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summary of the doctoral dissertation

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
AND EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
(on the example of selected communes of the Kielce powiat)**

(field - social sciences, discipline - public policy sciences)

Promoter:
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In this doctoral dissertation, the problem of the tasks and role of public administration was addressed in the education of students with special educational needs, which mainly covers the period from 1989 to September 2022. The changes that are taking place in the Polish education system in the field of educating people with disabilities have meant that the issue of special needs education goes beyond the area of interest today only special education. Educating people with disabilities has become one of the most important elements of Polish educational policy and has been linked to generally accessible education. It becomes extremely important to find answers to today's fundamental questions about the nature of equality and democracy in the school macro-system, about opportunities and barriers to access to education for people with disabilities, for the place of people with intellectual disabilities in this system and their psychosocial functioning in modern educational structures. The problem of transition from the segregation model to the model of inclusive education in Polish primary education, in the light of the standards formulated in numerous international documents concerning human rights, is still up-to-date. The concepts of educational inequalities and social segregation in education are also connected with the problem of social exclusion of students and the risk of this exclusion, which is often related, to the economic and social status of the student's family of origin.

In Poland, there are currently three models of education for children with disabilities: segregation, integration and inclusion. The main role in financing educational tasks, including those related to special needs education, rests today with local governments, which use funds from various sources for this purpose. The most important of them is the education part of the general subsidy.

The specific research objectives of the doctoral dissertation are attempts to determine:

1. The role of public administration in the development of Polish education.
2. The impact of the public administration reform on the shape of Polish education (administration reform and education reform).
3. The role of state authorities and local government units in shaping educational policy, with particular emphasis on special needs education.
4. Objectives and tasks of commune self-governments as bodies running schools and primary education institutions.
5. Needs and characteristics of students with special educational needs.
6. The degree of usefulness of legal regulations existing at the state and local government level necessary to ensure universal access to mainstream schools for all Polish children.

The main thesis of this doctoral dissertation can be summarized in the statement that the Polish education system in its current structural, functional and personal shape, as well as the

sectoral public policy conducted in this area, do not guarantee the proper implementation of inclusive teaching and the upbringing of students with special educational needs and requires significant changes in legal regulations. and modernization changes in the implementation of educational policy.

In addition, partial auxiliary hypotheses were formulated for the conducted research, i.e.:

1. Today, the Polish education system does not meet the conditions that allow for the introduction of inclusive education without harming students, and interpersonal relations between healthy students and students with disabilities are not completely devoid of segregation.
2. The principles of financing education in force in Poland do not contribute to the improvement of teaching and upbringing conditions for students with special educational needs.
3. Integrative teaching may constitute a transitional phase between special education and inclusive education and should receive full support from the state, government and local government administration.

At the same time, the analysis performed aims at answering detailed research questions, which enables confirmation or falsification of partial hypotheses. The research questions correlated with the formulated hypotheses are as follows:

1. How has the attitude towards people with disabilities changed over the years and how can it be defined nowadays?
2. Do public administration bodies fully meet the needs of students with special educational needs and their education and upbringing is carried out to the full extent while adapting Polish education and schooling to international standards?
3. Is communal education in the Kielce powiat prepared for education?
and upbringing of children with special educational needs (architectural barriers in schools, accessibility for students with disabilities, etc.)?
4. What is the financing of special needs education in the communes of the Kielce powiat and what is the mechanism for granting the educational part of the general subsidy and what does its amount depend on?
5. Are the funds allocated to municipal education under the educational subsidy fully meet the needs of school authorities in this respect?
6. Are municipal schools in the Kielce powiat ready to introduce inclusive teaching?

The empirical research conducted as part of the doctoral dissertation is aimed at analyzing the process of teaching and educating students with special educational needs, which currently operates in Poland at the primary school level. The main categories of the dissertation are educational policy as one of the sectoral public policies and special needs education after the

systemic reforms initiated at the end of the last century (reform of education and public administration). The research focuses on the new governing bodies that local government units became for schools in the 1990. The study covered the principles and policy of financing education, with particular emphasis on special needs education and the correlation of activities in this area between local government administration and state administration, and legal regulations were also analyzed. Selected communes of the Kielce powiat (Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship) were included in the research and include public (mass, mainstream) and integrated primary schools operating in them. The work is an attempt at a comprehensive description and analysis of the special needs education process and is an attempt to answer the fundamental question about the state of readiness of the Polish education reformed since 1999 to admit children and youth with special educational needs to mainstream schools as part of the implementation of the idea of inclusive teaching. The area of direct interest due to the conducted research are selected communes of the Kielce powiat. The problem addressed in the work includes the introduction of two reforms in Poland – public administration and the education system, with subsequent effects on the functioning of special needs education after 1999 and mainly after 2017. The problems discussed in the work include the introduction of two reforms in Poland – public administration and the education system, with subsequent effects on the functioning of special needs education after 1999 and mainly after 2017, and the perception of people with disabilities against the background of the history and defining, among others, such terms as: special educational needs, inclusive teaching and inclusive.

