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Principles and general objectives of education

The principles and general aims of education have been strongly marked by the political changes which occurred in November 1989 and the subsequent transformation of the entire society and economy, determining a new orientation in the education system towards democracy and pluralism characterized by: freedom of selection of an educational career (by parents and students); pluralism in all forms of education; participation of citizens in educational management; democratic character of the educational organization; and development of lifelong education.

According to the Programme Declaration of the Government of November 2002, the transformation of traditional education into a modern education system is the main and long-term goal. Along with other constituents of the system of lifelong education, the modern education system will prepare the people for life and work under the new conditions. The priority will rest in realisation of the right for free choice of educational career and thereby in creating the conditions for each individual to lead a full-value life and to find employment in the European labour market (the Slovak Republic entered the European Union in 2004). (MOE, 2004).

Within the framework of the Programme Declaration of August 2006, the government considers the forming of the knowledge society to be its priority because only such society constitutes a precondition of democratic development, science and technological progress, economic growth and social security, employment and growth. The principle of lifelong learning is considered an important area of increased quality of knowledge potential. The development of education and training in the spirit of modern European and world trends must be based on the support of knowledge-based economy, which creates the social environment, rules, models as well as real opportunities for economic realization of an individual. (MOE, 2007).

According to Article 4 of the new Education Act of 2008, the aim of education is to enable students to:

- acquire competencies, especially communication skills, oral and written skills, the ability to use information and communication technologies in the national language, mother tongue and foreign languages, mathematical literacy and competencies in the field of science and technology, lifelong learning, social skills and civic competencies, entrepreneurial skills and cultural competencies;
- learn and use at least two foreign languages;
- learn how to identify and analyze problems, propose their solutions and know how to solve them;
- develop manual skills, creative, and artistic psychomotor skills;
- strengthen respect for parents and other persons, to cultural and national values and traditions of the State and the mother language;



- strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and principles set out in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms;
- be prepared for responsible life in a free society, in a spirit of understanding and tolerance, equality of men and women, friendship among nations, national and ethnic and religious tolerance;
- learn how to develop and cultivate their personality and lifelong learning, to work in a team and assume responsibilities;
- learn to control and regulate their behavior, take care and protect their health and the environment and to respect the universal human ethical values.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Act No. 171/1990** of the Law Code amending the 1989 Act on the System of Basic and Secondary Schools (the Education Act) abolished the monopoly of the State in education, enabled the establishment of the private and church-affiliated schools, and reformed the general secondary education system introducing eight-year gymnasia. The 1998 amendment to the Act introduced ten years of compulsory schooling.

The new **Act No. 245/2008** of Law Code on education and training and on the change and supplement to some acts (the Education Law) was adopted in May 2008 and entered into force in September 2008. Among others, the new Act defines terms, objectives and principles of educational and training process, the division of powers among individual entities involved in this process and their control powers, the conditions of admission to study, the system of school facilities, the merging of secondary vocational schools into secondary specialized schools, and the preparation of educational programmes and syllabi. The Act also defines the rights and duties of children, pupils and their statutory representatives in the education and training process. The Act specifies that education and training in schools are performed through education and training programmes. The State will determine the mandatory content of school education and training through the state programme, providing the schools with a higher autonomy reflected in the school programme. The National Institute for Education and the State Institute of Vocational Education develop the state educational programme. This Act also provides for a ten-year compulsory school attendance, ensures free education and training of children in kindergarten in the last year preceding the beginning of compulsory school attendance, and provides for integration of pupils with special education needs in mainstream primary and secondary schools. The new Act also amended and supplemented the Act on State Administration in Education and School Self-Administration and the Act on Financing Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Facilities, and also amended a number of related regulations. This Act was last amended by **Act No. 37/2011**.

The **Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 322/2008 on Special Schools**, issued in August 2008, regulates the organization and functioning of schools for pupils with special educational needs.



The **Higher Education Act No. 172/1990**, adopted on 4 May 1990, established new fundamental academic freedoms, increased the autonomy of higher education institutions and their faculties, introduced a more democratic system of internal management with the new independent bodies (senates), and created the Council of Higher Education Institutions, which represents the interests of these institutions in relation to the State, and the Accreditation Commission, which supervises the quality of higher education. The functions of the Accreditation Commission were specified in the **Government Decree No. 422/1990**, issued on 2 October 1990. The most extensive amendment to the Higher Education Act, adopted in 1996, introduced the possibility of establishing private higher education institutions. The new **Higher Education Act No. 131/2002** adopted in April 2002 and last amended in 2011 regulates tertiary education (including financing) and also reflects the gradual implementation of the Bologna process.

The **Act No. 542/1990 on State Administration and Self-government in Education**, as amended in 1996, changed the system of educational management, abolished the local education authorities created at the beginning of the 1990s and transferred their functions to district and regional offices. **Act No. 222/1996 on Organization of the Local State Administration**, issued on 4 July 1996, transferred the functions of LEAs for basic and secondary schools to the newly-established district and regional offices. Further changes in the system of public administration of education were introduced by the new **Act on the State Administration in Education and School Self-governance** No. 596/2003 and subsequent amendments (the last one in 2011).

The Ministry of Education and Science **Decree No. 41/1996 on Professional and Pedagogical Competence of Educational Staff**, issued on 26 January 1996, stipulated the qualification requirements for teachers in kindergartens, special schools, basic schools (grades 1-4), and for general and professional subject teachers in basic schools (grades 5-8) and secondary schools. The **Act No. 317/2009 on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff**, entered into force in November 2009, establishes the rights and duties of teachers, trainers and other pedagogical staff, qualification requirements for these professions as well as the assessment of their performance. It also introduced a new model of continuing professional development (credit system).

The **Act No. 386/1997 on Further Education** of December 1997, entered into force on 1 January 1998 and amended in 2004 and 2007, lays down the general conditions and types of further education (including the institutions where it takes place). The **Act No. 568/2009 on Lifelong Learning**, adopted in December 2009, provides for the establishment of a National Qualifications System. The new **Act No. 184/2009 on Vocational Education and Training (VET)** supplements the 2008 Education Act and provides for the participation of different stakeholders (employers, professional associations and chambers) in the governance of the VET sub-system. The VET Act also provides for the establishment of national, regional and sectoral VET councils.

A nine-year compulsory school attendance was established by the Act No. 350/1994. In 1998, the duration of compulsory education was extended from nine to ten years by Act No. 6/1998. Article 42 of the **Constitution** adopted in 1992 stipulates that everyone shall have the right to education; school attendance is



compulsory. Citizens shall have the right to free education at primary and secondary schools and, depending on the abilities of the individual and the potential of the society, also at universities.

