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Principles and general objectives of education

The overall aim of education is the development of free and democratic citizens who contribute to the promotion of cooperation, mutual understanding, respect and love among individuals and people for the prevalence of freedom, justice and peace.

Education helps the new generation to: assimilate the spiritual and other achievements, as well as the fruitful elements of the past; capitalize on all the possibilities of the present; and proceed to new achievements in all sectors of social activity. The main objectives of education are: the fulfillment of the island's social, economic, cultural and other needs; the provision of specialized education, after a common general education, for both vertical and horizontal mobility; the preparation of young people for a profession and lifelong education; the strengthening of Cyprus as an independent State; the promotion of equal educational opportunities; and the promotion of friendship and cooperation between the various communities of the country.

The policy priorities for education, as deriving from the overall aim mentioned above, place particular emphasis on democratization, by cultivating respect for the dignity and uniqueness of each individual; respect for the opinion of the majority; creating opportunities for active participation in the decision making process; providing equality of opportunity in all aspects of school life; encouraging cooperation and responsibility. Furthermore, emphasis is being placed on creating favorable conditions for co-existence, cooperation, combating intolerance and xenophobia, in a world where an international character is increasingly developed, cultural diversity is promoted and boundaries abolished.

According to the *National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007-2013*, the Cyprus vision for lifelong learning is the development of a system which ensures that all individuals will be motivated and supported and will be provided resources as well as the time to participate in training activities throughout their whole lives, with the purpose of creating a society in which all citizens will participate actively and equally and will contribute to the reinforcement of productivity, innovation, competitiveness and the dynamism of the country.

Within the framework of the *Cyprus National Reform Programme 2011*, the ongoing education reform is an effort for a comprehensive introduction of changes and innovations at all levels and all aspects of the education system. The aim is to turn into reality the vision of a better education system that would meet students' future needs and society's challenges in the Twenty-first century. This will be done by improving the equity of the education system, by encouraging lifelong learning throughout the stages of the education system, by reinforcing the content of education and training and upgrading the infrastructure with an emphasis on the cultivation of lifelong learning competences from the early years of compulsory education. The offering of flexible, multifaceted programmes, which combine general education,

enriched, to a certain extent, with elements of technology education, is envisioned in order to satisfy the needs of contemporary citizens. (Planning Bureau, 2011).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The law concerning primary compulsory education was adopted in 1962, but in practice primary education was almost universal since 1945. According to **Law 12/1965**, which provided for the dissolution of the Greek Communal Chamber, pre-primary, primary, secondary, and some sections of postsecondary education were transferred under the authority of the Ministry of Education. According to the **Education Laws on Elementary Education** (1959, 1976, 1997) primary school means a state school financed and administered by the government, which provides six years of compulsory education to children from 5 years and 8 months of age. Almost all aspects of primary education are covered by the **Regulations 223** of 1997 concerning the functioning of public primary schools and the **Regulations 225/2008** regarding the operation of public primary schools and kindergartens. The **Law 24(I)/1993** provides for compulsory and free education at the elementary (primary) and gymnasium level and regulates free education at secondary level. This Law combined all the laws related to free and compulsory education.

On the basis of the **47/79 Law on Special Education**, the government undertook responsibility for the children with special educational needs between the ages of 5 and 18 years. This Law has been replaced by the **Law 113(I)** of 1999 on Education and Training of Children with Special Needs (age group 3-18 years), the **Regulations 185** of 2001 regarding the mechanisms for early detection of children with special needs, and the **Regulations 186** of 2001 regarding education and training of children with special needs which support the application of the Law.

The **Council of Ministers Decision 67.331** of 11 June 2008 provides for the establishment of the Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation. The Education Service Commission was established under the **Law 12/1986**.

The **Apprenticeship Law 13/66** of 1966 regulates the operation of the apprenticeship system. The **Council of Ministers Decision 62.037** of May 2005 assigned the responsibility for the system to the Cyprus Productivity Centre.

The University of Cyprus was established by **Law 144** of July 1989. The **Law 198(I)/2003** providing for the establishment of the Cyprus University of Technology was approved on 18 December 2003. The Open University of Cyprus was established under the **Law 234(I)/2002**.

Private schools and institutes including community kindergartens operate according to the **Law 5/1971** and **Law 77(I)/2008**. The establishment and operation of private tertiary-level institutions are regulated by the **Law 67(I)/1996** and **Law 221(I)/2004**, the latter also providing for the establishment of the Council for Educational Evaluation and Accreditation (SEKAP). The **Law 109(1)** of 29 July 2005 regulates the establishment, operation and control of private universities.



Article 20 of the **Constitution** (1960) stipulates that every person has the right to receive, and every person or institution has the right to give, instruction or education; free primary education shall be made available by the Greek and the Turkish Communal Chambers in the respective communal primary schools; and primary education shall be compulsory for all citizens of such school age as may be determined by a relevant communal law. According to the **Council of Ministers Decision 59.824/2004** of September 2004, children aged 4 years and 8 months to 5 years and 8 months are obliged to attend either public or private kindergartens that are registered and approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Compulsory education also covers the six-year primary and the three-year lower secondary education programmes; primary and secondary education are provided free of charge in public institutions. Students are required to remain in education until the age of 15 or until completing general lower secondary education (gymnasium), whichever occurs first. (Eurydice, 2011).

