



# Czech Republic

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## Principles and general objectives of education

The education system has recently undergone a profound process of transformation. One goal of this transformation has been to promote a democratic and humanized school system that provides equal opportunities for all members of society to attain an appropriate level of education. Another goal has been to enable every citizen to develop his/her individual talents.

## Current educational priorities and concerns

Major changes have taken place in the development of the education and training system after the social, political, and economic changes that have occurred in the country since 1989. The first official result of the Government proclamation of July 1992 was the document *Quality and accountability*, published in autumn 1994. This document defined the educational policy of the Ministry of Education on the basis of the reforms undertaken from 1990 to 1993. These reforms strengthened schools administrative, economic and pedagogical autonomy, thus decentralizing and diversifying the education system.

Since 1994, the emphasis has been on the stabilization of the education system and support for qualitative growth of the educational environment. The measures with the greatest influence on the development of the school system were: the abolition of the state monopoly on the provision of education, and, therefore, the opportunity for establishment of non-state (private and church) schools; the reform of the school financing system, which matches the state contribution with the number of pupils and students; the constitution of schools as legal entities and their progressive transformation from budgetary to contributory organizations, which strengthened their administrative and economic autonomy; and the strengthening of the pedagogic autonomy of schools. During the 1990s there have been efforts to change the curriculum at all educational levels and in all types of schools. Postsecondary technical schools have been introduced as a possibility for graduates to prepare for vocational professions requiring high-level skills. These study programmes offer an alternative to university or college education. The State IT policy in education was adopted in April 2000.

As the administrative arrangement of the Czech Republic changes, the fourteen new regions have more powers to manage the school system in their territory, and the measures aimed at improving education may help to promote further regional development. There are few national minorities in the country. The Polish minority has its own school system; demand from the Slovak minority is low, and the German minority has proposed to establish bilingual classes. Moreover, a Jewish primary school and a Jewish gymnasium were established in 1999. While the remaining minorities do not have their own school systems, the Ministry of Education



is willing to accommodate them to a certain extent. More importantly, the education of Roma children is undergoing significant changes. Before 1989, Roma children were educated predominantly in less demanding, special-needs schools. After 1989, Roma children started transferring from special needs schools into regular schools with a modified primary school curriculum designed to meet their needs.

The National Programme for the Development Education in the Czech Republic (or White Paper) was approved in February 2001. The document sets out the starting points and basic assumptions in relation to the development of the education system, which take into account social changes, education policy principles and the principles of governance and funding in the circumstances resulting from public administration reform. The document also sets forth the main strategic aims as regards the development of education and forecasts a quantitative development of the system based on anticipated demographic and economic developments.

The National Programme is implemented by means of long-term plans, which are formulated at national and regional levels and set out medium-term development priorities and the means of their implementation and support. A long-term plan constitutes a key platform for communication between the centre and regions as regards strategic aims for the development of “regional education” (all institutions providing initial education except higher education institutions). The national long-term plan sets forth the following functions for the system to perform:

- *Development of personality*, pursuing both the cultivation and self-fulfilment of each individual, and a maximum development of his/her potential;
- *Support for social cohesion*: the education system is a major integrating force, not only in terms of passing on shared values and common traditions, but also in terms of ensuring equal access to education and equal opportunities and redressing disparities of social and cultural background.
- *Promotion of democracy and civic society*: education for openness and co-operation in European and global society;
- *Increased employability*: which requires that vocational as well as general education should be focused on improving flexibility and adaptability, the proportion of general education should be expanded, there should be a broadly-conceived base for vocational education, and key competencies should be promoted.
- *Enhanced competitiveness of the economy and prosperity of society*: which means that flexibility and adaptability should be promoted, as well as the capacity to respond swiftly to changes, and emphasis should be placed on creativity and initiative, independence and individual responsibility.

The Long-term plan for higher education sets out the following priorities: (i) the development of higher education and equal access to higher education; (ii) new approach to the concept and content of higher education; (iii) changes in the structure of the higher education system; and (iv) support for academic staff and students. (MEYS, 2004).

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The legislative framework for education is based on the Constitution of the Czech Republic and the Charter of Basic Rights and Freedoms, which became part of the constitutional order on 16 December 1992. The basic legislative framework of the present school system consists of five basic laws.

The adoption of the **Law No. 564/1990 on State Administration and Self-Government in the Education System**, has meant a significant change in the school management system. The Act instituted the sectoral management of basic and upper secondary schools. Governed by local school authorities, school administration became a matter for specialists, rather than a political matter. It also made the flow of funds from the schools budget to the local level more transparent. The Act conveys the greater portion of administrative authority over schools to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. The Ministry's management responsibilities are thus considerably increased, and the focus of its management activities shifted from determining curricula to managing the functioning of the education system (i.e. to administrative management). The Act transfers a significant portion of the function of establishing schools from the national to local authorities, by establishing school boards as administrative authorities at the district level. Under the Act, school headmasters are the executive authorities of state administration in the school system. This arrangement, along with the constitution of schools as legal entities, has given schools considerable administrative as well as financial autonomy. The Act was substantially amended in June 1995. The Ministry's administrative functions in the regional school systems were reinforced, as were the responsibilities of its regional administrative bodies, the school authorities. The amendment also fulfills the Ministry's commitments made in the Government programme declaration and the paper *Quality and accountability*. It notably addresses questions regarding the state recognition of schools, the allocation of funds to individual schools, public information, participatory school management and the responsibilities of the Czech Inspectorate of schools.

Important changes were introduced to Law No. 564 in 2000 by **Law No. 132/2000** and 2002 by **Law No. 284/2002** in relation to Stage I and II of public administration reform. As part of Stage I, school authorities as district bodies of state administration were abolished and their powers were in part transferred to regional authorities and in part to district authorities. As part of Stage II, the powers of district authorities, which were being abolished, were transferred to "municipalities with extended powers" and to regional authorities.

Act No. 390/1991, on Pre-school and School Facilities, is an amendment to Act No. 76/1991, the full effective text of which has been published as **Act No. 395/1991**. It clarifies the system of education and special education facilities, special-purpose facilities, counselling centres and school canteens. It codifies the option of permitting children with sensory or physical handicaps or speech impediments to attend mainstream kindergartens which had formerly been restricted to children without disabilities. This Act was also amended in June 1995.

The primary and secondary school systems (or regional school systems) are governed by the **Act No. 29/1984, the Schools Act**. The first fundamental change was



Amendment No. 171/1990, which made nine years of basic school education compulsory, provided varied educational programmes in accordance with pupils abilities and interests, created extended-study gymnasia, gave schools the status of legal entities, provided for the establishment of a non-state school system (i.e. church and private schools), transferred the function of establishing secondary vocational schools to central authorities and established a state apprenticeship financing system. The Schools Act has been amended several times, recently by **Law No. 561/2004**.

The **Amendment to the Schools Act** of 22 June 1995, however, is quite far-reaching, as can be seen in the fact that the Act's very name is amended: it is now the Act on the System of Basic, Upper Secondary and Higher Professional Schools. With regard to the structure of the education system, the amendment makes a ninth form at basic school obligatory (with the sole exceptions of pupils leaving to attend extended gymnasia and dance conservatories), divides basic schools into a five-year first stage and a four-year second stage, abolishes all state-financed post-*maturita* study programmes, and sets new terms of gymnasium and secondary technical schools attendance. It also provides for the existence of a new level of education, i.e. higher professional studies, and of a new type of special school, the practical school. In addition, the amendment: (a) establishes conditionalities for state recognition of a school and its educational programme (i.e. incorporation into the network of schools, pre-school facilities and school facilities upon approval of pedagogical documentation by the appropriate sections of the Ministry); (b) provides for the establishment of several types of school as a single legal entity; (c) allows for higher professional education to be provided on a fee-paying basis even at state schools, under certain conditions; and (d) defines the precise age at which school attendance must commence.

The **Act No. 172/1990, the Higher Education Act**, gave the universities back their academic freedom, self-administration and autonomy. At the school and faculty level, self-governing academic senates elected by the academic community (instructors, researchers, students and, where appropriate, expert academic staff members) were established to supplement academic councils. The Council of Higher Education Institutions, which under the Act "represents institutions of higher education, especially in relation to the Ministry", became the universities local administrative authority. By establishing an Accreditation Commission as an advisory body to the government, the Act set the stage for development of quality control in higher education. Although the Act was quite progressive at the time it was passed, it was amended in July 1993, when the **Act No. 216/1993** was adopted. The 1993 Act, under which all instructors without exception are employed under limited contracts (for two to five years) and on a competitive basis, was intended to help improve the quality of academic teaching staffs. The **Act No. 111/1998 on Higher Education Institutions** was approved on 1 July 1998, and amended in 2001 (No. 147/2001), 2005 (No. 562/2004), and 2006 (No. 552/2005). The most recent amendments are clearly in line the three-cycle scheme of the Bologna Process.

The Amendment No. 171/1990 reduced compulsory school attendance from ten to nine years and simultaneously extended the eight-year basic school to nine years. The Amendment to the Schools Act of 22 June 1995 makes year 9 at basic school obligatory, with the sole exception of pupils leaving to attend extended gymnasia and dance conservatories.



## Administration and management of the education system

A comprehensive reform was launched in 2000. New legislation on regions, communities, property and budgetary rules enabled the devolution of state powers to establish upper secondary schools and higher professional schools, the transfer of property of these schools to newly established regions, and the cancellation of school authorities and district school boards which had been established in 1990. Starting in 2001, school funding in regions, decision-making regarding administrative matters, the management of human resources, and other powers are being transferred to regions and communities.

The system of school management and administration in place until 1990 was highly centralized and the role of the party/state bureaucracy was not offset by any autonomous governing mechanisms. The adoption of the Act on State and Local Administration in the School System (1990) and the Higher Education Act (1990) brought fundamental changes to the administration and management of the school system. The first systemic change was the concentration of administrative authority over the greater part of the education system in the hands of the Ministry of Education. The second major change created conditions for increased local administration in the regional school system and assigned to the municipalities and to the school boards autonomous district authority. The third significant step toward decentralization was the constitution of schools as independent legal entities. This greatly increased the responsibilities and redefined the role and position of the school headmasters. Another important step was the new status of the Czech School Inspectorate, which became an independent state administrative authority under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education.