The idea of inclusion understood as the process of inclusion of individuals, groups and social categories in the functioning of the wider society, gives the opportunity to counteract marginalization or social exclusion (exclusion). That is why its function and meaning are so important in today's world, there is no turning back and there should be no turning back from it. Educational inclusion meets children and youth as individual, diverse individuals, accepts their differences. Inclusive education is considered an advanced form of integration, it is the next, higher stage on the way to equalizing educational opportunities for students with special educational needs, it normalizes their educational and social situation. The purpose of inclusion is to limit segregation and integration education, but due to the large diversity of the group of students covered by education and the multidimensionality of the educational reality, this is a difficult task. A task that requires decisive action by many social groups as well as a declared and consistent implementation of public policy in this area. It is worth noting that students with special educational needs attend almost all schools. With a particular indication of schools operating in areas where there is a high density of poor, unemployed and pathological families,

which are very often educationally inefficient. Still, the readiness of Polish schools to implement inclusive teaching remains a problem.

The basic legal acts concerning the education system and the education of children and youth were changed along with the introduction of political and systemic changes in 1989-1990, including the establishment of the commune self-government. In the following years, local governments were entrusted with the task of conducting education at the primary and then secondary level. Attempts were also made to combine structural changes with organizational and program changes. However, the lack of a coherent government program introducing successive stages of education reform must be a source of concern. The amendments being prepared are partial and in many cases not only do they not eliminate solutions that did not work during the implementation of the reform and require correction or other form of support from the state, but they even weaken the solutions that constitute the basic pillars of the reform of the education system of 1999 and 2017. It cannot be that each successive reform destroys the previous one, as in the case of including lower secondary schools in the structure of education (1999 introduction of lower secondary schools, 2017 liquidation of lower secondary schools).

The creators of public policy in the field of education anticipated that the changes they proposed would be comprehensive and long-term. Any changes here require exceptional deep thought and prudence, as the effects of the introduced changes need to wait several or several years. Therefore, the systemic solutions adopted were to significantly transform the current education process, which was supposed to lead to a change in life attitudes and education of all Poles - disabled and able-bodied. One of the main tasks of the state policy is to provide its citizens with universal and equal access to education by, among others, guaranteeing them comprehensive development and a decent life. This task rests to a large extent with the commune self-government, which is responsible for the operation of most educational institutions and is determined by the system of financing local government education, under which communes receive funds in the form of an educational subsidy from the state budget. According to, among others, local government officials and representatives of trade unions, the funds transferred under the education part of the general subsidy, intended for, among others, to cover the current operating costs of educational institutions, as well as the implementation of investments necessary to adapt education to the changing socio-economic conditions. We should strive to simplify the algorithm for the distribution of the educational subsidy, primarily by reducing the number of parameters and finally determining the weights, the number of which is constantly growing, and on which the amount of the subsidy depends to a large extent. However, limiting only to changing the algorithms (which have been modified since the reactivation of the activities

of the communes) and the mechanism of financing educational tasks may not bring the expected changes. Above all, it is necessary to change the approach to Polish education, which must become a national priority. Polish education has never been the main area of interest of the authorities (it is irrelevant whether it was during the communist period or after 1989). Only a decisive and significant increase in the financial resources allocated to the Polish education system is able to stimulate such activities that will allow for a significant increase in the level of education and upbringing.

In the school year 2021/2022, there were 122 public primary schools in the communes of the Kielce poviát. Chart 4 shows the number of primary schools in the Kielce poviát compared to other poviáts of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship as of June 30, 2018. The number of primary schools in the Kielce poviát slightly increased compared to the current school year. There are 14,232 students in rural areas and 2,836 students in cities, which gives a total of 17,068 students in communal primary schools in the Kielce poviát. In public primary schools in the municipalities of the Kielce poviát, in 2021, there were 548 disabled students in special, integration and generally accessible classes, and 23 disabled students were assigned individual teaching. In total, 1,131 students attended primary schools run by commune self-government units in the Kielce poviát. The vast majority of children and youth come from small, rural backgrounds, educationally backward. School is the only place where they can come into contact with information technology. Communes in the Kielce poviát are agricultural in nature. About 30,000 people work here. individual farms, where more than 60% of total number of people employed in the Kielce poviát. Industry is developed only in the commune of Sitkówka-Nowiny. The development of eight communes neighboring Kielce, which include Chęciny, Daleszyce, Górno, Masłów, Miedziana Góra, Morawica, Piekoszów and Sitkówka-Nowiny, is closely related to the potential and condition of the capital of the voivodeship. The industry, which is generally of minor importance, focuses on mineral resources used for the production of construction and road materials.

The analysis of education records provided by city and commune offices and supplementing the data in the "educational data sheet" sent to communes (prepared by the author) shows that the amount of educational subsidy transferred to communes from the state budget is very diverse. The shortage of funds allocated for the implementation of educational tasks in the surveyed schools results mainly from too low educational subsidy. A possibly higher amount of the subsidy, which may also not close the education budget, is determined by co-financing the education of disabled children (in the amount determined each year in the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Science on the method of dividing the educational part of the general

subsidy for local government units). The surveys showed, among other things, that architectural barriers have not yet been eliminated, and the construction of a wheelchair ramp is still a success in this field. Schools still fall short of the minimum requirements in three areas of accessibility – architectural, digital and ICT. The infrastructure still requires modernization and investment. In the Kielce powiat, there are still schools without gyms, and physical education lessons are held in the corridors. Primary schools in the Kielce powiat, for which communes are the governing body, are in a very diverse organizational, financial, staffing situation. Other problems, mainly of a financial nature, require top-down political and legislative decisions, although at the commune level rational budget management and the use of help from non-governmental organizations and EU funds give great opportunities to obtain additional funds. Surveys with questions about contacts and relationships between able-bodied and disabled students showed that they are still not the best and still have their source in the negative attitude towards disabled people.