Administration and management of the education system

Educational administration is centralized. Pre-primary, primary, secondary and some postsecondary education institutions are under the authority of the **Ministry of Education and Culture** (MOEC), the highest authority in educational policy-making being the **Council of Ministers**. The Ministry is responsible for the administration of education, the enforcement of education laws and, in cooperation with the Office of the Attorney General, the preparation of education bills. The bills are tabled for debate and approval by the House of Representatives.

The MOEC Directors of Primary and General Secondary Education delegate part of their responsibilities and duties to a Chief Education Officer (called **District Inspector**) in each of the six districts, except for two districts which are administered jointly by one District Inspector at each level. The District Inspector for the primary level is also responsible for overseeing the provision of pre-primary education and is based in the district for which he/she is responsible. The District Inspectors for general secondary education are based at the MOEC. (Eurydice, 2009).

Besides the MOEC, other ministries operate a small number of postsecondary institutions offering professional training programmes, namely the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, the Cyprus Tourist Organization, and the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (police academy). The **Cyprus Academy of Public Administration**, which offers training courses for civil servants, operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance.

Overall planning is under the responsibility of the **Planning Bureau**, an independent authority of the Republic. Similar planning is done by all the ministries which run postsecondary institutions. Their development policies, however, are first submitted to the Planning Bureau, which then forwards them to the Council of Ministers together with its comments.

The **Education Council** is an advisory body to the MOEC. It is comprised of representatives of the Planning Bureau, the Director General of the Ministry of



Labour and Social Insurance, representatives of the Church, the parliamentary Committee of Education, parents' associations, teachers' unions, and seven persons well-known for their interest in educational matters.

The **Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KYSATS)** is an independent body in charge of the recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions. The **Council for Educational Evaluation and Accreditation (SEKAP)** is another independent body that advises the MOEC on issues concerning the establishment, monitoring and operation of tertiary education institutions. It has been proposed to establish the Cyprus Quality Assurance and Accreditation Board which will be responsible for the external evaluation of all tertiary education institutions. The Board would replace the existing separate evaluation and accreditation bodies and incorporate the functions that are performed by SEKAP and KYSATS. (CEDEFOP, 2011). The **Advisory Committee of Tertiary Education** deals with matters concerning the establishment of public and private institutions, registration of new programmes of study and tertiary-level education policies.

The **Secondary Technical and Vocational Education Advisory Board** is an independent body dealing with issues concerning technical and vocational education and providing advice to the MOEC. Since May 2005 the responsibility over the apprenticeship system has been assigned to the **Cyprus Productivity Centre**, under the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance.

The **Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA)**, founded in 1979 as the Industrial Training Authority, comprises representatives from the government, employers and trade unions. Its main mission is the upgrading of Cyprus' human resources through training and development in order to enhance their employability potential throughout the European Union (Cyprus accessed the European Union in May 2004). The Authority is responsible for the development of a competence-based system of vocational qualifications. A National High Level Committee has been set up comprising the Director General of the MOEC, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, and the HRDA to formulate the general framework and the policies for the design and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework. (Eurydice, 2009).

Curricula for pre-primary, primary, secondary general, technical schools and the Pedagogical Academy are approved by the Ministry of Education and developed on the basis of suggestions made by teachers, inspectors and local school boards. Postsecondary technical and vocational curricula are drawn by the relevant ministries on the advice of the **Board of Governors** or **Specialist Committees**. The curricula for private schools of all levels are developed according to the needs of various sectors of the wider public. Established in 1972, the **Pedagogical Institute** under the MOEC is responsible for primary school teacher training, educational research and evaluation, educational documentation, and curriculum development. Its Curriculum Development Unit produces textbooks for primary and secondary schools. Pre-service teacher training programmes for secondary education are organized by the University of Cyprus.

The **Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation** was established in August 2008 and is accountable to the Ministry of Education and Culture. The

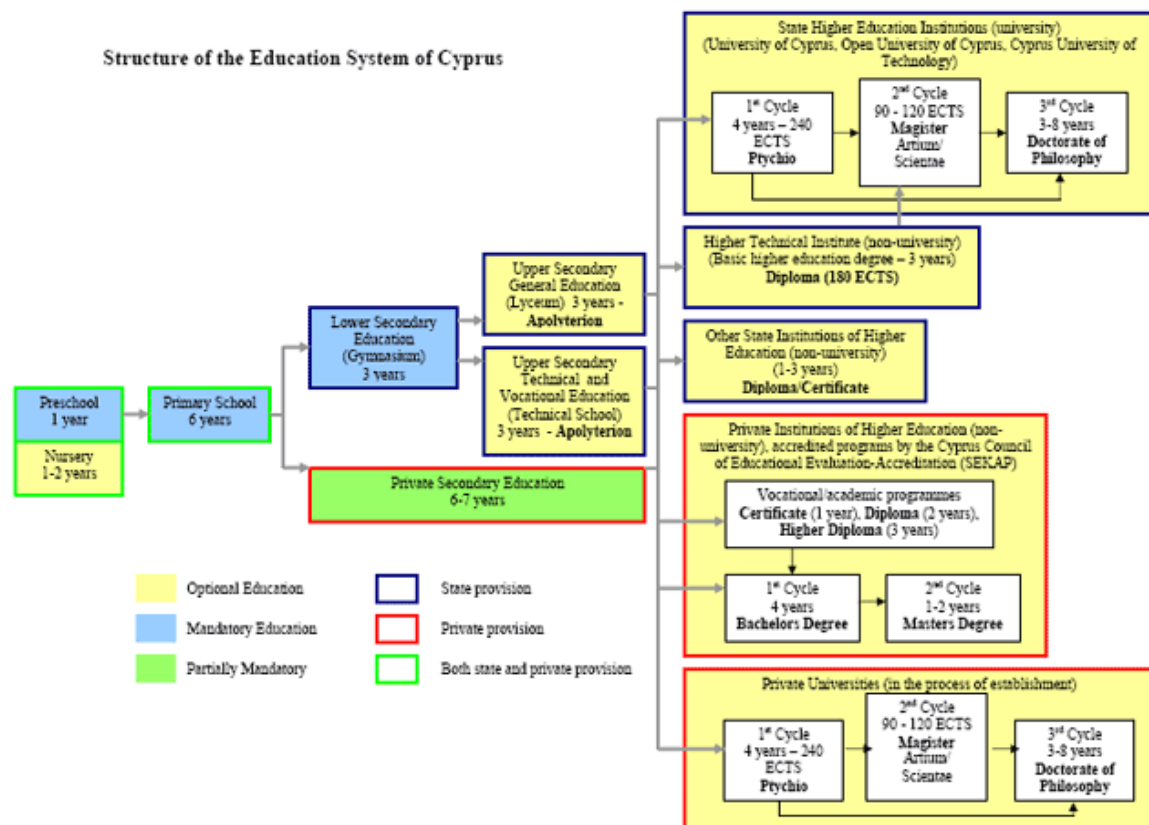
mission of the Centre is the promotion of research and the setting up of a research infrastructure in the Cyprus education system. The purpose of the Centre is to conduct scientific research in education-related issues (educational policy, curricula, textbooks, training), as well as the ongoing evaluation of the whole education system and the results stemming from each innovation introduced in education. It also promotes and supports research in school units.