The administration of the school system was further reformed in 1992, when the Ministry of Education's administrative jurisdiction over vocational schools (with some exceptions) was transferred to the Ministry of Economy. This measure led to the creation of a parallel governing structure at the Ministry of Economy and has thus resulted in some jurisdictional conflicts. The June 1995 amendment completed the system of local administrative authorities within the school system by establishing a legal basis for the existence of local administrative authorities at the school level (school councils) to counterbalance the responsibilities of the school headmasters.

Since the reform, the **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS)** no longer holds powers to found upper secondary schools and higher professional schools. Changes have also been made in its financial powers, and new functions have been established for the Ministry to fulfill the task of drafting long-term policy plans for education. As the Ministry is responsible for the system of education as a whole, its powers with regard to the network of schools and educational facilities, and its powers to appoint school principals in regions and heads of education units at districts and regional authorities, have been enhanced.

Thus, the state administration of schools is performed by the MEYS and/or other central authorities (the Ministries of Economy, Health, Interior and Defence), the regional authorities, communities and school headmasters (in state or municipal schools), as well as the Czech Inspectorate of Schools. The MEYS is charged with the formulation of national education policy, strategic development and financing, and





administrative activity in the school system as well as the creation and operation of information as well as other systems that support school activities. It also directs pre-school and school facilities in educational matters. It determines educational content by approving and issuing teaching plans and school curricula. The MEYS is responsible for general administration, which mainly involves the management of the network of schools and school facilities. It appoints and recalls school headmasters, as well as the directors of institutions that it governs. The law delegates the greater portion of jurisdiction over the management and administration of pre-schools and basic schools, and much of the administrative jurisdiction over secondary schools, to the school authorities.

The **National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education** is a coordinating, consultative, expert and research institution concerned with secondary vocational-technical and tertiary professional education. The **Institute for Information on Education** collects, processes and provides information on education. The **National Institute for Further Education** was established in 2004, having been transformed from pedagogical centres. It consists of thirteen regional stations and coordinates and organizes courses of in-service training of teachers and school management. It will also play an important role in implementing framework educational programmes in schools.

As of 2001, district school boards no longer carry out their self-governing roles in education. In the new system, the governing body is a **Region** or a **Municipality**.

During 2001, **Regions** took over the portfolios of the abolished school authorities and part of the Ministry's portfolio. Regions are primarily responsible for establishing and closing down secondary schools, post-secondary technical schools, conservatoires, special schools, training centres and a number of school facilities, and performing changes in this respect. Regions may appoint or dismiss directors of schools and school facilities of which they are founders only upon approval of the Ministry. Regions will also have to provide for financial operations of schools and school facilities from regional budgets, i.e. covering their operational and capital costs and contribute to the activities of civic associations.

The school authorities (established in 1991) were abolished in 2000. **Municipalities** as self-governing bodies have traditionally held statutory powers to establish basic schools and their supporting educational facilities. Municipalities now hold statutory powers to establish kindergartens, basic schools, basic art schools, centres for leisure activities of young people and other school facilities. Municipalities therefore execute the powers of founding bodies, but may only appoint directors of schools and school facilities upon approval by the relevant regional authority. Municipalities are also obliged to establish conditions for implementation of compulsory schooling. They also cover the operational and capital costs for schools and school facilities over which they exercise the powers of the founding body.

**Directors of schools and school facilities** manage the relevant schools and facilities and are responsible for their professional and pedagogical standards. They take administrative decisions in situations stipulated by law, e.g. admission to studies,



decisions concerning educational measures, postponement of compulsory schooling, interruption of studies, etc.

**School Councils**, if they are set up, are composed of student representatives (students' legal guardians), teachers and representatives of the founding body, and they exercise public control. Moreover, their task is to approve school plans and annual reports, budget proposals and report on the school's financial performance. They also comment on the design of study and training programmes, development policies and suggestions for appointment or dismissal of the school director.

The administrative authority responsible for educational quality control in the regional schools is the **Czech School Inspectorate** (CSI), which came into being in the middle of 1991 as part of the newly constituted sectoral education management system pursuant to Act No. 564/1990. The Inspectorate is an independent budgetary organization governed directly by the MEYS and headed by the central school inspector appointed by the Minister. In addition to executing state control over adherence to generally binding legal regulations, the CSI is authorised by law to perform external evaluation, i.e. identification and evaluation of conditions, implementation and outcomes of the educational process, evaluation of the conditions in relation to human resources and material and technical facilities, and supervision over the efficiency of the use of public resources. The results of the work of school inspectors are recorded in the form of inspection reports. The Czech School Inspectorate publishes annual reports setting out the findings identified during inspection activities in schools, and providing basic data about the scope of inspection and conditions under which it is being performed. Data about the CSI information system and internal administration are also included in the report.

Decision-making systems in universities have grown out of the Higher Education Act (1990), which establishes the independence of the universities. The task of the MEYS as state administrative authority in higher education under the Higher Education Act is to create conditions for the development of universities and university education, to co-ordinate university activity, to distribute financial resources among individual schools and monitor their use, to register universities statutes and to establish institutes and workplaces as independent legal entities to fulfill these tasks. Pursuant to a proposal or statement by the **Accreditation Commission**, established by the government as an advisory body, the Ministry may decide to revoke or return a university or university faculty's right to administer state or rigorous examinations in a given field or fields or to instate or reinstate professors or senior lecturers. The Commission's second important mission is to gain an independent overview on the quality of higher education in all its forms and to provide assistance to each university in the form of a qualitative evaluation of its educational or artistic activities. The Commission thus regulates the initiation (the accreditation process) and monitors the progress and results (the evaluation process) of education at the universities. The Accreditation Commission has had significant influence on the development of the system of universities and faculties. The goal in evaluating universities and faculties is to provide an assessment of conditions at institutions in order to form a basis for recommendations for improvement, as in the case of the 1995 evaluation of faculties of education.



Universities may be established, merged, divided, or dissolved by an Act of the Czech Parliament, which may also specify the name and location of a university. Universities and their faculties are legal persons. Their organization and activities are determined, in accordance with the law, by their autonomous academic administrative bodies, the **academic senates** and **academic councils** of the universities and faculties. Academic senate members are elected from among the academic community (teachers, researchers, students and, if school statutes so specify, professional employees). Academic council members are appointed by rectors and deans from among teachers, researchers and other significant professionals with the consent of the academic senate. Each university is represented by its rector, and each faculty by its dean. These functionaries are legally entitled to manage, represent and take actions in the name of their respective universities and faculties. They are accountable for their activity to the academic senate of the university or faculty by which they were elected. Rectors are accountable for their universities to the MEYS.

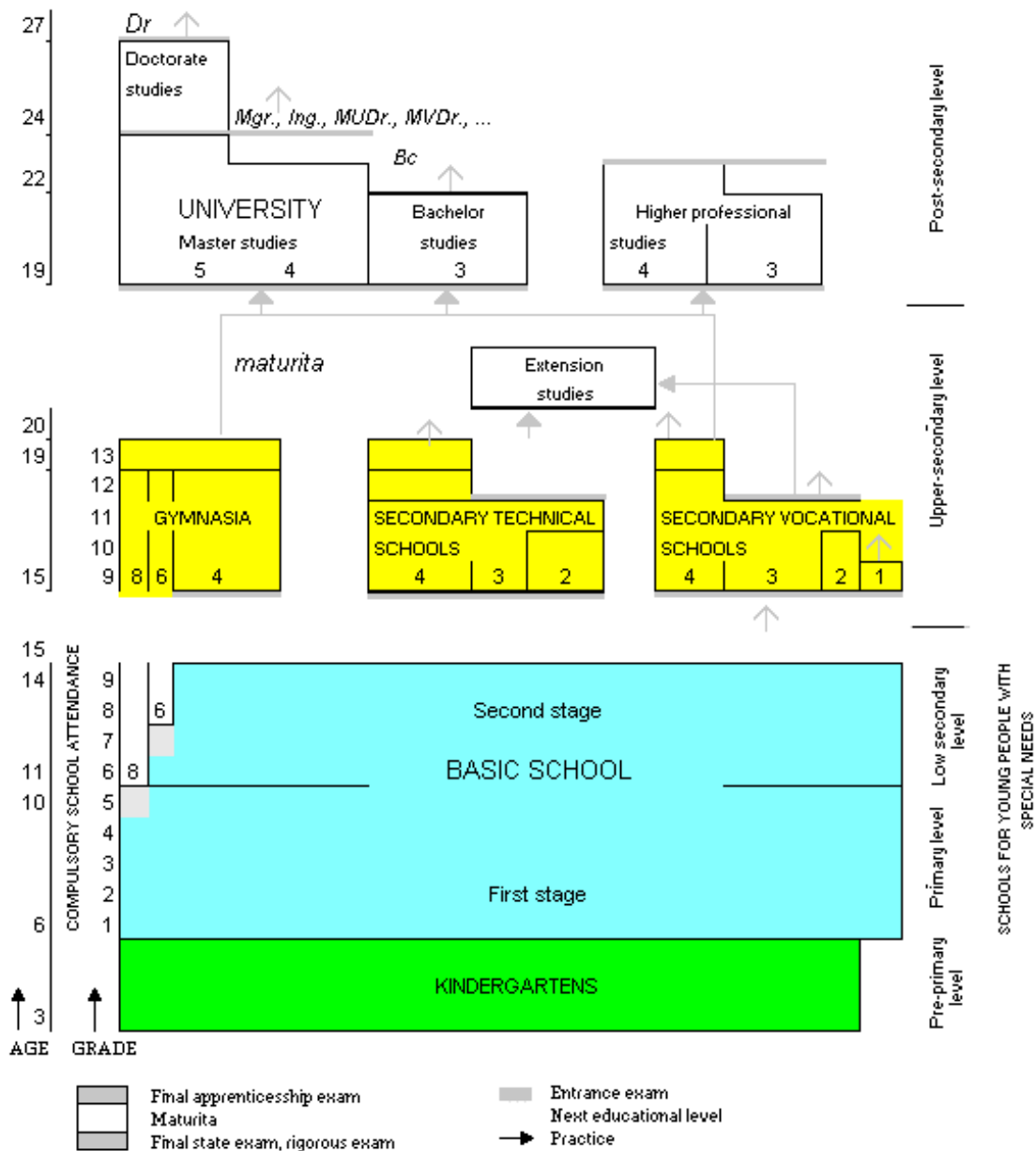
The autonomous administrative authority legally representing universities in their relations with the Ministry is the **Council of Higher Education Institutions**. The Council consists of representatives designated by the university and faculty academic senates and addresses nominations for the establishment and composition of the Accreditation Commission, Ministry proposals for the distribution of financial resources among universities and proposals and measures substantially affecting higher education. Universities enjoy a great deal of independence in making decisions, with the MEYS having only very limited opportunity to interfere with their authority. The Council of Higher Education Institutions plays a very important role in shaping the Ministry's higher education policy (including financial policy). The situation is similar within the individual universities as well, where faculties (which are themselves independent legal entities) also enjoy a high level of independence and university authority over them is limited. The authority of rectors and deans is also limited by the academic senates in that a large portion of their decision-making power is subject to the consent of the senates, of which they cannot be members. The creation of the **Czech Rectors Conference** in 1993 served to balance the exclusive status of the Council of Higher Education Institutions, as representative body of the academic community of universities and faculties and the Ministry's advisory authority in all significant decisions pertaining to higher education.