Administration and management of the education system

The major responsibility for education at the central level rests with the Ministry of Education (since 2010 the **Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport**). In addition to the Ministry of Education, secondary vocational education is provided by other ministries and bodies, including the ministries of Economy, Transportation, Post and Telecommunications, Industry, Agriculture, and Defence.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for educational policy, implementation strategies, and legislation and financing. It determines the network of schools and school facilities, as well as the principles of pedagogical management of schools. The Ministry is also supported by several institutions under its supervision.

The **National Institute for Education** is in charge of curriculum development for general education (including general subjects of in vocational education and training schools), and is also responsible for defining the framework curricular documents (or state educational programmes) at the national level.

The **National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements**, established in September 2008 following the changes introduced by the new Education Act, is responsible for: preparing and administering the national external test in mathematics and language sat by students completing grade 9 (carried out nation-wide for the first time in 2011); preparing the external part and the written component (essay) of the internal part of the school-leaving examination at the end of (upper) secondary education (*matura* examination); and coordinating the participation of the country in international student assessment programmes such as the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

The **State Institute of Vocational Education** provides assistance in the development of curricula for vocational education and training, including the elaboration of framework curricular documents (state educational programmes) at the national level.

The **Institute of Information and Prognoses (Forecasting) of Education** is a central information body in the field of education and a key information centre of the Ministry of Education and its directly managed organizations. It coordinates the operation of the educational information system (including statistics) within the competence of the Ministry, and carries out research and analyses in the field of educational development and planning.

The **Methodological and Pedagogical Centre** is responsible for in-service training of teachers and pedagogical staff through three regional offices and six additional offices in the regions.



The **National Lifelong Learning Institute**, established in May 2010 through the renaming and reorganization of the Academia Istropolitana, performs tasks related to the implementation of National Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance until 2015. It is also responsible for defining and updating the National Qualifications Framework and is involved in the design of a national system of qualifications, system monitoring and forecasting of training needs, and providing the tools, networks and network consulting services for the recognition of further education.

The **State School Inspection** fulfils the function of the state supervision over the pedagogical management and level of education and training in schools and school facilities and submits to the Minister of Education the report on the state of educational activities at schools and school facilities, proposals of changes in the school network and, on the basis of identified shortcomings, it takes corrective measures.

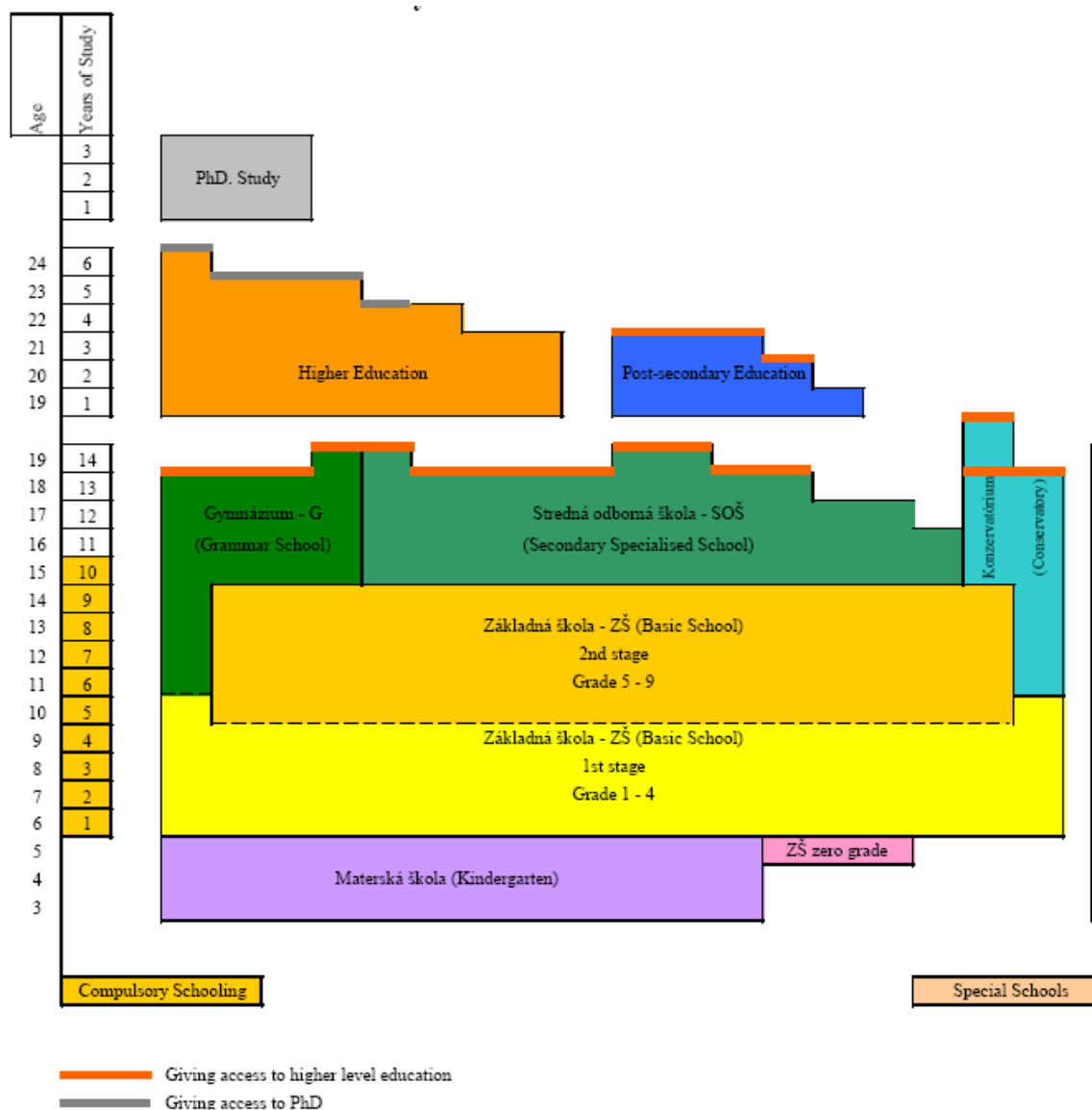
During the period 1990-1996, public schools and other educational establishments were under the responsibility of Local Education Authorities (LEAs), in accordance with the Act No. 542/1990. After the adoption of the Act No. 222/1996, these functions were transferred to the regional and district authorities. Following the adoption of the Act No. 596/2003, entered into force in January 2004, the school system is under the responsibility of: (i) the self-governing administration, including the **municipalities**, responsible for maintaining basic schools (primary and lower secondary education) and other establishments of local importance, and eight **offices of self-governing regions** maintaining secondary schools; and (ii) the state administration, through eight **regional offices**. The school self-government is carried out by school boards, municipal school boards, territorial and district school boards and, in secondary schools, also the students' school board.