Appointments, secondments, transfers, promotions and discipline of the teaching personnel and the inspectorate are the responsibility of the **Education Service Commission**, a five-member body appointed by the President of the Republic.

The construction of school buildings is under the responsibility of the **Technical Services** (a section of the MOEC), while their maintenance and equipment are the responsibility of **Local School Boards** under the supervision of the Technical Services. In urban areas these Boards are appointed by the Council of Ministers, while in rural areas since 1979 they are elected by the communities. Each year the School Boards submit their budget for the next school year to the MOEC for approval. At the end of each school year, they submit a detailed financial statement to the Ministry which is audited by the State Auditors.

Structure and organization of the education system

Cyprus: structure of the education system



Source: Cyprus Higher Education Website, April 2012.



Pre-school education

Starting from the school year 2004/05, one year of pre-primary education (usually called reception class) is compulsory for children between 4 years and 8 months to 5 years and 8 months. Younger children aged 3 to 4 years and 8 months may enrol in public kindergartens provided that there are sufficient vacant places. Community kindergartens, established by a parents' association or a charitable organization often in collaboration with the local authority and registered with the Ministry of Education, operate in areas where public kindergartens cannot fully meet the existing needs. The compulsory pre-primary year is considered part of basic education. There are also day nurseries under the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance mainly providing care and protection to children aged less than 3 years.

Primary education

Primary education provides a six-year programme (grades 1 to 6) to children from the age of 5 years and 8 months. Primary education is compulsory and provided free of charge in public schools. Larger schools in urban areas are divided into two cycles, namely Cycle A (grades 1 to 3) and Cycle B (grades 4 to 6). Generally, the same classroom teacher organizes the teaching and learning process in all subjects, although in large schools there are also subject teachers for physical education, art, music or other specialized subjects. There are no final examinations at the end of primary education. Upon successful completion of grade 6, pupils receive the primary school-leaving certificate.

Secondary education

Public secondary general education extends over six years (some private schools offer a seven-year programme) and is divided into two three-year cycles: lower secondary or gymnasium (the final stage of compulsory basic education) and upper secondary or lyceum. At the end of lower secondary education students sit the final internal examinations and, if successful, receive the school-leaving certificate. Pupils who have not completed compulsory education and are aged 14 can enter the apprenticeship system (normally after grade 8); attendance is free of charge and the period of training is two years, spent in a technical school and in the workplace (dual training system). The apprenticeship certificate gives access to a number of occupations, but not to tertiary and higher education. Gymnasium graduates usually enter the comprehensive upper secondary school, a new type of lyceum implemented since 2000/01 phasing out the lyceum of specialized studies (LEM), or technical and vocational schools (theoretical or practical streams, both lasting three years). Students who pass the final examinations at the end of secondary education (general or technical-vocational) are awarded a school-leaving certificate, granting access to tertiary and higher education.

Higher education

Access to higher education is subject to the results of the entrance examination. Higher education institutions include public universities and tertiary-level institutions offering professionally-oriented programmes, and a number of private tertiary education institutions. Professionally-oriented programmes lasting one to three years



lead to the award of a certificate (one-year programme), a diploma (two-year programme) or a higher diploma (three-year programme). Universities offer undergraduate programmes in a variety of fields. The duration of programmes leading to the award of a bachelor's degree is normally four years, equivalent to 240 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). Full-time master's degree programmes normally take one and a half to two years to complete (equivalent to 90-120 ECTS). The University of Cyprus also offers postgraduate programmes leading to a doctoral degree after three to eight years of study (usually four years), including research.

The school year is divided into two semesters (into three terms until 2009) and consists of approximately 180 teaching days at the primary level and 161 teaching days at the lower secondary level; classes are held five days a week (Monday to Friday) from any day during the first ten days of September until 20 June in the case of primary education, any day during the first ten days of June for lower secondary, and during the last ten days of May for upper secondary. The exact dates are defined every year by the Ministry of Education. (Eurydice, 2011). The academic year consists of thirty weeks, divided into two semesters (September-January and January-May).