Some state administration of the upper secondary school system is also performed by other central administrative authorities (i.e. the ministries of Economy, Health, Agriculture, Defense and Interior). The **Ministry of Agriculture** has organizational authority over agricultural vocational schools, including jurisdiction over the approval of teaching documentation and study courses in the field of agricultural vocational education. The **Ministry of Health** has full administrative jurisdiction over all health care secondary schools and vocational schools, with the exception of general education and, partially, theoretical pre-professional education, over which the Ministry of Education retains authority.



## Structure and organization of the education system

### Czech Republic: structure of the education system (as of 1995/96)



### Pre-school education

Kindergartens provide pre-school education for children, generally in the age group 3 to 6 years. They serve to supplement education and upbringing at home and to promote the socialization of young children. Attendance is not compulsory and does not result in any certification. Early care and education of children under the age of 3 takes place in crèches operated by the Ministry of Health.



## Primary education

Basic schools provide nine years of basic, compulsory education, usually beginning when the child is 6 years old. In accordance with a 1995 amendment to the Schools Act, the first stage of basic school has been extended to five years and the second stage (lower secondary) shortened to four. The last four (or, in some cases, two) years of compulsory nine-year schooling can be completed at an eight-year or six-year gymnasium or at a dance conservatory.

## Secondary education

Upper secondary schools provide students with knowledge and skills necessary for employment or further study. Upper secondary education generally begins at the age of 14 or 15 and lasts, depending on the type of course, three or four years. Exceptions to this rule are the extended multi-year gymnasia and dance conservatories. Upper secondary schools can be classified into several types: (a) gymnasia offer four-, six-, and eight-year courses of complete upper secondary education, culminating in the *maturita* exam and intended primarily as preparation for university-level studies; (b) secondary technical schools provide complete secondary vocational education; prepare pupils primarily for professional activities or for technical university-level studies, in a four-year course culminating in the *maturita* exam; they may also offer shorter courses in certain fields that do not culminate in the *maturita*; the conservatories, which have six- to eight-year courses culminating in the *absolutorium* diploma (i.e. certification of higher vocational education), constitute a specific type of secondary technical school; (c) secondary vocational schools offer secondary vocational training for at least two years, culminating in a final examination (pupils who obtain only theoretical preparation at a secondary vocational school receive practical training at special centres and workplaces for practical learning; while four- and five-year courses in certain fields offer complete upper secondary education culminating in the *maturita* exam); and (d) integrated secondary schools (which emerged officially with the the June 1995 education law amendment) provide both vocational and academic subjects that are taught at the secondary vocational and technical school levels, respectively.

In addition, upper secondary schools provide extension studies (generally two years) for applicants who have obtained a secondary vocational education and wish to obtain a complete level of education (*maturita*).

Tertiary-level professional schools, which were officially launched by the June 1995 amendment to the Schools Act, offer a new type of postsecondary studies. In courses lasting three to three and a half years, they prepare graduates of *maturita* studies for qualified performance in demanding technical vocations.

Universities offer graduates with *maturita* diploma studies culminating in the award of an academic title. Bachelor's courses (three or four years) are intended to provide either education for a profession or the first stage of a longer higher education course. Bachelor's courses conclude with a bachelor's level examination. Master's courses (or, in the case of technical, economic and agricultural schools, engineer degree courses) generally last five years. Doctoral courses at faculties of general and veterinary medicine last six years. All of these courses conclude with a final state



examination, which generally includes the defense of a dissertation. Master's, engineer and doctoral courses are usually conducted through day studies, although they can also (with the exception of medical studies) be completed on a continuing education basis concurrently with employment. Universities also offer postgraduate doctoral courses, which are based on further study for the production of a major research project. These courses last at least three years and conclude with a rigorous examination and defense of a dissertation. In addition, universities organize various forms of further education. Most programmes provided by higher education institutions have been restructured in line with the three-cycle scheme of the Bologna process.

At the pre-primary, basic school (primary and lower secondary) and upper secondary levels, the school year extends from 1 September to 30 June. There are two months of holidays during the summer, two weeks for Christmas, spring holidays and some other free days at the headmaster's discretion. The length of the school year expressed in number of teaching days varies each year: in 1994/95 it was 196 teaching days; 184 days in 1995/96; 171 days in 1996/97; and 193 teaching days in 1997/98.

## The financing of education

The mechanisms of school financing have undergone the greatest changes. Act No. 564/1990 placed kindergartens, basic and upper secondary schools under the control of the school authorities. Since 1991, the MEYS has allocated state budgetary funds to individual schools through these school authorities. The most drastic effects of the Act also include the obligation of municipalities to finance, in full, the capital expenditures and current costs of the schools and facilities run by them (i.e. primarily kindergartens and basic schools, after-school facilities, etc.). However, salaries and textbooks are paid for by the state through the MEYS.

Abolition of the state monopoly on education was accompanied by thorough and, in comparison to other countries, unprecedented state support of non-state schools. This support was manifested above all in the area of financing (i.e. access to subsidies from the state budget) but also in the actual establishment of non-state schools. Significant changes also took place in the financing of training at secondary vocational schools. The May 1990 Schools Act amendment assigned to the State the responsibility of paying the costs of training apprentices. This measure has resulted in yearly increases in the number of these apprentices and significantly affected the amount of financial resources spent on vocational training. The financing situation of vocational schools is further complicated by its diversity and the variety of participating ministries (Economy, Agriculture, Education).

The education reform of July 1992 changed the method by which funds from the central government budget are allocated to individual schools. A *normative method* of financing is now used which considers the number of pupils and students. Its aim is to link the performance of individual schools to the amount of state funding received. The approach to normative allocation of recurrent expenditures in the regional school systems has undergone a series of changes and corrections from 1992 to the present. When normative financing was introduced in 1992, roughly 88% of total funds for current expenditures in the regional school system were allocated normatively at the district school authority level. Roughly 88% of current regional



school expenditures were allocated on a normative basis in the 1993 primary allocation, although allocation methods were somewhat different. In the 1994 and 1995 primary allocation, almost 90% of funds for recurrent expenditures in the regional school systems were allocated normatively. Perhaps the most highly debated change was in the financing of private schools, for which norms were set at 90% of the average full-year norm of non-private schools. Pursuant to a Ministry of Finance request, and unlike previous years, not only wages norms were established, but also norms for the number of employees per school (via a normative number of employees indicator). In 1996, budgetary funds allocated on a normative basis increased to almost 97%.

In 1992, the system of normative allocation of funds for recurrent expenditure was also introduced into higher education. In the 1992 primary allocation, normative allocations exceeded 72% of the total volume of funds for recurrent expenditures. Remaining funds were targeted for: emergencies, halls of residence and canteens, economic management, development programmes and budget reserves. The normative volume of current funds for individual schools was established as the product of the volume of school output and price per unit of output (normative). Universities used the number of full-time students (bachelor's, master's and graduate degree candidates) and part-time students (with a coefficient of 0.4) as the school output indicator. Norms were set according to actual (past) costs of education in given groups of academic fields. In the first year of normative allocation, there were seven such groups. The application of this method represented not only a fairer, more comprehensive method of budgetary allocation, but also a change in the structure of financial flow from the Ministry to the universities. In 1993, normatively allocated funds for recurrent expenditures at universities increased to 92% of the total funds. Funds for recurrent expenditures normatively allocated represented 90% of the total in 1994. The basic change from the previous year was the allocation of some normative resources according to universities creative results in the previous year (called *incentive coefficient*). Almost 95% of all funds for recurrent expenditures in 1995 were allocated normatively. For the year 1996, more than 95% of the budget was allocated using the normative methods.

The system of education financing is relatively complicated, as it is bound to the system of school management and administration. Although most education expenditures come from the MEYS budget, the financing of education in the Czech Republic is still notably diverse due to the roles of the different state and local administrative authorities, the complex governing structure, as well as the nature of the services that the various types and levels of schools and school facilities provide.