The **municipality** establishes and dissolves the schools within its jurisdiction, kindergartens, basic and secondary schools, out-of-school establishments, basic schools of art, language schools at basic schools and facilities of school catering, and establishments of services. The **self-governing region** establishes and dissolves secondary schools and school facilities within its jurisdiction and carries out similar educational-organizational, personnel and economic-administrative competence in relation to schools established by it as a municipality in relation to basic schools. The **regional school office** establishes and dissolves, according to network, all types of schools and school facilities that form a part of schools, carries out control activities, and provides professional advice to self-governing regions, church bodies and founders of private schools.

Higher education institutions are established in accordance with the Higher Education Act. Enjoying a high degree of autonomy, they are partially subordinated to the Ministry of Education (with the exception of military and police academies) which allocates funds from the state budget. The external evaluation of higher education institutions is an integral part of the accreditation process. It has been provided for in legislation since March 2003, and is carried out by the **Accreditation Commission**.

Structure and organization of the education system

Slovak Republic: structure of the education system (2009)



Source: CEDEFOP, 2010.

Pre-school education

Pre-primary education is provided by kindergartens, which are designed for children from 3 to 5 years of age. Municipalities can establish nurseries for children aged less than 3 years. Preschool education is not compulsory and normally is provided on a fee-paying basis. In accordance with the 2008 Education Act, one year of pre-primary education before the starting of compulsory education should be provided free of charge.



Primary and lower secondary education

Basic education is compulsory and children normally enrol in school at age 6. Education in the basic school lasts nine years. Basic education is divided into two stages, i.e. grades 1-4 (primary education) and grades 5-9 (lower secondary). Since 2011, students completing grade 9 sit the national external test in mathematics and language prepared by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements. It is expected that in the future the results from testing will be taken into account for admission to secondary school. Upon successful completion of basic education students receive a certificate.

Secondary education

Secondary education is provided by three main types of school: gymnasia (grammar schools), secondary specialized schools and conservatories. Gymnasia provide general secondary education. There are four-, five-, and eight-year gymnasia (bilingual gymnasia offer five-year programmes, with the first preparatory year devoted to language preparation); the transfer to eight-year gymnasia is also possible after completing grade 4 (depending on the results of the entrance examination). The standard duration of gymnasia programmes is four years (for basic school leavers). Upon completion of (upper) general secondary education students sit the *matura* examination and if successful they receive the school-leaving certificate which gives access to higher education. Secondary specialized schools prepare students not only for vocational occupations, but also for higher education; the duration of programmes leading to the *matura* examination is four to five years; three- to four-year programmes leading to the certificate of apprenticeship are also available; two- and sometimes three-year training programmes leading to the qualifications for workers' trades and vocational occupations are also offered (mainly for basic school low achievers or those who do not complete the basic education programme). The duration of vocational education and training programmes at the postsecondary non-tertiary level is at least two years. Conservatories offer six-year (in the case of music and drama) and eight-year programmes (in the case of dance). Upon completion of the programme students sit the *matura* examination; they can continue their studies for an additional two years (postsecondary) leading to the *absolutorium* diploma.

Higher education

Higher education institutions provide education in the form of full- or part-time study. Bachelor's degree programmes generally last six to eight semesters. Master's (*Magister's*), engineer and doctoral (medical and veterinary branches) degree programmes last eight to twelve semesters. Postgraduate (PhD) degree programmes last six semesters. Part-time programmes are usually longer (one or two additional semesters). The new Higher Education Act of 2002 introduced bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programmes in accordance with the Bologna process. Bachelor's degrees are generally awarded after three or four years of study, while a master's degree can take one to three years to complete. The duration of full-time doctoral degree programmes is three and four years. The former long-cycle programmes have gradually been phased out since 2005/06 and incorporated into master's courses. (Eurydice, 2007).



The school year is divided into terms (two semesters at the higher education level) and usually consists of thirty-nine weeks. In 1999/2000, the school year comprised 189 teaching days. Schools normally operate five days per week. The school year 2009/10 comprised 188 teaching days between 1 September and 31 August of the following year (classes are held until the end of June). For basic education (grades 1-9), the annual number of teaching hours ranged from 620 (for the first year) to 705 (for the fourth year) at the primary education level and from 761 (for the fifth year) to 818 (for the seventh to ninth years) at the lower secondary education level. (Eurydice, 2010).

The educational process

The development of the national curricula falls under the competence of the Ministry of Education. The curriculum for general education is developed under the supervision and coordination of the National Institute for Education (and State Institute of Vocational Education in the case of vocational education and training), in close cooperation with the subject commissions, teachers and advisers.

In comparison to the previous curriculum, which was unified, worked out in details, and had to be strictly observed, new curricula give the teachers and subject commissions the possibility to adapt the educational programmes to the conditions of individual schools and teachers. In recent years the curriculum has been completely changed. It has been enriched by optional subjects as well as interdisciplinary subjects. Furthermore, great attention has been paid to developing the core curriculum, or educational standards. The educational standard for individual subjects contains, in its operational form, the knowledge, skills and intellectual operations required for developing pupils' cognitive abilities. The standards also state that the pupils' ability to communicate, give interviews, concentrate and be creative, overcome obstacles, and interact effectively with peers and adults, should be developed. The curriculum states that in addition to regular teaching activity, schools should also provide space for extra-curricular activities aimed at developing versatility in students' personalities.

One of the essential requirements which has been gradually and constantly emphasized, is to strengthen the differentiation of the content of education and to extend the possibilities of optional curriculum in the final years of study with the aim to create the greatest possible space for pupils with diverse abilities, needs and interests. Besides the basic curriculum that allow differentiation of the system of extended classes, the development of alternative curricula with varied study concentrations and possibility of their choice and modification according to local conditions, has also been introduced. (MOE, 2004).

The 2008 Education Act makes reference to the state educational programme and the school educational programme. The school programmes are worked out in curricula, syllabi and educational standards. The state educational programmes contain, for example, the name of the programme, the aims of education and training, the expected level of achievement upon completing the programme, the graduate's profile, educational standards, framework teaching plans, etc. The school educational programme contain the name of the programme, the definition of the aims, the



expected level of achievement upon its completion, the orientation of the school, the length of the study, the language of teaching, etc.

The educational standards contain a constituent part of the state educational programmes, i.e. a set of requirements for the knowledge, skills and abilities that the children and pupils should acquire. They include performance standards which determine the level of mastering of the knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as content-based standards which determine the volume of required knowledge and skills. Framework curricula are a part of the state educational programme, covering the main learning areas and a list of compulsory and non-compulsory subjects defining the minimum number of lessons within the framework of educational programme or its comprehensive part. The frameworks also determine the weekly load and the number of lessons that the school may use for its own educational programme development. The frameworks are obligatory for curriculum development of the respective school educational programmes. The frameworks and model syllabi, prepared by the National Institute for Education and approved by the Ministry, represent a guide for curriculum development by schools to suit their own conditions. Schools that are not capable to work out their own syllabi may use the model syllabi.