The educational process

The curriculum for public and community kindergartens is the same for all types of kindergarten and must be followed in its entirety. It forms part of the primary curriculum. The national curriculum for public primary schools is determined by the Council of Ministers upon approval of the proposal by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC). The current curriculum was first issued in 1994, revised in 1996 and re-edited many times since then. The curriculum was compiled by the Director of Primary Education, the Chief Education Officers and the Inspectors of Primary Education, members of the staff of the Pedagogical Institute and representatives of the Primary Teachers' Union, with contributions from the Directorate of Secondary Education, the Union of Inspectors of Primary Education and the Parents' Association. The curriculum includes the general aims of primary education and subject matter to be taught. For each subject of the curriculum the basic concepts, the teaching objectives, indicative teaching activities and assessment guidelines are allocated to different classes. The curriculum is common to all public primary schools. All the subjects are compulsory and they are taught in the language of instruction. The primary school curriculum currently implemented is a 2005 reprint of the third edition of 2002.

The national curriculum for public secondary schools is also determined by the Council of Ministers after the approval of the MOEC. The common practice is that subject curricula are drawn up by writing committees consisting of Chief Education Officers and MOEC Inspectors, staff of the Pedagogical Institute, academics and representatives of the Teachers' Unions and the Parents' Associations. Thus, there is no single, unified curriculum for general secondary education. Instead, there are syllabi for each subject that are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The syllabi for both levels constitute a complete guide to the teaching of each subject and consist of: clearly formulated goals for each subject; the material to be taught; methodological guidelines and teaching aids for each subject. At the lyceum there are different syllabi for some subjects depending on whether they are taught as a common



core subject, optional stream subject or as a subject of special interest or enrichment. Textbooks are also prescribed by the MOEC. Teachers are obliged to apply the national curriculum and use the prescribed textbooks in their classes, but they are free to choose their teaching methods and materials. (EURYDICE, CEDEFOP and ETF, 2009/10; Eurydice, 2009).

The modernization, restructuring and upgrading of the national curriculum from pre-primary to upper secondary education, with the aim of better addressing the needs of the students for the Twenty-first century, is one of the major issues of the educational reform programme. The objective is to create an integrated continuum encompassing early childhood, pre-primary, primary, secondary general and secondary technical and vocational education. Within this framework special emphasis will be given to defining the aims and key contents of different subjects and thematic areas in order to form a more unified educational approach. The new core curriculum will be developed so as to provide all students opportunity for individual choice and provision of supporting services, including remedial and additional instruction in areas of need. The key competencies that European Union's citizens should acquire to enable them to adapt to changes will be effectively addressed. (MOEC, 2008).

Within the framework of the ongoing education reform, a committee of academics and curriculum specialists was appointed in 2008 with a mandate to set out guidelines, general objectives and expected educational outcomes for the design of new curricula and syllabi for all levels, from pre-primary to upper secondary education. In 2009 the MOEC appointed several sub-committees made up of subject specialists and practitioners with instruction to design new curricula. (Eurydice, 2009). The new curricula for upper secondary and technical-vocational education are expected to be fully developed by 2015. (CEDEFOP, 2011).

In the case of technical-vocational education, curriculum development is a collective effort involving qualified staff from the MOEC Directorate of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE), experts from other training institutions, STVE Advisory Committee members, trade unions and employer's representatives. The STVE curriculum is subject to approval by the Council of Ministers before being implemented. During the previous reform and modernization of the curricula offered by STVE, the implementation of which was completed in 2004, all the stakeholders involved agreed on the definition of the term 'curriculum', which includes the training objectives, the content, the teaching material, the student's profile and suggested approaches and methods in order to achieve the training objectives. (CEDEFOP, 2011).

Pre-primary education

As mentioned, pre-primary education is for children between 3 and 5 years and 8 months. Since September 2004, one year of pre-primary education (called reception class) is compulsory for children between 4 years and 8 months to 5 years and 8 months. The compulsory pre-primary year is considered part of basic education. Younger children aged 3 to 4 years and 8 months may enrol in public kindergartens provided that there are sufficient vacant places. Community kindergartens registered with the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) operate in areas where public

kindergartens cannot fully meet the needs of the community. Public kindergartens are established by the MOEC in cooperation with the parents' association and local authorities. Pedagogical staff and teachers are appointed by the Education Service Commission. Private kindergartens are established with the MOEC approval and charge fees. Day nurseries providing care and protection to children aged less than 3 years are under the Social Welfare Services Department within the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. There are public, community and private day nurseries.

Since 2005/06, some all-day kindergartens (operating up to 4 p.m.) have been introduced on an experimental basis. In public kindergartens, children are grouped according to age and normally into three groups, i.e. children between 3 to 3 years and 8 months, between 3 years and 8 months and 4 years and 8 months, and between 4 years and 8 months and 5 years and 8 months (reception class). Depending on the number of children, public kindergartens can have one, two, three or more classes. They normally operate five days a week from 7:45 a.m. to 13:05 p.m. (in some community kindergartens up to 14:45 p.m.). (Eurydice, 2009).