Society's total expenditures for the school system (i.e. public and private spending) increased from 22.2 billion Czech *koruna* (CZK) in 1989 to CZK71.8 billion in 1995 (in current prices). Most of this amount, 70.6 billion or over 98%, consists of public spending, comprised largely of central government budget expenditures (56.9 billion in 1995, or 79% of total social spending on the school system). Over 84% of central government budget expenditures for the school system are distributed through the MEYS; 11% through the Ministry of the Economy (for secondary vocational schools); and the remaining 4% through the ministries of Agriculture (for secondary vocational schools) and of Health (for secondary health care schools).



Although public spending on the school system as a share of gross domestic product has already reached a level comparable to that of most developed countries, the Czech school system still faces financial difficulties, due primarily to past neglect of school assets and, for historical reasons, a low value placed on the work of teachers. It appears therefore that this increase in public spending, both in absolute terms and in relation to gross domestic product, has, thus far, served only to partially offset these two factors without providing an actual financial injection into the school system. The small increase in public spending on the school system (in constant 1989 prices) illustrates this situation.

Basic expenditures are classified as either investment (capital) or non-investment (recurrent) expenditures. Recurrent expenditures are expected to be used up in the course of a given period, while capital expenditures are typically drawn on over a longer period. A direct comparison of capital and recurrent expenditures over an extended period of time is quite difficult in the Czech Republic, because of changes in methodology and the transfer of many schools to contributory financing. In 1995, capital expenditures accounted for CZK8.7 billion out of total public expenditures on education of CZK70.6 billion (over 12%); municipalities capital expenditures (mostly for investments in kindergartens and upper secondary schools) exceeded CZK4.3 billion (6% of total public expenditures). Due to the long period of insufficient investment in the regional school systems, the Czech Parliament approved a programme to improve the quality of technical equipment in regional schools, for which CZK3 billion was appropriated from the National Property Fund in 1995 and 1996.

The dominant item among recurrent expenditures in the regional school systems are teaching and non-teaching staff salaries and directly related expenditures. The ratio of salaries (and related expenditures) to other recurrent expenditures in the regional school systems has undergone a fundamental change in recent years. Total yearly increases in state education financing have been directed toward covering salary increases (and mandatory deductions) in general correspondence with wage trends in the economy as a whole. Total expenditures allocated for other recurrent costs (energy, water, sewage, communications, services, etc.) have, therefore, constantly decreased. In the 1995 budget, however, the minimum operating costs for schools and school facilities had to be covered at the partial expense of wage resources. The situation with recurrent costs is somewhat different at universities, where salaries make up only about half of such expenditures.

An important criterion in determining education expenditures is the allocation of expenditures among the various basic parts of the education system. Data in current prices, of course, only reflect the nominal value of expenditures. To determine their real value requires to take into account the inflation rate as measured by the consumer price index. Cumulative inflation from 1989 to 1995 totalled 272%. Among the various parts of the school system, it is clearly the upper secondary schools that have seen the fastest-growing expenditures. This can be explained by demographic trends within the upper secondary school age group during several years, the fast growth in upper secondary schools (especially technical schools), as well as the progressive lengthening of secondary school attendance (in higher, post-maturita and extension studies). The high index for secondary vocational schools is also caused by financing methods which have not yet been systematically resolved (i.e. state apprentices, who





total almost 85% of all secondary vocational school students). Except for universities, all of the basic components of the education system have more than tripled their unit expenditures in the last six years; even with the above-mentioned 272% increase in the consumer price index, this represents a real rise in unit expenditures. The situation at universities, where unit expenditure increases do not match higher overall expenses (due to the increased number of students), has been improving since 1994.

According to Eurostat, the total public expenditure on education represented 4.42% of GDP in 2004.

## **The educational process**

Up until 1990, curricular projects were developed exclusively at the national level by staff at the Ministry of Education and research institutes under the responsibility of the Ministry. Teachers and their associations rarely participated in such projects, and centrally-drafted curricular projects were binding for all schools. The role of a teacher was narrowed down to transforming centrally-set standards to classroom teaching.

The new Education Act aims at a curricular policy in which the centre sets the framework by defining the objectives and content of education in framework programmes. More specifically, these describe the competencies of graduates, the objectives of individual programme components, the time schedule for the content of framework teaching plans, as well as basic material and human resources. Based on the framework educational programmes, schools design their own educational programmes, specifying the profile of a graduate, the description of the programme, the teaching plan, the syllabi, and the modules.

The Educational Research Institute defines the objectives and content of education for pre-school, basic school and gymnasium. In the process of developing such documents, experts from various pedagogical institutes are consulted, as well as the teachers and the general public. The National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education develops the curricula of vocational education, consulting with university and college teachers, members of teaching associations, Ministry of Education staff, social partners, and groups of experts in specific fields. Thus, the needs of the labour market are reflected, with the intention to increase the employability of school graduates.

Hence, although all curricular documents have to be approved by the Ministry of Education, a wide range of experts and institutions get involved in the curriculum development process. The Ministry then ends this broad examination process by approving a relevant document and publishing it via usual legislative channels. By the end of this process, the document becomes binding for schools. Main curricular documents used by schools up to 1990 include the following: teaching plans, curricula of individual subjects, teaching materials, and textbooks. After 1990, teaching materials and textbooks were excluded from the list, because the concept of standardized teaching materials and textbooks was abandoned.

All aspects of curricula have been changed. In particular, the objectives of education were modified, greater emphasis was placed on key competencies, and



active methods of teaching were introduced. The school culture also changed, as the interpersonal relations between students and the teacher shifted towards partnership and mutual respect, more opportunities were created for students to work independently, and school functions were broadened, with an emphasis on the development of social relations, hobby activities and leisure time. Schools also strove to encourage students to find their own individual purpose in learning. All framework educational programmes (curricula) developed so far (pre-school, basic, secondary general, secondary vocational and technical education):

- *Pursue an identical or very similar structure*, which is derived from the Education Act and may possibly be modified in line with the needs of the particular level of education; framework educational programmes cover the starting conditions, the basic concept and objectives of education, key competencies, the educational content, cross-curricular themes, framework study plan, the conditions for the implementation of education, guidelines for the education of pupils with special learning needs and pupils with special talents, and the principles governing the development of school-based curricula;
- *Work with the same set of key competencies*, which are identified for students of a particular age, or may be modified in line with the specific educational focus (secondary vocational education); the sets of key competencies, while taking account of the specific features of Czech education, are fully in line with European trends;
- *Define the content of education, which is closely interlinked with key competencies, and divide it into larger sections* facilitating more variability in designing school-based curricula and in integrating the content;
- *Set out practical outputs*, which are closely linked to practical life, e.g. the framework educational programme for pre-school education does not set outputs, but practical activities);
- *Are interrelated in terms of content* and establish the prerequisites for lifelong learning;
- *Facilitate modification of the educational content* for pupils with special learning needs, socially disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special talents;
- *Are open to possible modifications* at specific time periods and to innovation depending on the changing needs of society, experience of teachers in teaching according to school-based curricula, and depending on the changing needs and interests on the part of pupils. (MEYS, 2004).

## Pre-primary education

Pre-school education has once again become an integral part of the system of education. The state ensures the widest possible access to pre-school education, sets its goal, and determines its curricula and quality. The accessibility of pre-school



education is high, and was further enhanced by the possibility to integrate disabled children into mainstream kindergartens, while special kindergartens still operate.

The age group of children attending kindergarten is 3-6 years, and in 1997 the enrolment ratio was estimated at 86%. In special cases, when parents have no alternative, schools can accept even younger children, for whom the Ministry of Health otherwise arranges crèches. Some pupils older than 6 years also attend kindergarten. Most common in kindergarten are 5-year-olds, for whom pre-schooling is considered beneficial in helping them adjust to compulsory school attendance. In 1999, an estimated 92.2% of 5-year-olds were attending kindergartens. Since 1990/91, kindergartens have been admitting (or integrating) disabled children in order to accustom them to the company of children without disabilities, as well as to accustom children without disabilities to the acceptance of disabled children.

In 2003/04 there were 280,491 children enrolled in 5,622 kindergartens; 22,661 children were younger than 3 years. There were 70,477 3-year-olds, 81,815 4-year-olds, 84,385 children aged 5, and 21,153 children in the age of 6. In percentage terms this represents 79.7% of the age group of 3, 92.3% of the group of 4-year-olds, and 94.4% of 5-year-olds. There were approximately 88.8% of children aged 3-5 attending kindergartens. Special kindergartens, which are attended by 2.2% of children, continue to operate. These special kindergartens create conditions for pre-school education of children with severe disabilities. In 2004 a total of 5,565 disabled children and 208 children without a disability have been placed in 221 special kindergartens. There is a challenging trend to provide comprehensive care for children with special learning needs beginning with early care – both of the child and his/her family. The funding of kindergartens differs depending on the governing body. Most kindergartens are governed by municipalities which cover their running costs. Direct educational costs are financed from the state budget, and part of the finance is provided by parents (with the exception of the final year which is free) up to 50% of non-capital costs, except the costs covered from the state budget. (MEYS, 2004).

The Framework Programme for Pre-school Education entered into force in March 2005 serves as a basic curriculum for kindergartens. This document requires kindergartens to develop their own educational programmes that best suit the local conditions and possibilities. Hence, the education plan (curriculum) is almost completely a matter of the individual kindergarten. There is internal differentiation and individualization in the content of educational activities. Programmes in foreign languages, swimming, art and speech therapy are offered, as well as courses for gifted children. The framework programme abandons the traditional structuring of educational content, and rather stresses that education always involves the whole personality of the child. Thus the content is structured in such a way to reflect the natural development of children. Individual areas of education are based on different relationships that a child gradually forms towards him/herself, other people, and the rest of the world. For each of these components partial learning objectives are defined, as well as expected competencies to be acquired, and activities and opportunities that should be offered. No generally applicable standards of evaluation have been introduced in pre-school education.