The primary (basic) education curriculum (grades 1-9) includes seven learning areas which organize the individual subjects, their contents and the key competencies. These areas are: language and communication; mathematics and information technology; nature and society; man and values; man and the world of work; art and culture; and health and movement. In addition there are cross-curricular themes that serve to extend the subject content matter. The contents can be included in the individual subjects, organized in the form of courses, or offered as optional subjects. The cross-curricular themes are: personal and social development; environmental education; media education; multicultural education; traffic education (safety education in traffic); life and health protection; project development and presentation skills; regional education and traditional folk culture. (Eurydice, 2009).

Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education is provided by kindergartens, which cater to children aged 3-5 years. In exceptional cases, children under 3 years of age can also enrol. Municipalities can establish nurseries for children aged less than 3 years. Preschool education is not compulsory and is normally provided on a fee-paying basis. In accordance with the 2008 Education Act, one year of pre-primary education before the starting of compulsory education should be provided free of charge. Since 2002 kindergartens can operate within the primary school premises (i.e. kindergarten–primary school).

Preschool education institutions may be established by a state administration body in the field of education, churches, religious societies, communities or other legal entities or persons. Kindergartens and special kindergartens are established as institutions providing half-day care, all-day educational care or boarding educational care. Most of the children (96%) attend all-day kindergartens. Regular kindergartens are also attended by children with special educational needs who may be either integrated into the mainstream classes or attend special classes established for them in kindergartens. During the year of pre-primary education before the starting of



compulsory education children are introduced to the basics cultural, reading, mathematical and science literacy. The profile of children completing pre-primary education is defined making reference to a set of competencies (capabilities) to be developed, i.e. psychomotor, personal, social, communication, cognitive, learning and information competencies. This set of competencies serves for teachers to be able to direct their teaching activity through purposeful and meaningful educational activities corresponding to the developmental level of children. (Eurydice, 2009). The competencies are drawn up on the basis of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning.

Pre-primary education aims at supporting the personality development of children in the socio-economic, intellectual, physical, moral and aesthetic areas, developing their abilities and skills, and creating the conditions for the further education. It prepares for life in the society in harmony with individual and age specificities. According to the state educational programme for pre-primary education adopted in June 2008, the main aim is to attain the optimal perceptual and motor, cognitive and socio-emotional levels as the basis for readiness for school education and the life in the society. The starting ground is the uniqueness of the child, active learning, and integration in a group and a team. Pre-primary education aims to:

- meet the need of the child for social contact with his or her peers;
- facilitate smooth adaptation to the changed environment (kindergarten and primary school);
- foster the attitude of the child to exploring and learning through play;
- develop purposefully, systematically and in a creative atmosphere the child's personality in the psycho-motor, cognitive, social, emotional and moral spheres;
- have regard for different socio-cultural and socio-economic background of the child;
- observe and protect the rights of the child in cooperation with the family, the founder and other institutions (maintaining the ethical principle of cooperation) while respecting the needs of the child;
- win the confidence of parents in individual educational counselling and focus their attention on positive manifestations in the behaviour of their child.

Pre-primary education shall help the child to:

- foster respect for the parents, cultural and national values and traditions of the state, mother tongue, state language and the child's own culture;
- acquire and foster respect for human rights and basic freedoms;
- prepare for life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, freedom from prejudice, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among nations, national and ethnic groups, and the churches and religious communities;
- learn to develop and cultivate one's own personality, prepare for lifelong learning;
- learn to cooperate in a group and a team and assume appropriate responsibility;



- learn to protect one's health, including the use of healthy nutrition and protect the environment;
- learn to respect the ethical principles of the humanity.

The attainment of the above aims requires a favourable educational climate with an emphasis on the development of creativity over memorization, in which learning takes place through play. Positive emotional experience of the child is crucial. The state educational programme for kindergartens is called 'The child and the world', and on this basis kindergartens have to develop their programmes. The state programme is organized into four integrated thematic domains, i.e.: I am, People, Nature, and Culture. Each thematic domain covers three areas of the development of the child's personality, i.e.: perceptual-motor, cognitive, and socio-emotional. The thematic domains and the educational developmental areas are a means to achieve the specific (concrete, operationalized) objectives in a process-based activity. In achieving the specific objectives the child's personality develops holistically, even if the formulation of a particular objective has been incorporated in one of the educational areas of development. The content standards cover the content which respects the developmental potentialities of the preschool child and which draw on the child's experience and understanding. The content standards may be understood as the obligation for the teacher. They contain the basic curriculum that the children are expected to master, appropriate to their developmental potentialities and by means of active methods. The content standards are a means to educate children of preschool age and serve to develop the basic foundations of competencies (capabilities). The performance standards are formulated in specific (concrete, operationalized) targets. The planning of educational activities is under the responsibility of the teacher. The way, form, scope and duration of educational activities are determined and agreed by every kindergarten at the first meeting of the pedagogical board. The language of instruction is the state language (Slovak). For children belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups education and training is provided in the language of the relevant national minority. In kindergartens or classes where the education and training is provided in the language of the relevant national minority, communication in the state language is also part of the educational and training activity. (NIE, 2008).

Kindergartens are divided into classes organized by children ages (i.e. 3 to 4, 4 to 5, 5 to 6, and 3 to 6). The assessment of children progress is mainly carried out through monitoring and analysis of the play, the major, dominant activity of the preschool age child. The teacher analyses from pedagogical point of view all the products of the child. Each product is assessed individually with the child in the form of dialogue or publicly by presentation of the child product (classroom decoration, exhibition for parents). The teachers closely cooperate with parents and regularly inform them about the progress of their children.

In 2000/01, the gross enrolment ratio for pre-primary education was estimated at 81%. According to national data, in 2004/05 there were 3,046 kindergartens (public and private) with 149,569 children enrolled. The total number of teachers was 14,009 (including head teachers).

In the 2009/10 school year, the gross enrolment ratio (ratio of all children enrolled in kindergartens irrespective of age, i.e., including the children under 3 and over 5 years from the total number of population aged 3-5 years) was estimated at



85.9 %. (Eurydice, 2010). In the same school year, there were 2,873 kindergartens (of which 44 were run by churches and 64 in the private sector) with a total enrolment of 138,741 children and 13,798 teachers (including head teachers). In addition there were 73 kindergartens for children with special educational needs with a total enrolment of 1,268 children and 237 teachers. Out of the 2,765 kindergartens in the public sector, 23 kindergartens organized special education classes with a total enrolment of 245 children. (Eurydice, 2009).