As laid down in the pre-primary curriculum of 2005 (a revised version of the curriculum of 2002), the aims of pre-primary education are: to help children smoothly adjust to the school environment, to easily and safely integrate into society, to ensure, preserve and encourage their healthy and full development (mental, social, emotional, moral, religious, psycho-motor and aesthetic) to the highest degree possible and in accordance with the level of maturity they have reached. The general objectives include: to preserve and promote health; to improve psycho-motor and emotional skills; to encourage creative expression and thinking; to develop mental abilities through the increased use of mental functions and scientific processes; to develop notions and ways of thinking related to all fields of knowledge; and to prepare for primary school. The specific objectives are to: develop personality characteristics such as initiative, persistence, determination, self-confidence and optimism; develop attitudes of acceptance and understanding, self-acceptance and self-confidence and, primarily, positive self-esteem; develop creativity and expression skills; develop language skills, reasoning and critical and mathematical thinking; adjust to the school environment and develop an appropriate attitude towards learning, work, human relations, rights and duties, natural environment and health; develop an appropriate attitude regarding the basic values of social, moral, national, cultural and religious life. (*Ibid.*). In July 2011 the MOEC published a new version of the pre-primary curriculum.

The pre-primary curriculum is child-centered and problem solving-centered. This means that the attainment of objectives is sought through the encouragement of active participation in the learning process through problem-solving activities, experimentation and investigation in order to activate the critical and creative thought process. The daily programme of each kindergarten is a smooth succession of periods, but the order and duration of the activities is not fixed. The curriculum and timetable of each kindergarten is determined by the teacher, who must consider the needs, abilities and interests of the children, as well as the need for achieving balance between structure and freedom through a variety of challenging activities. The main components of the programme are the following:



- Free activities (80 minutes): a free choice of a variety of social, cooperative and creative activities such as art, role playing, experimenting, observation, basic reading, writing and mathematics.
- Group Activity A (40 minutes): covering language, science, mathematics, health education, environment education, social education, and religion.
- Group Activity B (40-80 minutes): comprising storytelling, theatre, music and movement, puppet shows, games, and poetry.
- Outdoor play and activities (40 minutes): including physical educations, games, gardening, and environmental observation.
- Quiet activities during the final part of the school day (40 minutes): language, mathematics, individual or group work, which are structured and aim at developing necessary skills to facilitate the transition to the primary school. (Eurydice, 2009).

In between these activities there are periods for tidying, washing, breakfast, snack and free playing. An integrated rather than a thematic approach is widely used in most kindergartens.

The MOEC does not prescribe one particular teaching methodology that teachers must follow. The role of the kindergarten teacher is to organize the programme with a balance between structure and freedom in mind, allowing the children access to a variety of activities which will expose them to different environmental influences and challenges, allowing them the freedom to choose which activity they want to participate in. All kindergarten teachers in the public sector are university graduates in their field of expertise. The evaluation of children aims to ascertain the degree of success a child attains in his/her school work and to determine the areas of weakness in specific areas so that these areas may be addressed, either by improvement of the learning conditions or by changing the teaching approach. Evaluations cover, as far as possible, the three areas of cognitive, emotional and psychomotor learning. Three types of evaluation tools are used: the initial diagnostic assessment, the continuous or formative assessment, and the final summative assessment.

In 2003, the gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 60%. According to national data, in 2003/04 there were 391 kindergartens (public, community and private) with 15,366 children and 878 teachers.

The Cyprus Statistical Service reports that in 2009/10 there were 469 kindergartens, of which 250 were public, 59 operated by the communities, and 160 in the private sector. The total enrolment was 21,050 children (including 10,219 girls), of whom 9,134 enrolled in private institutions. The number of full-time equivalent teachers was 1,495 (mainly female teachers), and the children-teacher ratio was 14.1:1. The enrolment ratio for the age group 3-5 was estimated at 71.9%. In the same year, the number of day nurseries was 213 (of which 55 operated by communities and 147 in the private sector); the total enrolment was 6,935 children (including 3,248 girls) and the number of full-time equivalent caregivers was 690. (CSS, 2011).



Primary education

As mentioned, primary education covers grades 1 to 6 and the entry age is 5 years and 8 months. Primary education is compulsory and provided free of charge in public schools. Most of the larger schools in urban areas are divided into two cycles, namely Cycle A (grades 1 to 3) and Cycle B (grades 4 to 6). Generally, the same classroom teacher organizes the teaching and learning process in all subjects, although in large schools there are also subject teachers for physical education, art, music or other specialized subjects. There are no final examinations at the end of primary education. Upon successful completion of grade 6, pupils receive the primary school-leaving certificate.

As stated in the introduction to the national curriculum of 1996, the general objectives of primary education are to:

- develop children's knowledge using modern technology to the greatest extent possible;
- ensure children's emotional and psycho-motor development;
- help children to successfully face problems of adaptation and other challenges in their school environment and in society;
- promote the gradual socialization of children, their sense of national identity and culture and respect for other countries and cultures;
- provide children with a positive attitude towards knowledge and human values;
- develop appreciation for beauty, creativity and love for life;
- develop a sense of respect and protection towards nature. (Eurydice, 2009).

The curriculum currently implemented is the revised 2005 version of the 2002 curriculum. All of the subjects are compulsory and taught in the language of instruction (Greek); there are no curricular options. There is no flexibility as regards the allocation of teaching periods per subject. The time allocated to the different subjects depends on the type of school, i.e. schools with one, two, three to five, and six or more teachers. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a separate subject in all-day schools (see below). In the other schools ICT and computers are used as teaching and learning tools.