## Primary education (first stage of the basic school)

The Framework Programme for Basic Education sets out general and specific skills which are to be acquired by the end of basic education. This document sets objectives, defines binding content and core competencies that students must acquire, and also touch on conditions for, and evaluation of, education. The document provides sufficient room for schools' and teachers' creative pedagogical work as well as the interests and needs of students. The school headmaster is ultimately fully responsible for this process. In the basic school students should acquire necessary learning strategies on the basis of which they should be motivated for lifelong learning. They should learn how to think creatively and solve appropriate problems, effectively communicate and cooperate, protect their physical and mental health, creative values and the environment. They should learn how to be considerate and tolerant towards other people, different cultures and spiritual values, to recognize their abilities and real possibilities and to apply these together with knowledge and skills acquired in deciding on their life path and professional career.

Most children beginning school are 6 years old, and legal compulsory school attendance stipulations set the age range of basic school pupils at 6-14 years (compulsory education was first introduced in 1774 as an obligatory six-year attendance). Only children exempted from compulsory school attendance for serious health reasons do not attend school. The length of compulsory education is identical with the length of basic school. Talented pupils can leave having only completed lower grades of basic school and enter multi-year upper secondary schools (i.e. six- and eight-year gymnasia and dance conservatories).

As the basic education is demanding in terms of its content, a significant part of the pupils have difficulties coping with it, and thus are transferred to special needs schools. Alternatively, in 2000/01 the parents of 20% of 6 year-olds opted for a delayed commencement of primary education. In that same year, 8.9% of primary school children received enhanced teaching in some subjects. In 1999/2000, five percent of pupils completed their education in special care schools. Thus approximately 70% of the population graduate from the mainstream study programmes of basic education. Approximately 1.3% to 1.4% of pupils repeat a year, and almost all pupils continue to upper secondary schools, including special care schools.

The structure of basic school comprises two stages (Grades I-V and Grades VI-IX, respectively). Teaching of basic school subjects is differentiated according to pupils interest and abilities; extended teaching of some subjects is available (e.g. languages beginning in third grade, mathematics beginning in fifth grade). Individual basic schools have also begun in recent years to introduce various elective courses. The gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 104% in 2000/01, and the pupil/teacher ratio was 1:18.

The dominant form of education at the basic school level is the instruction of groups of pupils of the same age in common classrooms. In the first stage, one classroom teacher generally teaches all subjects, and the second stage uses subject-certified teachers. Even at this level, classes are formed of pupils of the same age, which is the main organizational form. A marked trend of recent years has been more

frequent instruction in specialized classrooms and the division of classes into smaller groups for a growing number of subjects and instructional hours. It is not unusual to combine pupils from various classes in certain selected subjects.

Most of the hours of the common curriculum are devoted to Czech and mathematics. Other subjects include music, art, athletics and work education. An integrated subject forms the basis for later social studies and science instruction. It acquaints the pupils with their near surroundings and teaches them to recognize and understand societal and natural phenomena. Content differences within the common curriculum are possible only through optional subjects. Since the 1993/94 school year, the alternative first-stage general school model has been experimentally tested. Its goal is to provide a basic education and a well-rounded world view. Pupils' concept of the world is created through gradual acquisition of knowledge and discovery experiences. More leeway is given to creative activities and to pupils' individual development and independence. New elements are drama education and a greater emphasis on emotional experiences and emotional development.

#### Basic education (first stage of basic school): weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Czech language	9	10	10	7	7
Foreign language	–	–	–	3	3
Local environment	2	2	3	–	–
Basis of natural sciences and elementary social studies	–	–	–	3	4
Mathematics	4	5	5	5	5
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
Music	1	1	1	–	–
Art education	1	1	1	–	–
Work education	1	1	1	–	–
Music, art education and work education	–	–	–	4	4
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>

*Source:* Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

The number of pupils accepted into multi-grade secondary schools has been increasing constantly since 1990/91. Most of these pupils have been entering six- to eight-year gymnasia after fifth or sixth grade. Student and parent interest in these schools is high, because they represent an opportunity to get a head start on a prestigious and demanding education and increase the chances for university acceptance.

Because basic schools have always been a fundamental element of town and community civic structures in the country, the basic school network has historically been rather dense. The increase in the number of schools was caused by the rapid re-establishment of partially organized and single-classroom schools (where several grades are taught in one classroom) as essential parts of life in small communities (257 new partially organized and single-classroom schools represent an 84% increase). Partially organized schools represent 41% of all basic schools, 8% of which





are single-classroom schools. These facilitate school attendance for children in small and secluded communities and have served to restore the tradition of the school as a natural community centre. Because the quality of instruction at these schools depends (more than it does elsewhere) on the abilities of the individual teacher, opinions about them vary. Despite the greater economic demands of these schools, their contributions to small community life are irreplaceable and their development will, therefore, be supported. The simultaneous increase in the number of schools and decrease in the number of pupils has led to reduced school sizes.

## **Secondary education**

In the common curriculum, scientific subjects dominate. The proportion of social studies and natural science disciplines is roughly equal. Instruction in practical skills is also regarded as important. In Grade V curriculum-required subjects occupy most of the instructional time. This serves to orient pupils in the transition from the first to the second stage, where specialized teaching of individual subjects begins. In Grades VI-IX the curriculum is, for the most part, variable. Most time is spent on five basic subjects: Czech, mathematics, foreign language, physical education and civics. Time allocation varies (based on the headmaster's discretion) with the other required subjects. Beginning in Grade VII, elective subjects are introduced which allow a broad profile of content and respect for the interests and abilities of the pupils, as well as respect for local and regional needs and conditions. The system of elective subjects is supplemented by optional subjects, the most popular of which are foreign languages, computer science and home economics.

**Basic education (second stage of basic school): weekly lesson timetable**

Subject	Minimum number of lessons in Grades VI–IX			
	VI	VII	VIII	IX
Czech language				16
Foreign language				12
Mathematics				16
Chemistry				4
Physics				6
Biology				6
Geography				6
History				6
Civic education				4
Family education				4
Music				4
Art education				6
Work education				4
Physical education				8
Optional subjects				6
<b>Total number of lessons in Grades VI–IX (min.)</b>				<b>108</b>
<b>Total prescribed number of weekly periods in each grade (min.)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>

Source: Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

Note: In Grades VI–IX the number of lessons and their organization is determined by the school head. The total minimum number of lessons per subject has to be respected, as well as the minimum number of lessons per week. Optional subjects are introduced in Grades VII–IX on the basis of a decision made by the school head.

The number of pupils completing basic education is highly dependent on demographic trends and on the effects of structural and organizational changes in the education system. Most eighth and ninth grade basic school graduates proceed to some kind of upper secondary school. Students who have left school without completing nine years of basic school, have the option of attending one to three-year low-difficulty manual work training centres. Basic and upper secondary school headmasters or school authorities may also organize supplementary courses for individuals who have not completed their basic education. Applications for these courses have been increasing, mainly because completion of the basic education is a precondition not only to upper secondary school study, but also to obtaining a trade license.

The purpose of upper secondary schools is to prepare students for either university studies or the world of work. The secondary school network has traditionally consisted of gymnasia, secondary technical schools and secondary vocational schools. Recent developments include a new type of upper secondary school, the integrated secondary school, effectively a combination of the secondary vocational school and the secondary technical school. Secondary schools also offer extension programmes (allowing primarily non-maturita vocational school graduates to earn the maturita). After the 1995 amendment to the Schools Act, higher professional studies became a fully-fledged educational level in its own right. Upper secondary schools appear to be the most dynamically developing part of the education



system. The rapidly increasing number of schools has been accompanied by a restructuring of secondary education, the creation of new types of schools, an increased variety of secondary technical school courses, changes in many schools internal structures and newer and more modern academic content and teaching methods.

Upper secondary education has experienced the most rapid development in the 1990s. The following are the main changes: (i) the rapid development of private schools; (ii) the introduction of eight-year gymnasia, in addition to the already existing four-year gymnasia; (iii) the diversification of previously rigid types of schools, with schools more often offering study programmes of various lengths, types, and branches; (iv) changes in the structure of study branches of vocational education; (v) the ratio of schools preparing solely for employment to schools preparing for further studies has changed; (vi) the development of post-apprentice education has been developed; (vii) the abolishment of post-maturita education, and its replacement with post-secondary technical schools, constituting a separate level in the education system.

**Lower and general upper secondary school (eight-year gymnasium): weekly lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each form							
	Lower secondary				Upper secondary			
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Czech language and literature	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3
Foreign language I	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Foreign language II	–	R	R	R	3	3	3	3
Latin	–	–	–	R	R	R	R	R
Civic education	1	1	1	1	–	–	–	–
Basics of social sciences	–	–	–	–	1	1	2	2
History	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	R
Geography	2	2	2	2	2	2	R	R
Mathematics	5	5	4	3	3	3	3	3
Descriptive geometry	–	–	–	R	R	R	R	R
Physics	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	R
Chemistry	–	2	2	2	2	2	2	R
Biology/geology	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	R
Information and computer technology	R	R	2	1	R	R	R	R
Aesthetic education	3	3	2	2	2	2	R	R
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Optional subject 1	–	–	–	R	R	R	2	2
Optional subject 2	–	–	–	–	–	R	2	2
Optional subject 3	–	–	–	–	–	–	R	2
Optional subject 4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	R
Sub-total	28	28	28	25	27	27	28	22
Lessons added by the school head (R)	2	2	3	6	4	4	3	9
<b>Total prescribed number of weekly periods in each grade (min.)</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>

*Source:* Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

*Note:* The number of lessons represents a minimum which cannot be decreased, but it can be further increased due to reserved lessons. The letter 'R' (the reserved or unassigned lessons) indicates that the inclusion of this subject in a given year will be decided by the school head. Reserved lessons may be used both for the subjects indicated by the letter 'R' and to reinforce any subject in order to increase the number of lessons above the minimum set by the curriculum.

Secondary school developments have led to rapid increases in the number of pupils admitted to and studying in *maturita* courses (especially at secondary technical schools). The upper secondary school system has thus been undergoing a restructuring corresponding to developments in the labour market, and the number of vocational schools has dropped. The developments in the secondary school system and the demographic decline in the number of potential future upper secondary students has necessitated wide-scale structural changes in schools' study offerings as well as a search for new ways to attract and gain pupils. Gymnasia have addressed this issue with the development of six- and eight-year courses, while secondary technical



schools and vocational schools have expanded their post-*maturita* courses and lengthened their regular study courses.