The Statistical Office reports that in 2010/11 there were 2,869 kindergartens with 139,239 children enrolled (of whom 67,216 were girls) and 13,896 teachers (including head teachers). (Statistical Office, 2011).

Primary and lower secondary education (basic education)

As mentioned, basic education is compulsory and children normally enrol in school at age 6. Education in the basic school lasts nine years. Basic education is divided into two stages, i.e. grades 1-4 (primary education) and grades 5-9 (lower secondary). Since 2011, students completing grade 9 sit the national external test in mathematics and language prepared by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements. It is expected that in the future the results from testing will be taken into account for admission to secondary school. Upon successful completion of basic education students receive a certificate.

The process of democratization of education which took place after 1989 is closely connected with the curriculum transformation. Chief attention has been given to the development of educational standards or a core curriculum. Educational standards have been developed for preschool education, the first stage of basic school (grades 1-4) as well as for the second stage of basic school (grades 5-9). New syllabi for basic schools were introduced in 1995/96. In comparison to the previous ones, they were not legally binding but gave the teacher and the subject commissions the possibility to adapt them to the conditions in the region and in the individual schools. The teaching of religion in schools was reintroduced as well as ethics as a new compulsory subject alternative to religion. The most important changes took place in foreign language teaching, sometimes under the influence of the presence of foreign lecturers—with the possibility for teachers of foreign languages to participate in in-service teacher training courses abroad—and the use of foreign textbooks.

As mentioned, the Education Act No. 245/2008 provides the basis for diversification of curricula according to local, regional differences, needs and interests of individual pupils and specific offers of schools and teaching staff. The state educational programme defines the compulsory curriculum and the school educational programme has to be developed in accordance with the state educational programme. The educational standards are a constituent part of the State educational programme. The basic education curriculum (grades 1-9) includes seven learning areas which organize the individual subjects, their contents and the key competencies. These areas are: language and communication; mathematics and information technology; nature and society; man and values; man and the world of work; art and culture; and health and movement. In addition there are cross-curricular themes that serve to extend the subject content matter; the contents can be included in the individual subjects, organized in the form of courses, or offered as optional subjects. The cross-curricular



themes are: personal and social development; environmental education; media education; multicultural education; traffic education (safety education in traffic); life and health protection; project development and presentation skills; regional education and traditional folk culture.

The tables below show the framework curriculum for basic education (2009 and 2011) in schools using Slovak as language of instruction:

Slovak Republic. Framework curriculum for primary (basic) education: weekly lesson timetable

Learning area/subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade								
	Primary education				Lower secondary				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Language and communication:</i>									
Slovak language and literature	8	6	6	6	5	4	4	5	5
First foreign language	–	–	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Second foreign language	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	1
<i>Nature and society:</i>									
Natural science	0.5	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–
History and geography	–	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Man and nature:</i>									
Physics	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	2	1
Chemistry	–	–	–	–	–	0.5	0.5	1	2
Biology	–	–	–	–	1	1	1.5	1	1
<i>Man and society:</i>									
History	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	1	2
Geography	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	1	1
Civics	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	0.5	0.5
<i>Man and values:</i>									
Ethics/Religious education	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5
<i>Mathematics and IT:</i>									
Mathematics	4	4	3	3	3.5	4	3.5	4	4
Information science	–	–	–	–	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Computer education	–	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Man and the world of work:</i>									
Work education	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
World of work	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.5	0.5	–
Technology	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.5	0.5	–
<i>Art and culture:</i>									
Art and craft	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	–
Music education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	–
Art education	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.5	0.5
<i>Health and movement:</i>									
Physical education	2	2	2	2	–	–	–	–	–
Physical education & sports	–	–	–	–	2	2	2	2	2
<i>Sub-total compulsory part (state programme)</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>School programme</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>
Total weekly periods (max.)	22	23	25	26	27	29	30	30	30

Source: Eurydice, 2009. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.



**Slovak Republic. Framework curriculum for primary education (grades 1-4,
Slovak as language of instruction): weekly lesson timetable**

Learning area/subject	Number of weekly periods over grades 1–4
<i>Language and communication:</i>	
Slovak language and literature	26
First foreign language/English	6
<i>Nature and society:</i>	
Natural science	3
Geography	3
<i>Man and values:</i>	
Ethics/Religious education	4
<i>Mathematics and IT:</i>	
Mathematics	14
Computer education	3
<i>Man and the world of work:</i>	
Work education	1
<i>Art and culture:</i>	
Art and craft	4
Music education	4
<i>Health and movement:</i>	
Physical education and sports	8
<i>Sub-total compulsory part (state programme)</i>	76
<i>School programme</i>	20
Total weekly periods over grades 1-4	96

Source: Website of the National Institute for Education, February 2012. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes. Time allocation to the different subjects is decided by the school. Approved by the Ministry of Education in May 2011 and effective from September 2011. Pupils having chosen a foreign language other than English will continue to study it as their first foreign language.

Slovak Republic. Framework curriculum for lower secondary education (grades 5-9, Slovak as language of instruction): weekly lesson timetable

Learning area/subject	Number of weekly periods over grades 5–9
<i>Language and communication:</i>	
Slovak language and literature	23
First foreign language	15
Second foreign language	4
<i>Man and nature:</i>	
Physics	5
Chemistry	4
Biology	5
<i>Man and society:</i>	
History	6
Geography	5
Civics	4
<i>Man and values:</i>	
Ethics/Religious education	4
<i>Mathematics and IT:</i>	
Mathematics	19
Information science	2
<i>Man and the world of work:</i>	
Work education	1
Technology	1
<i>Art and culture:</i>	
Art and craft	3
Music education	3
Art education	1
<i>Health and movement:</i>	
Physical education and sports	10
<i>Sub-total compulsory part (state programme)</i>	115
<i>School programme</i>	31
Total weekly periods over grades 5-9	146

Source: Website of the National Institute for Education, February 2012. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes. Time allocation to the different subjects is decided by the school. Approved by the Ministry of Education in May 2011 and effective from September 2011.

Starting in 2008/09, the curricula for the first grade of primary education (grade 1) and for the first grade of the lower secondary education (grade 5 and first year of the 8-year gymnasium and conservatory), as well as for the first year of upper secondary education implements the state educational programme, on the basis of which the schools develop their school educational programmes, in which they define



the teaching plan and curricula. Teachers are free to use the teaching methods and textbooks of their choice (from a list approved by the Ministry of Education). The alignment of the school programme to the state educational programme is controlled by the State School Inspection. (Eurydice, 2010).

