educational reform in the Ukrainian SSR allows us not only to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of the Soviet education system, but also to draw certain conclusions relevant to Ukraine's current educational policy. Firstly, the experience of combining education with productive labour has

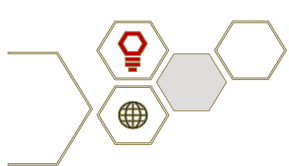


shown that excessive utilitarianism in education leads to a narrowing of its humanistic content; therefore, it is important today to maintain a balance between practical training and the development of critical thinking, creativity and civic competencies in students. Secondly, an analysis of the Soviet system of centralised education management shows the danger of excessive politicisation of the educational process, which highlights the need to ensure real autonomy for educational institutions and to depoliticise the content of education. Thirdly, despite its ideological limitations, the 1958 reform laid the foundation for the principle of universal compulsory secondary education — a value that remains relevant today.

Therefore, understanding the legacy of this reform has not only historical and legal significance, but also practical significance: it helps to avoid repeating the systemic mistakes of the past and to develop the modern Ukrainian school as a space of freedom, equal opportunities and social responsibility.

Despite the depth of the analysis, this study has certain limitations due to both the source base and the scope of the work. First, the analysis is based mainly on official regulatory acts, party documents and statistical reports that reflect the position of the state, but do not always allow for a complete picture of the practical implementation of reforms at the local level. Secondly, the study focuses on the period of de-Stalinisation (1953–1963), while the further evolution of Soviet education policy in the 1970s and 1980s requires a separate comprehensive study to understand the continuity or transformation of legal approaches. I have previously addressed these issues in part in the context of the establishment of the legal foundations for protecting children's right to education in the 1920s [6], but the period of later Soviet development requires a broader legal analysis in view of the changes in the political and ideological context.

Further research should be linked to a comparative legal analysis of educational reforms in other Soviet republics, which will allow us to assess the uniqueness or commonality of the Ukrainian experience within the USSR. It is also promising to study the influence of the Soviet educational model on contemporary Ukrainian

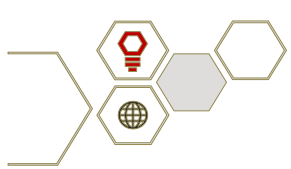


legislation on education, in particular with regard to the ideas of universal compulsory education, polytechnic training, and interaction between schools and industry. Such research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the legal evolution of the education system and help to develop a further and comprehensive political and legal assessment of the Soviet legacy in the modern context.

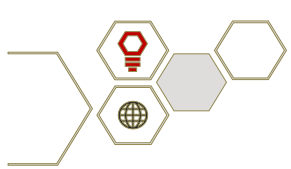
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