Gymnasia are secondary schools offering a complete secondary education, culminating in the *maturita* examination. The tradition of the gymnasium as the prestigious secondary school for general education has clearly made a comeback. Most gymnasium graduates continue on to university, higher professional studies or postsecondary courses at a secondary technical school. Roughly two thirds of all gymnasium graduates are admitted to the university the year they graduate and another eighth the following year. Since the 1994/95 school year, gymnasium studies last for four, six (e.g. bilingual gymnasia) or eight years. Multi-year gymnasia were introduced in order to satisfy growing parental demands for more academically challenging courses in the years of compulsory school attendance, as well as the pressure for selectivity and diversity in basic schools.

Gymnasium educational content is dominated by an orientation towards cultural and personal development, while vocational matters are downplayed. An important element of gymnasium study is an emphasis on the active role of the pupil, especially in choosing subjects of instruction and in supporting the independence of his or her study (individualized study, leading pupils to work independently by setting up investigative and research projects). Students are selected for study based on an acceptance process. Most applicants take entrance examinations and, in exceptional cases, some pupils are admitted based on excellent results in basic school or in activities connected with study (e.g. placement in the academic Olympics in some subject). The demands and organization of the entrance exams are completely within the authority of the gymnasium headmaster. The gymnasia provide the only alternative to basic school for fulfilling compulsory school attendance. Instruction differs from that provided to basic school pupils of the same age in that it has greater depth and freedom in subject selection, and, in some cases, is the beginning of specialized study.

General education subjects markedly dominate the curriculum, in keeping with the overall orientation of the gymnasium. They are divided into: compulsory subjects for which the hourly allotment is dictated by MEYS guidelines (i.e. Czech language and literature, a first foreign language, a second foreign language, mathematics, history and physical education); compulsory subjects for which inclusion and the hourly allotment are determined by the headmaster, either partially (e.g. basic social sciences, geography, physics, chemistry, biology and geology, and computer science) or completely (e.g. Latin, descriptive geometry); elective subjects the inclusion and hourly allotment of which are determined by the headmaster; and optional subjects outside the total established weekly allotment of instructional hours, which are also under the authority of the headmaster. Instructional hour allotment and the combinations of elective and optional subjects determine the given specialization of a gymnasium (e.g. humanities, sciences, mathematics and physics, foreign language, business and economics, sports).

Educational programmes in upper secondary schools end either with a final examination, leading to the award of apprentice certificates or diplomas, or with the *maturita* exam, leading to the award of general certificates of upper secondary education. These certificates enjoy national recognition, and are issued upon





completion of tests, the nature of which is stipulated by the Act and ordinances. These tests are not standardized, however, nor are they external. Differences in the quality of final examinations at different schools have recently been criticized, particularly with regard to *maturita* exams. Differentiated educational content makes it impossible to design a standard *maturita* exam for all students. This has prompted a proposal to create a new model of *maturita* exams and to introduce it into the new Act on education.

Secondary technical schools offer a wide range of vocational education, in which pupils prepare for professional activities including those in: technical, business, teaching, health care, social welfare, administrative, artistic and cultural fields. Education at these schools consists of either two- or three-year courses, culminating in a final exam (for non-*maturita* fields), or of a full secondary technical course, usually four or five years in duration, culminating in the *maturita* exam. The Schools Act amendment set the maximum term of study at four years, effective from 1995/96. The *maturita* exam entitles a graduate to apply to universities. The great popularity of secondary technical schools in the Czech Republic is due to the fact that while pupils may continue on to university, they also gain qualifications that give them an edge in the professional world if they are not admitted.

These schools are distinguished and characterized by their specializations (mechanical, electrical, chemical, agricultural, health care, library science, teacher training, etc.) and include several academies and conservatories. The content and structure of fields and courses of study available have developed rapidly. Various options are often combined in accordance with labour market demands and personal interests. The attractiveness of the *maturita* option has given birth to new efforts to integrate secondary technical schools with secondary vocational schools. These integrated secondary schools will allow pupils to earn training certificates, as well as have the option of continuing their education and taking the *maturita* examination at the same institution. By the 1995 School Law amendment, they became the part of the Czech education system.

Secondary technical schools admit pupils from the ninth grade of basic school. The number of pupils admitted to secondary technical schools has risen by over a third in the last six years, despite the downward demographic trend in the relevant age groups. In addition to the shift of interest away from vocational schools and the rapid development of post-*maturita* and extension courses, this growth has also been caused by longer study periods.

In 1999/2000, the branch of economy, business and services dropped from its peak 46% of all accepted students back to its initial value of 33%. The number of graduates of upper secondary education further increased also due to the extraordinarily fast development of post-vocational education, that allows graduates of three-year vocational branches to complete their full secondary education in a two-year study programme ending with the *maturita* exam.

Secondary vocational schools are secondary schools that prepare students primarily to work in the labour vocations performing skilled workers' activities. In providing this instruction, secondary vocational schools may also offer a complete secondary vocational education culminating in a *maturita* examination. A *maturita*



qualifies graduates not only for demanding labour vocations and technical activities, but also to apply to the university. While still in the period of compulsory school attendance, pupils receive a general education in academic subjects and in vocational theory, as well as practical training that allows them to gain special skills in their chosen vocations. The courses from which a student may choose vary in difficulty and, correspondingly, in length. Non-*maturita* secondary vocational education courses last one to three years, study courses four to five years. Special courses also exist for pupils who have completed their compulsory school attendance in a lower grade of basic school. Unlike other secondary schools, most public secondary vocational schools are not run by the MEYS. Public secondary vocational schools are run by the Ministry of the Economy (68%), the Ministry of Agriculture (23%), and the MEYS (9%).

New approaches to vocational curriculum organization have appeared and are gradually being introduced. The entire development of this field is moving toward a blurring of the sharp division between the existing systems of vocational (non-*maturita*) and academic (*maturita*) systems and between the types of schools (secondary technical school and secondary vocational school), primarily because there is an increasing contradiction between the existing system and the demands of the labour market, as well as the interests of the pupils accepted for study.

### Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Several factors are creating a situation of markedly decreased secondary education cohesion: broadening of school autonomy in educational content; the development of private schools, as well as the increasing diversity in the content and level of *maturita* exams (the only test finalizing a complete secondary education). The *maturita* has become an ineffective instrument for checking schools' educational success, especially due to the marked differences in their quality and difficulty. An investigation by the Czech Inspectorate of Schools has shown that secondary school students sit the *maturita* examination in more than 300 different subjects.

The *maturita* exam is thus losing the character of a state examination. The *maturita*, which traditionally signified not only a secondary school completion exam, but also a credential for admission to university, has lost its usefulness due to test results incomparability. This is further documented by changes in the structure and content of the university admission process, in which *maturita* exam scores play an ever decreasing role. The loss of the *maturita* exam scores' informational value is also affecting the education evaluation environment. Students and parents are demanding relatively clear criteria for judging the quality of individual secondary schools, secondary schools need reliable feedback on their activities for effective development, and, not least, the state lacks one of the few effective means of evaluating the quality of schools and of the entire education system. The MEYS considers the negative changes in *maturita* exams a serious problem, for which the solution is a limit in the possibility of exam variation (mainly in limiting the range of elective subjects), and a profound conceptual change. This would, on the one hand, increase state influence and, on the other, leave a certain level of autonomy to the secondary schools. In January 1996, several measures towards the quality improvement of *maturita* examinations within the legislative framework were accepted by the MEYS.



Under the proposed new model, matura exams would be composed of a common (external) part and a specialized (internal) part; the first common matura exam would be administered in 2004. The common part of the matura exam should provide comparable and transparent outcomes of general secondary education.

## Higher education

Higher education has undergone a transition from an elite model (i.e. characterized by a low ratio of university level students to the general population) to a modern model based on the participation of a broad segment of the population. In the great majority of fields there is a shortage of places for students (except in some technical specializations), even if the number of students accepted rapidly increased.

Universities, the school system's highest educational institutions, have a long and prestigious tradition in the Czech Republic. Since 1989, however, the higher education system has had to address the legacies of a forty-year deprivation of academic and administrative autonomy and of the artificial isolation, and consequent devaluation, of academic research activity. The Higher Education Act (1990) did away with the ideological centralization of university administration and restored the schools' academic freedom and autonomy. The Act also laid a foundation for the renewed development of higher education and a return to the traditional integration of research and teaching. The total number of undergraduate students at universities substantially increased after 1989. The number of students accepted for full-time studies at universities grew by 80% between 1989 and 1999. Despite this permanent growth, only approximately one half of applicants are accepted due to a growing demand.

Bachelor's degree courses are organized either as a first step towards the master's degree or as a self-contained degree. Bachelor's degrees are offered in a wide spectrum of fields, such as health sciences, nursing, the humanities, environmental science, information sciences, business, regional development and administration, etc. Bachelor's degrees in education are offered for kindergarten, foreign language and vocational teaching among others. The highest proportions of bachelor's degree candidates are in the humanities and social sciences (roughly 1:2.5), followed by the arts (1:3), the natural sciences (1:4) and engineering (1:4.5), while bachelor's degree courses are also catching on in education schools. Some fields even have a greater number of part-time bachelor's degree candidates than part-time master's candidates.

At many faculties, the master's course is divided into two cycles, the first of which is ended by a progress exam. In cases where the bachelor's course is the required first stage of a master's course, the progress exam fills the role of a bachelor exam. Besides systematically improving their qualifications by taking part in lectures, seminars and independent studies, doctoral candidates are gradually entrusted with instruction of students and incorporated into research teams. Doctoral study also often brings about the necessary co-operation between the universities and the Academy of Sciences, consisting in students' independent study concluded by defense of a dissertation. More students are studying the humanities and social sciences (especially law, business and economics and other fields in the expanding services sector) and the natural sciences, while fewer are going into medicine and engineering. Graduate



doctoral courses were established in 1990 to stimulate scholarly research at universities and to train a new generation of researchers.