Pupils are continuously assessed on the basis of written and oral work at school and homework. Basic school pupils are assessed twice a year. Evaluation is carried out on the basis of a 5-point marking scale: excellent (1), very good (2), good (3), satisfactory (4), failed (5). In grades 2 to 4, pupils pass to higher grades when their marks are not less than 4 in all subjects. If they fail (mark 5) in one or more subjects, they must repeat the grade. In the second stage of basic school (grades 5-9), pupils may sit an exam in one or two subjects in which they failed. If they pass the exam(s), they proceed to a higher grade. If they receive a “5” in more than two subjects or they fail, they must repeat the grade. Pupils are given a certificate at the end of the first semester and at the end of each school year. At the end of the ninth grade, a certificate is awarded on the basis of the pupil’s school results (with no final examination) with a certificate supplement which shows that “the pupil has received the lower secondary education”.

In 2003, the gross enrolment ratio for primary education was 100%. According to national data, in 2004/05 there were 2,342 primary schools (including state, church and private schools; 2,217 were state schools) with 560,618 pupils enrolled (of whom 530,777 in state schools). The number of full-time teachers (including head teachers) was 36,666.

In 2009/10, there were 2,224 primary (basic) schools, including 112 schools run by churches and 36 in the private sector. The total enrolment was 448,371 students, of whom 3,134 in grade 0 (pre-primary/preparatory year), 199,067 in grades 1-4, and 246,170 in grades 5-9. Out of the total enrolment, 134,106 pupils were enrolled in 282 basic schools of art. The number of full-time teachers (including head teachers) was 29,987, of whom 12,200 in grades 0-4 and 17,787 in grades 5-9. The number of part-time teachers was 5,184 (1,912 in grades 0-4 and 3,272 in grades 5-9). In addition there were 274 primary schools for pupils with special educational needs with a total enrolment of 19,581 pupils and 3,069 full-time teachers (including head teachers) as well as 169 part-time teachers. (Eurydice, 2009).

The Statistical Office reports that in 2010/11 there were 2,216 basic schools with 439,675 pupils enrolled (of whom 214,492 were girls) and 30,155 full-time teachers (of whom 25,810 were female teachers). (Statistical Office, 2011).

Secondary education

As mentioned, secondary education is provided by three main types of school: gymnasia (grammar schools), secondary specialized schools and conservatories. Gymnasia provide general secondary education. There are four-, five-, and eight-year gymnasia (bilingual gymnasia offer five-year programmes, with the first preparatory year devoted to language preparation); the transfer from basic school to eight-year gymnasium is also possible after completing grade 4 (depending on the results of the entrance examination). The standard duration of gymnasia programmes is four years (for basic school leavers). Upon completion of (upper) general secondary education



students sit the *matura* examination and if successful they receive the school-leaving certificate which gives access to higher education. Secondary specialized schools prepare students not only for vocational occupations, but also for higher education; the duration of programmes leading to the *matura* examination is four to five years; three- to four-year programmes leading to the certificate of apprenticeship are also available; two- and sometimes three-year training programmes leading to the qualifications for workers' trades and vocational occupations are also offered (mainly for basic school low achievers or those who do not complete the basic education programme). The duration of vocational education and training programmes at the postsecondary non-tertiary level is at least two years. Conservatories offer six-year (in the case of music and drama) and eight-year programmes (in the case of dance). Upon completion of the programme students sit the *matura* examination; they can continue their studies for an additional two years (postsecondary) leading to the *absolutorium* diploma.

As in the case of basic education, the school educational programme is the basic document of the secondary school. It is issued by the head teacher in agreement with the pedagogical council and the school board. The programme must be elaborated in accordance with the principles and aims stipulated in the 2008 Education Act and the respective state educational programme. In gymnasia, the teaching the humanities, foreign languages and physical education has increased and new subjects have been added. Within the framework of extended classes students may choose from among a range of subjects, and there is also a list of optional subjects to choose from. In secondary specialized schools language education and the scope of cross-curricular subjects have been extended and new subjects introduced, such as management, marketing, entrepreneurship, banking, and introduction to the world of work. (Eurydice, 2009).

Gymnasia provide general secondary education, normally lasting four years (for basic school graduates). They educate young people in accordance with the principles of patriotism, humanism and democracy, form their intellectual and moral development, prepare them for creative work and professional activities in their occupations, and provide scientific, aesthetic, health, physical and ecological education. Gymnasia programmes mainly prepare students for continuing their study at higher education institutions, but also for some occupations or activities in administration, culture and other similar branches. Since 1990, it is possible to organize eight-year gymnasia. The eight-year gymnasium is a comprehensive secondary school where students complete part of their compulsory school attendance. In addition, five-year bilingual gymnasia were set up with the purpose of teaching foreign languages (English, German, French, Italian, and Spanish) more effectively.

The tables below show the framework curriculum for the four- and eight-year gymnasium using Slovak as language of instruction:

Slovak Republic. Framework curriculum for general secondary education (four-year gymnasium, Slovak as language of instruction): weekly lesson timetable

Learning area/subject	Number of weekly periods in each form			
	1	2	3	4
<i>Language and communication:</i>				
Slovak language and literature	3	3	3	3
First foreign language	4	4	4	4
Second foreign language	2	2	2	2
<i>Man and nature:</i>				
Physics	2	2	1	–
Chemistry	2	2	1	–
Biology	2	3	1	–
<i>Man and society:</i>				
History	2	2	2	–
Geography	1	2	1	–
Civics	–	–	2	1
<i>Man and values:</i>				
Ethics/Religion	1	1	–	–
Psychosocial training	–	–	–	1
<i>Mathematics and IT:</i>				
Mathematics	4	3	3	1
Information science	1	1	1	–
<i>Art and culture:</i>				
Art and culture	1	1	1	1
<i>Health and movement:</i>				
Physical education & sports	2	2	2	2
<i>Sub-total compulsory part (state programme)</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>School programme</i>				
Electives	4	4	7	15
Total weekly periods	31	32	31	30

Source: Eurydice, 2009. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

Slovak Republic. Framework curriculum for general secondary education (eight-year gymnasium, Slovak as language of instruction): weekly lesson timetable

Learning area/subject	Number of weekly periods in each form							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Language and communication:</i>								
Slovak language and literature	4	4	5	5	3	3	3	3
First foreign language	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
Second foreign language	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
<i>Man and nature:</i>								
Physics	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	–
Chemistry	0.5	0.5	1	2	2	2	1	–
Biology	1	1.5	1	1	2	3	1	–
<i>Man and society:</i>								
History	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	–
Geography	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	–
Civics	1	1	0.5	0.5	–	–	2	1
<i>Man and values:</i>								
Ethics/Religion	1	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	–	–
Psychosocial training	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
<i>Mathematics and IT:</i>								
Mathematics	4	3.5	4	4	4	3	3	1
Information science	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	1	1	1	–
<i>Man and the world of work:</i>								
Technique	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Art and culture:</i>								
Fine arts	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Music	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Art education	–	–	0.5	0.5	–	–	–	–
Art and culture	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	1
<i>Health and movement:</i>								
Physical education & sports	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<i>Sub-total compulsory part (state programme)</i>	23	24	24	24	27	28	24	15
<i>School programme</i>								
Electives	6	6	6	6	4	4	7	15
Total weekly periods	29	30	30	30	31	32	31	30

Source: Eurydice, 2009. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.