The typical weekly lesson timetable in 2001 in schools with six or more teachers is shown below:

Primary education: weekly lesson timetable (2001)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Greek language	13	13	14	13	10	10
Mathematics	5	5	6	6	6	6
Social studies	5	5	6	6	6	6
Science	–	–	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Art education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2	2	2	2
Foreign language (English)	–	–	–	2	2	2
Home economics/Design and technology	2	2	–	–	2	2
Free activities	–	–	–	–	1	1
Total weekly periods	31	31	34	35	35	35

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes. Social studies in Grades I–II include science, geography, history and religious education; in Grades III–VI, social studies include history, geography and religious education, all taught separately.

The weekly lesson timetable implemented since 2004 is presented in the tables below (schools with six or more teachers, and schools with three to five teachers):

Cyprus. Primary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Modern Greek language	14	14	14	13	10	10
Mathematics	7	7	7	6	6	6
Religious education	2	2	2	2	2	2
History	–	–	2	2	2	2
Geography	–	–	2	2	2	2
Environmental studies	3	3	–	–	–	–
Science	1	1	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Art education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2	2	2	2
Foreign language (English)	–	–	–	2	2	2
Home economics/Design and technology	2	2	–	–	2	2
Free activities	–	–	–	–	1	1
Total weekly periods	35	35	35	35	35	35

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture, 2004 (see also Eurydice, 2009). Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes. The timetable above applies to schools with six or more teachers.

Cyprus. Primary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade								
	1	1-2	2	3	3-4	4	5	5-6	6
Modern Greek language	8.5		8.5	7.5		7.5	5.5		5.5
Mathematics	4		4	3		3	3		3
Religious education		1.5			1.5			1.5	
History				2		2	2		2
Geography					2			2	
Environmental studies		3							
Science					2			2	
Physical education		2			2			2	
Art education		1.5			1.5			1.5	
Music		1			1			1	
Foreign language (English)							1		1
Home economics/Design and technology		1						1	
Free activities								1	
Total weekly periods		35			35			35	

Source: Eurydice, 2009. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes. The timetable above applies to schools with three to five teachers.

Schools operate in every town or village where there are more than 15 children. Area schools serve neighbouring communities with less than 15 pupils. In urban areas and in large rural schools there are single-grade classes, while in small communities multigrade classes are common. In 2005 the maximum size of a class was 30 pupils in all grades. By 2010/11, the maximum number of pupils per class is to be 25 in all grades, and 20 in multigrade classes.

All-day schools have been introduced to help improve the quality of education. In September 1999, the implementation of this new programme began in eight pilot schools on a voluntary basis; one year later it was implemented in 25 schools, and in 2008/09 it covered 116 schools. From October to May all-day schools offer to grades 4-6 pupils four additional periods in the afternoon (up to 16:00 p.m.) four times a week. The morning session is devoted to the compulsory curriculum following the prescribed timetable. The afternoon programme includes four periods during which pupils can complete assigned homework, four periods for reinforcing learning and receiving individual help if necessary, and eight periods spent on subjects of interest such as English, computer studies, music, sports, art, design, and ICT. (Eurydice, 2009).

Assessment is considered an integral part of teaching and the essential aim is the provision of support to pupils so that they can reach their full potential. Assessment shall be carried out in line with curriculum objectives. The evaluation includes the initial (diagnostic) evaluation, continuous and formative evaluation, and the final evaluation (at the end of the term and of the school year). Pupils' assessment is based oral and written tests, observation of pupils' behaviour and participation in

schoolwork, communication and pupils' self-evaluation. Teachers periodically report the results of the formative evaluation to the parents and try to find ways of improving the child's performance, if required. Evaluation results are not expressed by numerical grading/marks. At the end of each school year pupils in grades 1 to 5 receive a progress certificate; almost all pupils automatically move to the next grade. A pupil must repeat a year only when the teacher, the respective school inspector, the child's parents and the educational psychologist agree that repeating a class is in the best interest of the child. The school-leaving certificate states that the child has successfully completed the subjects in the sixth grade and is entitled to graduate and enrol in a gymnasium. (*Ibid.*).

Special education services are provided to children aged 3-18. They can attend mainstream schools, special units established in schools or special education schools, depending on the type of their needs. Special educators can be either fully assigned to mainstream schools and run special units at regular schools or act as peripatetic teachers and provide individual support to students with special needs in various school units. (MOEC, 2008).

According to national data in 2003/04, there were 347 public and 25 private primary schools with 58,420 and 3,298 pupils enrolled respectively. In the same school year, 3,820 teachers served in public primary schools and 334 in the private ones.

The Cyprus Statistical Service reports that in 2009/10 there were 370 primary schools, of which 341 were public and 29 in the private sector. The total enrolment was 54,522 pupils (including 26,534 girls), of whom 4,164 enrolled in private institutions. The number of full-time equivalent teachers was 4,754 and the pupil-teacher ratio was 11.5:1. The enrolment ratio for the age group 6-11 was estimated at 103.5%. During school year 2009/2010, there were also 11 special schools with 299 pupils enrolled. (CSS, 2011).

Secondary education

As mentioned, public secondary general education is divided into two three-year cycles, offered in two different types of school: the compulsory gymnasium and the lyceum. At the end of lower secondary education students sit the final internal examinations and, if successful, receive the school-leaving certificate. Gymnasium graduates usually enter the comprehensive upper secondary school, a new type of lyceum implemented since 2000/01 phasing out the lyceum of specialized studies (LEM), or technical and vocational schools (theoretical or practical streams, both lasting three years). Students who pass the final examinations at the end of secondary education (general or technical-vocational) are awarded a school-leaving certificate, granting access to tertiary and higher education. Pupils who have not completed compulsory education and are aged 14 can enter the apprenticeship system (normally after grade 8); attendance is free of charge and the period of training is two years, spent in a technical school and in the workplace (dual training system). The apprenticeship certificate gives access to a number of occupations, but not to tertiary and higher education.