Admissions policies vary from school to school and faculty to faculty. Most often, these policies are based on various combinations of oral and written examinations, as well as secondary school performance. The humanities and social sciences, especially teaching, business and economics, law and medicine enjoy the greatest number of applications (55% of applications, 43% enrolment), more than mechanical, electrical and civil engineering (17% of applications, 33% enrolment). Together these fields account for three quarters of all applications and enrolment.

By the end of 2002, the total number of higher education institutions (HEI) under the jurisdiction of the MEYS was twenty-four, most of them in the larger cities. In addition there were three HEI under the Ministry of Defense and one under the Ministry of Interior. The number of private HEI was 27 (34 in 2004), mainly offering programmes leading to the award of a bachelor's degree.

Most programmes provided by HEI have been restructured in line with the Bologna process. The 2001 amendment of the Act on HEIs made the three-cycle structure compulsory with very strictly limited exceptions. The complete model consists of three to four years for bachelor's degree programmes, one to three years for master's programmes and three to four years for doctoral studies. In the case of non-structured long study programmes, the master's degree course lasts four to six years. A doctoral programme may follow any master's qualification. It is not possible to enter doctoral studies after a bachelor's degree programme. Since 2004/05, the vast majority of students have been accepted into a bachelor's programme. The long study programmes running in parallel are either those for which accreditation has not yet expired, or concern specific disciplines such as medical studies, veterinary studies, pharmacy and others selected by the Accreditation Commission. (Eurydice, 2007).

Tertiary professional schools are more focused on providing students with practically-oriented qualifications. Most of these schools are attached to secondary technical schools, and only one fifth of them are independent entities. Tertiary professional education is regulated by the Schools Act as basic and secondary education, and the Decree on Tertiary Professional Education No. 10/2005. According to the new regulations, full-time programmes at these schools generally last three years. In 2004/05, 57% of students who had completed secondary education (maturita examination) in the previous year were admitted to tertiary education (or 34% of all 19-year olds), 81% of whom entered HEI, 16% entered tertiary professional schools and 16% enrolled in both the types of tertiary education. (Czech Eurydice Unit, *Czech Republic 2005/06*).

In 2003/04, there were about 275,000 students enrolled in higher education.



## Special education

Two main trends can be tracked in the many changes that have marked special needs education over the 1990s. First, there is a desire to make special education accessible to all pupils with special needs, including children with severe handicaps, who used to be exempt from compulsory schooling. The second important trend is the integration of students with special needs into mainstream education.

Special schools and facilities provide pre-school education, compulsory basic education and upper secondary and higher education and professional training to disabled children and young people. They provide education to students with: hearing, sight, speech and physical handicaps; multiple handicaps; mental handicaps, as well as children and young people with behavioural and learning problems, and those who are sick at the hospital for the longer period. These schools (except those for the mentally retarded) provide pupils with an education equivalent to that provided by regular schools, but reach this goal using special teaching methods and resources tailored to the abilities and capabilities of handicapped pupils. Special schools employ teachers with special pedagogical training and additional specialists (such as rehabilitation workers, psychologists, social workers, etc). Compulsory schooling was extended to ten years for children with severe mental, sensory or physical disabilities.

Mentally retarded pupils receive education in auxiliary schools (where they gain some basic knowledge), vocational schools, practical schools and special schools with reduced curricula corresponding to their cognitive abilities. The development of special education has brought an expansion of the educational opportunities for disabled pupils of all kinds.

Most essential has been the change in approach to disabled children in society at large, which no longer seeks to isolate them. Today, if their health allows, these children attend the same schools as children without disabilities in special or specialized classes wherever staff and facilities are available for them. To help children with disabilities to integrate, special needs teaching centres have been set up as a new counselling service, specializing in children and pupils with a particular disability. To facilitate the integration of pupils with severe mental disabilities and with multiple disabilities into the learning process, educational facilities called preparatory classes for remedial schools have been set up. These take one to three years and prepare pupils for further education. In 1996/97, a total of 7,157 pupils attended special kindergartens, while 46,000 and 17,000 attended basic and upper secondary schools, respectively.

As mentioned, the special education system now provides places for those children with more serious handicaps (including mental retardation, multiple disabilities such as combined blindness and deafness, and autism) who were previously excluded and had to be taken care of by their parents or social care institutions for the mentally or physically handicapped. Attention is also devoted to auxiliary school graduates and pupils with incomplete basic school educations in the form of special family and practical schools. These are non-professional schools with the basic goal of allowing pupils to complete and strengthen their general education, and gain abilities and skills that they can use in family life and other practical activities. Practical schools prepare their students, in one or two years of study, for the





performance of simple activities. The ratio of special school pupils to the entire population in the age group 3-18 years is a constant 3%.

The number of integrated pupils reached 20,300 in 1995/96, while the number of pupils in special and specialized classes decreased slightly (to 11,000). The numbers of special school pupils at the different educational levels have changed during the years, with fewer of these pupils at compulsory school attendance age (i.e. attending special basic schools) and more in special gymnasia and secondary technical schools. The relative numbers of different handicaps have also changed, with fewer mentally retarded pupils and more pupils with multiple disabilities. Special education trends have resulted in fewer pupils per class; in 1995/96 the average was 9.8. Average pupil-teacher ratios have progressed similarly, reaching 7.5 in the same year. In addition to teachers, 4,400 people worked in special schools (vocational trainers, tutors, assistant tutors, psychologists, nurses and training masters). This number has increased by roughly 500 since 1989/90, primarily due to the creation of special teacher training and child care centres which offer not only pedagogical, but also psychological, social and therapeutic care.

Finally, schools offering one, two, or three years of preparatory classes have been set up for socially disadvantaged children, and for children of ethnic minorities.

## Private education

The development of private education is one of the major changes since 1989. The legal foundation was laid for the creation of non-state schools by the 1990 school legislation amendment, which affected pre-school education, basic and secondary schools. Abolition of the state monopoly was accompanied by state support in the area of financing (i.e. access to subsidies from the state budget) and in the actual establishment of non-state schools. A space was thus created for the rapid development of a non-state school system, and thus for openings for students in areas of the education system where there had previously been shortages. Along with demographic developments, the rise of private schools has changed the relationship between supply and demand, especially in regional school systems.

The number of private schools grew steeply to reach its peak in 1996/97 when they represented 25.6% of all upper secondary schools and 13.6% of students. For 2000/01, the figures were 22.1% and 11.9%, respectively. These schools are generally small, and thus economically inefficient. The current demographic decrease is faster than the decrease of the number of accepted students to these schools.

Large-scale diversification of educational opportunities has developed largely due to the rise of private schools, which have demonstrated greater adaptability to the labour market than state schools and satisfied the demands of many for whom education had been inaccessible. Most of these have been secondary technical schools, which continue to represent the centre of interest in secondary school study. These schools have concentrated primarily on admitting pupils in such high-demand programmes as commercial academies, hotel schools, family schools and others in the area of economics and business.





Public attitudes to issues related to private schools have changed from initial positive assessments and expectations to moderately skeptical, sometimes negative expectations. The fact remains, however, that the issue of education quality which was raised in recent years by the establishment of private schools has contributed to public awareness of differences in quality among schools and in curricula, which are more varied at private schools than at state schools. The public is also aware of the significant role played by private schools in varying curricular options offered and enriching teaching methods. For the most part the public believes that the economic means for development of state and non-state schools should be comparable, and that private schools should continue to receive support in the future.

In 2004/05 private and denominational schools made up 1.5% of all preschools and they accounted for 1.2% of the total number of children, 1.4% of all basic schools with 0.8% of students, 22.5% of schools at upper secondary level with 15% of students and 33% of tertiary professional schools with 34% of students. (Czech Eurydice Unit, *Czech Republic 2005/06*).

## Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

School facilities include free-time extracurricular activity (after-school clubs, arts schools, children's centres and state language schools); school meals and accommodations (school canteens, youth homes, university dining halls and halls of residence); compensatory family, safety and preventative education; and pre-school education (kindergartens). Roughly 12% of the education budget is spent on these facilities. Parents of pupils attending these facilities pay some of the recurrent costs.

A total of CZK498 million was allocated from the state budget for the operation of university halls of residence, which are administered by individual universities. However, it would require considerable financial investment to reach the desired technical condition. One of the main problems with the situation at present is the unequal distribution of housing capacity among universities. Canteens, also administered by the universities, offer opportunities for university students to take meals. A total of CZK204 million was allocated for canteen operations in 1995 and distributed according to the number of student meals served. Part of their capacities (in some cases over 50%) remain unused. Students are granted two subsidized meals a day. School facilities for institutional care, protective education and preventive educational care are a diverse set of institutions offering pupils 3-18 years old relief from dysfunctional family or other socially unfavourable environments. They provide a full education in areas that would normally be provided by the family.

New textbooks have been written and printed in great numbers by private publishing houses. The Educational Research Institute is actively involved in producing new material and it co-operates closely with groups of teachers. Regular co-operation between the central administration and the Educational Research Institute on the one hand, and the private publishing houses on the other, is necessary for the present free-market textbook policy to function satisfactorily. The task of providing schools with new textbooks is far from being completed.



## Adult and non-formal education

Adult education is linked to tertiary education and includes further professional training, retraining, and civic education. Key issues that have to be resolved for the further development of this significant component of lifelong learning include the so far unclear distribution of powers and responsibilities, as well as the non-existence of mechanisms for systemic adult education development.