Slovak Republic. Framework curriculum for general secondary education (eight-year gymnasium, Slovak as language of instruction): weekly lesson timetable for the first four years

Learning area/subject	Number of weekly periods over years 1-4
<i>Language and communication:</i>	
Slovak language and literature	12
First foreign language	16
Second foreign language	8
<i>Man and nature:</i>	
Physics	5
Chemistry	5
Biology	6
<i>Man and society:</i>	
History	6
Geography	4
Civics	3
<i>Man and values:</i>	
Ethics/Religion, Religion education	2
<i>Mathematics and IT:</i>	
Mathematics	11
Information science	3
<i>Art and culture:</i>	
Art and culture	4
<i>Health and movement:</i>	
Physical education and sports	8
<i>Sub-total compulsory part (state programme)</i>	93
<i>School programme</i>	
Electives	31
Total weekly periods over years 1-4	124

Source: Website of the National Institute for Education, February 2012. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes. Time allocation to the different subjects is decided by the school. Approved by the Ministry of Education in May 2011 and effective from September 2011.

Educational programmes of the secondary specialized schools provide students with the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for an occupation and professional activities and may also prepare for further studies. Secondary specialized schools are divided into types and offer theoretical teaching and practical training. If the school provides theoretical teaching only, the students complete the practical training in the centre of practical training or in the workplace. The centre of practical teaching is responsible for education and training according to curricula and syllabi while collaborating with the secondary specialized school which provides theoretical teaching. Conservatories prepare students for occupations in the field of the arts and



also for teaching art subjects. They also provide lower secondary education by successfully completing the fourth year of eight-year programmes. Gymnasias, secondary specialized schools and conservatories provide education in study and trade fields (which can be further divided into vocational specializations) which are determined in the system of fields of education. (Eurydice, 2009).

Secondary school students are evaluated twice a year on the basis of a 5-point mark scale, 1 (excellent) being the highest. If students fail (mark 5) in one or two subjects, they may apply for repeating these subjects. If they fail in more than two subjects, or if they fail in repeating the subjects, is up to the school to decide whether they should repeat the grade or not. Students may also apply for repeating in another school. Students' behaviour is also assessed (using a 4-point scale). Secondary school can be completed by: a final examination; the secondary school-leaving examination; the final postsecondary examination; and the graduation examination (absolutorium).

At the end of secondary education programmes which give access to higher education, students sit the school-leaving examination (*matura*). The *matura* consists of two parts (internal and external), and the external tests are prepared by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements (NUCEM). The internal part consists of an essay to be written in mother and/or foreign language, and an oral exam administered by individual schools. In the case of the external part, it is compulsory for all students to sit the examination in foreign languages, Slovak or Hungarian language and mathematics. The NUCEM prepares the external tests in some ten subjects including mother languages (Slovak, Hungarian), Slovak language for schools using Hungarian as language of instruction, mathematics, and foreign languages at the levels B1 and B2 of the European Reference Framework for Languages (English, German, French, Russian, Spanish and Italian). Furthermore, adapted tests are prepared for students with special educational needs.

According to national data, in 2004/05 there were 234 gymnasias with a total enrolment of 99,738 students (of whom 81,984 students in 161 state gymnasias). There was a total of 262 secondary specialized schools with 87,563 students enrolled (of whom 80,895 students in 213 state schools). Before the merging of vocational and secondary specialized schools, there were also 233 vocational secondary schools/apprentice training centres with 73,525 students enrolled (of whom 63,886 in 202 state schools). Finally, there were 109 integrated secondary schools with 64,738 students enrolled (of whom 62,772 students in 105 state schools). The number of full-time teachers (including head teachers and deputy head teachers) was: 7,543 teachers in gymnasias (of whom 6,121 in state schools); 8,274 teachers in technical secondary schools (of whom 7,496 in state schools); 4,354 in vocational secondary schools/apprentice training centres (3,735 in state establishments); and 4,174 in integrated schools (4,089 in state schools).

In 2009/10, there were 750 secondary schools, of which 545 were state schools, 75 run by churches, and 130 in the private sector. The total enrolment was 285,613 students. There were 20,643 full-time teachers (including head teachers and deputy head teachers), 5,043 part-time teachers, and 3,581 practical training instructors and foremen. (Eurydice, 2009).



The Statistical Office reports that in 2010/11 there were 251 gymnasia with an enrolment of 89,336 full-time students (of whom 52,221 were girls); the number of teachers was 5,961 (of whom 4,570 were female teachers). There were 490 secondary specialized schools with 179,790 students (of whom 81,669 were girls) enrolled on a full-time basis and 10,819 students (of whom 6,863 were girls) on a part-time basis; the number of teachers was 11,808 (of whom 8,530 were female teachers). (Statistical Office, 2011).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

The country participated in international assessment exercises, such as TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), and PISA (Program for International Student Assessment). Gradually, the national monitoring of educational outcomes is systematically conducted to enable the feedback affecting of quality of work by teachers, schools and the whole education and training system. The State School Inspection is the independent body in the field education which carries out the evaluation of schools and school facilities at the national level. Schools are expected to produce a self-evaluation report every year.

In September 2002, an evaluation of the knowledge and skills of pupils in Slovak language and mathematics was conducted with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education of France. The test focused on grade 5 of basic schools and year 1 of eight-year gymnasia in a sample of 117 schools involving a total of 2,774 students. In Slovak language, 58 schools (77.8%) attained the score corresponding to the nation-wide mean, 35 schools attained significantly higher scores and 22 schools attained significantly lower scores. In mathematics, 45 schools (72.6%) achieved the nation-wide score, 39 schools achieved significantly higher scores and 33 schools attained significantly lower scores than average.

In April 2003, the results of an application form to study in gymnasia of voluntary orientation involving 16,701 grade 9 students in basic schools showed an average success rate of 56% in mathematics, and 76% in Slovak language and literature as well as Hungarian language and literature. (MOE, 2004).