The overarching principles that govern the operation of general education schools at the secondary level are:

- the assimilation of national identity and cultural values;
- the promotion of the universal ideals of freedom, justice and peace;
- the nurturing of love and respect for fellow human beings in order to promote mutual understanding and democracy;
- the development of skills and abilities for the needs and challenges of the modern world;
- the development of skills and abilities for lifelong learning, academic studies and the world of work.

The main objectives of the gymnasium are to enable pupils to:

- broaden their traditional value system (aesthetic, moral, social, personal, technical and economic);
- acquire, expand and synthesize knowledge that will help them to meet personal, social and economic challenges;
- develop skills for critical literacy through the acquisition of their first language;
- acquaint themselves with a range of different art forms, express their artistic talents and progressively form their own sense of appreciation;
- become self-aware of their potential in terms of skills, interests and talents and be able to appreciate the importance of both intellectual and vocational aspects of work they aspire to;
- develop physically.

The lyceum aims to:

- offer students the opportunity to develop all aspects of their capabilities through modern general, scientific and technological knowledge, methods and media, so that they can respond to a changing world and adapt to an evolving work environment;
- link the school with the outside world, thus offering students opportunities to familiarize themselves with the world of work and production, in order to plan their career more effectively, whether they aim at being employed, venturing into entrepreneurship or pursuing higher education;
- expand syllabi and offer programmes with diversity and flexibility, incorporating the selection of individual subjects, as opposed to combinations of subjects, and deferring specialization. (Eurydice, 2009).

In the gymnasium all pupils follow a common programme and all subjects are compulsory. The emphasis is on general subjects and the humanities. The gymnasium serves as an observation period, giving pupils enough time to form an opinion about themselves and their interests, and providing their parents and teachers with opportunities of further appraising their aptitudes and abilities and guide them accordingly.

The weekly lesson timetable of the gymnasium in 2001 is shown in the table below:


Lower secondary education (gymnasium): weekly lesson timetable (2001)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each form		
	I	II	III
Religious education	2	2	2
Modern Greek language	6	5	5
Greek language and literature	3	4	4
Mathematics	4	4	4
History	3	2	2
Civics	–	–	0.5
Vocational counselling	–	–	0.5
Geography	1	1	1
Physics (*)	3	4	4
English language	4	4	4
French language	–	–	2
Physical education	3	3	3
Art education	2	2	1
Music education	2	2	1
Home economics/Design & technology	3	3	2
Total weekly periods	36	36	36

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes. (*) Includes botany and zoology in Form I; physics, chemistry and human biology in Form II; and physics, chemistry and biology in Form III.

The weekly lesson timetable implemented since 2004 is presented in the following table:

Cyprus. Lower secondary education (gymnasium): weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	7 (A)	8 (B)	9 (C)
Religious education	2	2	2
Modern Greek language	5	5	5
Classical Greek	3	3.5	3.5
Mathematics	4	3	4
History	3	2	2
Civics	–	–	0.5
Vocational guidance	–	–	0.5
Geography	1	2	–
Physics	–	2	2
Chemistry	–	1	1
Natural sciences	2	–	–
Biology	–	–	2
English language	3	3	3.5
French language	2	2	2
Physical education	3	3	3
Art education	2	2	1
Music education	2	2	1
Home economics	1.5	1	1
Design and technology	1.5	1	1
Computer studies	2	2	2
First aid	–	0.5	–
Total weekly periods	37	37	37

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture, 2004 (see also Eurydice, 2009). Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

A significant development, introduced since September 1990, is the teaching of design and technology in gymnasia. This was brought about by adjusting the aims, the teaching methodology and the contents of the existing traditional subject of craftwork in schools. Programmes have been monitored and revised so as to bring the subject into line with the needs of modern society.

At the gymnasium pupils' progress is continuously monitored by their teachers in terms of both performance in the various subjects and involvement in the teaching and learning process and personality development. Methods commonly used include assessment carried out orally, short written tests, end-of-the-term written tests, specific assignments, individual and/or group projects, and end-of-the-year written examinations in modern Greek, history, mathematics and physics. Marks awarded at the end of the terms and of the year are expressed using a five-point scale, where A stands for 'excellent' and E for 'fail' (a numerical 20-point scale is used for written examinations, where 19-20 is equivalent to A and 1-9 to E). In order to be promoted to the next grade a pupil should have at least a mark D ('sufficient') in the subjects of the examinations. Nearly all of the pupils having successfully completed lower



secondary education continue their studies in the upper secondary cycle, either at a lyceum or technical and vocational school. In recent years secondary education follows a more flexible and diverse orientation, catering to individual inclinations, aptitudes and interests. Computer science has been introduced in all lyceums, and is a compulsory subject in the first year of all the lyceum combinations.

Until the end of the 1990s, the upper secondary general education cycle was offered in either the lyceum of optional subjects (LEM) or in technical and vocational schools. At the LEM, introduced in 1981, there were three categories of subjects: core, compulsory subjects; specialization subjects; and additional subjects. Although in principle the students were free to choose any of the optional subjects, in practice there were five main subject clusters, i.e. classical studies; physics and mathematics; economics; skills for office professions; and foreign languages and modern Greek.