After-school education is mainly offered in after-school centres and school clubs, both affiliated to particular schools. Apart from providing relaxation and opportunities for hobby activities for children and youngsters, these institutions play a role in relieving the situation in families where both parents are employed. After-school educational institutions unaffiliated to school (called Leisure Time Centres for Children and Youth) comprise Houses of Children and Youth and hobby clubs specializing in the specific interest activities of children and youth and even their parents and other interested adults. Interest activities usually take the form of regular meetings in circles, clubs, choirs, ensembles and courses. The leisure time of children and youth is now no longer taken care of exclusively by the state, which has been joined by a host of interest, sporting, charity, private and religious associations. Among the traditional forms of extra-curricular education in the field of music, art and dancing there have always been the people's schools of art, renamed basic school of arts in 1990. Many students study also in state language schools.

An important role in the educational process is played by the mass media. The production of programmes of use to schools by the Czech television and by the Czech radio is done on the basis of a mutual agreement with the MEYS. A group of experts works out an annual concept for these programmes, taking into account national educational needs and current international trends. The group also works out a schedule of topics for the programmes and helps to choose the most appropriate broadcasting/telecasting times.

The ongoing changes in society and the economy underline the necessity of creating a complex system of lifelong education. This area is covered by an expanding network of adult education. Its function is to organize educational activities leading to all-round personality development, to the development of professional qualifications and to the general improvement of educational and cultural standards. Adult education is oriented to all citizens, including youngsters, whose highest education is basic. A qualitative new type of education is extramural adult education through correspondence, combining individual and group forms with other auxiliary programmes. Besides day and evening classes, the universities offer various possibilities of lifelong education. More and more schools organize instruction according to individual study plans, so that the student may combine his or her study with certain types of employment. The development of distance learning is also gradually contributing to the enrichment of educational offerings.

The Universities of the Third Age aim to meet the needs of senior citizens who no longer have gainful employment. These universities create opportunities for the imaginative use of leisure time and enable older people to continue to play an active role in society. Some of the existing specializations taught at the Czech university institutions and aimed at regular students can also be used in educational programmes



for senior citizens. The recently founded Czech Association of Universities of the Third Age aims at helping to found new such universities, to co-ordinate their activities and to co-operate with comparable institutions abroad.

## Teaching staff

The work of teachers has changed since 1989. Under the new conditions many teachers levels of specialization were no longer sufficient, requiring them to re-orientate their specializations. Not all teachers managed to attain quickly the same quality of required supplementary qualifications, re-qualification and change in the content and style of their work. Indeed, primary and secondary school teachers are, by and large, not ready to effectively and efficiently adapt current curricula to the dynamically changing practice in schools, because they were not systematically trained to do so. Furthermore, the change in social conditions significantly affected not only the work of teachers, but also that of the school management staff, who were faced with new tasks arising from the autonomous status of schools.

Training for the teaching profession varies according to the level of qualification (i.e. according to the level of school for which the graduates are considered to be qualified). Teachers in the first stage of basic school complete a four-year course of studies and are awarded a master's degree. They may study in one of nine teaching faculties. They obtain a qualification to teach general subjects with a specialty in music, art or physical education, and occasionally a foreign language. Curricula and methods of teacher training for the first stage of basic school are currently undergoing fundamental changes.

Teachers of general education subjects in the second stage of basic school and at upper secondary schools usually specialize in two teaching subjects. The course of study is five years long and takes place in twenty-four faculties (faculties of education, philosophy, natural science, mathematics and physics, physical education and sport). Graduates are awarded a master's degree. In some faculties a single-specialty course of study is taken, especially for foreign language teaching. Following the abolition of the compulsory teaching of Russian and the introduction of optional courses, teachers are able, in the form of extended study, to obtain qualifications to teach a further foreign language. Most teacher training faculties have introduced two types of master's courses—a four-year teacher training course for both stages of basic school and a five-year course for training secondary school teachers.

Teachers of specialized subjects at secondary technical and vocational schools are trained at all other types of higher education establishments (in faculties at technical, economic, agricultural, medical, and art schools). In some of these faculties a teaching qualification in a specialized subject can be obtained while studying a major specialist subject. Teaching qualifications can also be obtained after finishing university in the form of supplementary teaching courses, usually lasting four semesters. A university graduate who teaches, but failed to complete the teaching specialization, is considered unqualified.



Teachers at special schools must complete a four-year course, or occasionally a five-year course in the case of master's courses at some education faculties, in order to enter the profession.

Kindergarten teachers are not required to attend the university and obtain their qualifications at the end of a four-year course culminating with the *maturita* examination, offered at fifteen secondary teacher training schools. They also have the opportunity to study at higher teacher training schools and universities, where they enroll in the short bachelor's degree course.

At the higher education level, teachers' professional promotion depends on their level of academic teaching qualifications. Schools (faculties) determine regulations according to statutes for the process of *habilitace* (being admitted to the title of *docent*, i.e. senior lecturer) and the procedure for appointing professors. These procedures take place before the academic councils of the faculties and schools in the form of a *viva voce* defence of the professor's work. Senior lecturers are appointed by the university rector on the recommendation of the faculty's academic council; the university's academic council discusses the recommendations of the faculty's academic council for the appointment of professors. Upon their recommendation, the rector submits a proposal for the appointment of a professor to the Ministry, which conveys it to the President of the Czech Republic. The President carries out the appointment which is countersigned by the Prime Minister.

However, the school or faculty does not automatically have the right to carry out the appointment of senior lecturers and professors. The MEYS can revoke this right on recommendation of the Accreditation Commission. The prerequisite for obtaining the academic teaching qualifications of a senior lecturer or professor is possession of an academic title (doctor). The 1990 Higher Education Act strengthened universities position in academic training by awarding them the right to confer the title of doctor. It is assumed that a given proportion of graduates from doctoral courses at universities will stay on and devote themselves to becoming higher education teachers, for whom obtaining the title of Doctor is an important condition required for professional promotion. During the course of their studies, doctoral candidates, particularly internal ones, are involved in both university research activities and occasionally teaching.

A new system of continuing education for teachers at basic, upper secondary and higher professional schools was established in 1996, when the MEYS founded six teacher training centres. The National Institute for Further Education was established in 2004, having been transformed from pedagogical centres. It consists of thirteen regional stations and coordinates and organizes courses of in-service training of teachers and school management. It will also play an important role in implementing framework educational programmes in schools.

In 2004/05, the weekly working load is thirty-one hours in kindergarten. The working week of all employees in the education sector is the same as that of all other employees in the Czech Republic, i.e. 40 hours. The working week of teachers is divided into teaching hours and hours required for activities related to the education process, i.e. preparing lessons, assessment of pupils/students, consultancy and guidance, supervision, informing parents of their children's progress, attending



meetings, managing departments, libraries, collections, etc. The school head decides on the distribution of working hours. The prescribed teaching load for teachers at both stages of basic school is 22 lessons per week. The direct teaching load for teachers at the upper secondary level is 21 lessons per week for teacher of general and technical subjects, 21-25 lessons for teacher of practical training, and 25-35 lessons for teachers of vocational training. (Czech Eurydice Unit, *Czech Republic 2005/06*).

The disadvantage of the teaching profession in basic and secondary schools is the “flat” nature of the career path, with the vast majority of teachers ending their productive period in the same position as that in which they began. The present salary charts enable a regular linear growth in salary, influenced only by the level of education attained and seniority (there is a scheduled pay raise every three years). Qualified kindergarten teachers are classified in salary bands 7 and 8 (according to the level of education attained), basic school teachers in band 9 and upper secondary school teachers in band 10. Graduates from secondary schools with the maturita school leaving exam and from higher professional schools fall into lower salary bands (bands 4-6), as do graduates with university bachelor’s degrees (salary band 8). In universities the career path of teachers is steeper, both with regard to the academic teaching level (assistant, specialized assistant, senior lecturer, professor) and financial compensation. Teachers in higher education may be classified in salary bands 9-12, with varying rates within each band. This is dependent on the level of academic teaching qualifications attained, the extent of involvement in lecturing and academic teaching activities, managerial position and age. However, a shortage of finances often leads to teachers being classified in lower salary categories than they might have been, particularly in the case of those in the lower categories.

Teachers’ salaries are based on standard pay and variable elements (e.g. individual bonuses, rewards and management fees). The proportion of variable elements in the salary is constantly increasing, although with regard to lower salary rates it does not sufficiently fulfil its incentive and differentiation functions.

## **Educational research and information**

There are a number of institutions engaged in research into education and schools, the most important being organizations managed directly by the MEYS and those attached to certain education faculties. Amongst the organizations directly controlled by the MEYS, are: the Educational Research Institute (general education and special education, with an emphasis on content and organization); the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (professional education, stressing its conceptual, content and organizational aspects); the Centre for Higher Education Studies of (post-secondary, especially university education, with an emphasis on analytical and conceptual aspects); the Institute for Psychological Counselling in Education (concept, content and co-ordination of educational psychology); and the Institute for Information on Education (analysis and strategy of education system development).

The Institute for Information on Education provides data for the MEYS and the public. It processes statistical data collected regularly through more than two dozen statistical report sheets. Since 1996, a structurally new statistical yearbook of education has been appearing, together with the Atlas of Czech Education, which, apart from the list of schools and school facilities, provides analytical data on the



educational infrastructure in the country. All these outputs are, or will be, also available on CD-ROM.

Educational research is stimulated and financed in several ways.

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## Web resources

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports: <http://www.msmt.cz/> [Mainly in Czech. Last checked: October 2007.]

Centre for Higher Education Studies: <http://www.csvs.cz/> [In Czech and English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Czech Rectors Conference: <http://crc.muni.cz/> [In Czech and English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Czech School Inspection: <http://www.csicr.cz/> [In Czech. Last checked: October 2007.]

Educational Research Institute: <http://www.vuppraha.cz/> [In Czech. Last checked: October 2007.]

Institute for Information on Education: <http://www.uiv.cz/> [In Czech and English. Last checked: October 2007.]





National Training Fund: <http://www.nvf.cz/> [In Czech and English. Last checked: October 2007.]

National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education: <http://www.nuov.cz/> [In Czech and English. Last checked: October 2007.]

EURYBASE, the information database on education systems in Europe:  
<http://www.eurydice.org/> [In several languages.]

*For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>*