In 2003, the external assessment of students graduating from lower secondary education (grade 9) involving the Slovak language and mathematics was introduced. Since 2007 this testing is compulsory for all students (except students with special educational needs). The results of the test can be used for admission to secondary school. In 2010/11 the nation-wide testing of grade 9 students consisted of two tests (certification testing and literacy testing). The certification testing was carried out at the national level on mathematics, Slovak language and literature, Hungarian and Ukrainian language and literature.

In international assessments organized by International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), pupils in Slovakia achieve higher than the international average. Within the framework of PIRLS, joined in 2001 and focusing on pupils aged 10, girls achieved better results than boys; pupils achieved higher score in reading information texts than the literary ones.

It has been observed that “Slovak students’ overall achievement in the 2003 OECD PISA study was below the OECD average. Scores were around the OECD average in mathematics and science but below average in reading and problem solving. Performance in reading was particularly weak. A multivariate regression analysis of the 2003 PISA results shows that they are more sensitive to socio-economic background (represented by the occupational status of parents) than in most other countries.” (Carey, 2007).

Teaching staff

All teachers must have university education, excepting kindergarten teachers. Higher education institutions offering pre-service teacher training programmes are mainly in the public sector. Both full-time and part-time study are free of charge, the students pay for the study exceeding their standard length, admission interviews, accommodation, catering, transport and for some administrative services. The required qualifications of educational staff are specified in the Act No. 317/2009 on pedagogical employees and professional employees.

As a rule, kindergarten teachers are trained at the secondary education level, but there are training programmes also at university level. The duration of programmes offered at secondary teacher training schools is four years; the programme also includes a course on preschool pedagogy and psychology. This training also allows becoming an educator. Graduates of other secondary schools may receive qualifications as teachers in kindergartens and educators through two-year postsecondary teacher education programmes. Teachers for basic schools of art are trained at conservatories offering six-year programmes.

At the higher education level, faculties of education and teacher training colleges offer training programmes for preschool education teachers, teachers for the first stage of primary (basic) school, teachers of academic and artistic subjects, as well as teachers of vocational subjects and practical training in primary schools, basic schools of art and in secondary schools. The programmes are organized at two levels (two- or three-year bachelor’s and three- or two-year master’s degree), following the Bologna pattern. The first level is completed by taking the state final examination leading the award of the bachelor’s degree (kindergarten teachers, tutors for school clubs, vocational training instructors). Graduates can continue at the second level leading to the master’s degree. The second level of university training has to be completed by students wishing to receive the teaching qualification (teacher training for the first stage of basic school, teacher training with one subject or two-subject specialization, teacher training for the first stage of basic school in combination preschool pedagogy, teacher training for special schools and vocational subject teacher training). Graduates from technical universities and other higher education institutions without pedagogical training may obtain pedagogical training as further education at technical universities.

Pre-service teacher training programmes normally consists of a combination of three basic teaching blocks, i.e. core curriculum, vocational subjects and their methodology, and teaching practice. The core curriculum comprises introductory lectures and core subjects. The core subjects at faculties of education are usually the following: general education, history of education, general psychology,



developmental psychology, special education, methodology, biology, philosophy, etc. Vocational subjects are oriented at the teaching qualification (mostly consisting of two subjects, i.e. Slovak language and history). Subject methodology and didactics are also part of the programme. The teaching practice is often organized in stages, in such a way that in the first year there are visits to schools, field trips and observations, to be followed by teaching practice under the guidance of colleagues and the trainer or methodologist from the higher education institution. (Eurydice, 2009).

Teachers can be employed for a definite or indefinite period (tenure), and can work either full- or part-time. The salary is dependent on the teaching load. Teachers can also be employed by several employers as well (up to 48 hours per week). The working load of all educational staff is divided into direct teaching load and time dedicated to other activities related to teaching. The basic weekly workload of kindergarten teachers is 28 hours; in the case of primary school teachers, teachers of basic school of art, and assistant teachers of primary school, it is 23 hours; 22 hours for secondary school teachers, and 21 to 35 hours for vocational training instructors.

From 2002 teachers' salaries have been regulated by the law on public service. The latter was substituted by the new Act No. 553/2003 of Law Code. Government Decree No. 413/2004 of Law Code provided for the raised scales of salary brackets of employees performing works in public interest effective from 1 July 2005 by 6%. Government Decree No. 238/2007 of Law Code sets out the raised scales of salary brackets of employees performing works done in public interest with efficacy from 1 January 2008 by 5%. The scale of salary brackets includes 14 salary grades and each grade has 12 salary stages, which involves all educational staff. The development of a new system of teachers' remuneration is contained in the Concept of the Professional Development of Teacher in Career System which was approved by the government in April 2007.

The system of in-service teacher training is currently regulated by the Act No. 317/2009 on pedagogical employees and professional employees and the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 445/2009 of the Law Code on continuous education, credits and attestations of pedagogical employees and professional employees. The in-service training is supervised by the Ministry of Education and offered by the Methodological and Pedagogical Centre, the National Institute for Education, the State Vocational Education Institute, higher education institutions and other bodies. Teachers usually apply for individual forms of in-service training through head teachers. The head teacher decides what forms of in-service training are preferential with regard to the educational and instructional practice of the school as well as individual interests and needs of teachers and conditions of the school. (*Ibid.*).

The regional education survey carried out in April 2001 on teachers' qualifications and professionalism found that in the first stage of the basic school (grades 1-4) some 18% of the teachers did not possess the appropriate qualifications; in the second stage (grades 5-9), the percentage was 12.4%; in technical secondary schools and in secondary vocational schools, the figures were 11.3% and 11.8% respectively. The best situation was in gymnasia, with just 4.5% of non-qualified teachers, while the highest percentage of non-qualified teachers was found in special schools (as much as 41.3% in special basic schools, and 32.2% in special secondary schools). (MOE, 2004).



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Web resources

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<http://www.uips.sk/> [In Slovak; some information in English. Last checked: February 2012.]

Methodological and Pedagogical Centre: <http://www.mpc-edu.sk/> [In Slovak; some information in English. Last checked: February 2012.]

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport: <http://www.minedu.sk/> [In Slovak and English. Last checked: February 2012.]

National Institute for Education: <http://www.statpedu.sk/> [In Slovak; some information in English. Last checked: February 2012.]

National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements: <http://www.nucem.sk/> [In Slovak and English. Last checked: February 2012.]

National Lifelong Learning Institute: <http://nuczv.sk/> [In Slovak; some information in English. Last checked: February 2012.]

State School Inspection: <http://www.ssiba.sk/> [In Slovak and English. Last checked: February 2012.]

State Institute of Vocational Education: <http://www.siov.sk/> [In Slovak. Last checked: February 2012.]

For more detailed and updated information consult EURYDICE, the information network on national education systems and policies in Europe:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php

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