In 2000/01 the comprehensive upper secondary school (*Eniaio Lykeio*), a new type of lyceum, replaced the LEM. This new institution is characterized by focusing on general education, including technological and economy education. The students have the flexibility to form their own timetable according to their interests and inclinations. In this they are assisted by the teachers of career guidance and counselling and the Committee for the assessment of the students' options. The A form (grade 10) is, for the students, the year of observation, guidance and orientation. Students have the opportunity to take decisions about their studies in the following two years. In the B and C forms (grades 11 and 12) the students follow common core lessons and at the same time they have the opportunity to select those lessons of orientation which will help them in their preparation for their future career and those subjects of interest or enrichment which will satisfy or enhance their special interests and inclinations.

In the A form all the subjects are common core ones. In the B form students attend 19 periods of common core subjects and compulsory foreign languages. In addition they must select three or four stream subjects (each four periods per week) and two or no subjects of special interest or/and enrichment (each two weekly periods). In the C form students attend 17 periods of common core subjects and compulsory foreign languages. In addition they are required to select four optional stream subjects (four weekly periods) and one subject of special interest or enrichment (two periods a week). The choice of electives and special interest subjects included in the approved lists is subject to restrictions or preconditions that the students must consider (for example, some electives offered in the C form must have been studied in the previous year).

The weekly lesson timetable of the lyceum is shown in the table below:

Cyprus. Upper secondary education (lyceum): weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	10 (A)	11 (B)	12 (C)
<i>Common core subjects:</i>			
Modern Greek language	4	4	5
Classical Greek	3	1	–
Mathematics	4	3	2
Physics	2	2	–
Chemistry	1	1	–
Natural sciences	1	–	–
History	3	1.5	2
Religious knowledge	2	1.5	2
Civics	–	–	1
Economics	2	–	–
English language	3	–	–
French language	2	–	–
Language 1	–	2	2
Language 2	–	2	2
Computer science	2	–	–
Technology	2	–	–
Physical education	2	1	1
Arts	1	–	–
Music	1	–	–
<i>Sub-total common core</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Optional stream subjects:</i>			
Three or four electives	–	12-16	–
Four electives	–	–	16
<i>Special interest subjects/Enrichment:</i>			
Two or no subjects	–	4-0	–
One subject	–	–	2
Total weekly periods	35	35	35

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

Students' progress is continuously monitored as at the gymnasium. The main methods include oral participation, short quizzes, end-of-the-term written tests, portfolio, and end-of-the-year written examinations in: modern Greek, history, mathematics and physics in grade A; and modern Greek, mathematics and two of the optional stream subjects in grade B. The minimum pass mark is D. The grading scale used for both written examinations and progress is the same as that used in the gymnasia. The minimum pass mark is D in all subjects. The subjects of the common school-leaving examinations at the end of grade C are modern Greek, mathematics and two of the optional stream subjects. (Eurydice, 2009).



Some 13% of gymnasium graduates enter technical and vocational education (STVE). Since 2001, STVE is offered in two streams, the theoretical and the practical. The duration of studies is three years in both cases. The first year of studies is common for the branch in each stream and students select a specialization in the second and third year of their studies. The theoretical stream is completely school-based and combines general education subjects and science (about 58% of the programme) with technological and workshop subjects. The first and second year of the practical stream are also completely school-based and combine general education subjects (about 42.5% of the programme) with technological and workshop subjects, while the third year of studies students spend one day a week of supervised training in the workplace. The Evening Technical School offers training programmes equivalent to the regular STVE programmes. Attendance is free and the duration of the programmes is between one and four years, depending on the educational background of the students. Graduates receive the school-leaving certificate, equivalent to that obtained from public technical schools.

The proposal for the establishment of the New Modern Apprenticeship (NMA) was approved by the Council of Ministers in November 2007. It is designed to constitute a viable, alternative form of training and development for young people and is expected to become fully operational in 2015. The NMA will target young people aged between 14 and 25 at three apprenticeship levels (preparatory, core and postsecondary), will be supported by an internal research and development centre, and will be linked to the National System of Vocational Qualifications. (CEDEFOP, 2011).

According to national data, in 2003/04 there were 68 public gymnasias providing educational services to 28,854 students out of the total number of 52,221 students enrolled at the secondary level. In 2003/04 there were 23,367 students enrolled in 39 lyceums and 839 students in five evening schools.

The Cyprus Statistical Service reports that in 2009/10 there were 165 secondary schools, of which 127 were public and 38 in the private sector. The total enrolment was 64,611 students (including 31,554 girls), of whom 11,245 enrolled in private institutions. Out of this total, 33,452 students (including 16,432 girls) were enrolled in the second cycle of secondary education; 4,427 students (of whom 730 were girls) were in technical-vocational education and 27,542 students (of whom 15,003 were girls) were in the unified lyceum. The number of full-time equivalent teachers was 7,692 and the student-teacher ratio was 8.4:1. Concerning the public sector only, 113 schools offered general secondary education with an enrolment of 49,040 students (including 25,491 girls) and 5,763 full-time equivalent teachers; and 14 schools offered technical-vocational education with an enrolment of 4,326 students (including 705 girls) and 742 full-time equivalent teachers. The enrolment ratio for the age group 12-14 was estimated at 98.9%, and for the age group 15-17 at 93.6%. (CSS, 2011).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

At the pre-primary, primary and secondary level overall responsibility for quality assurance rests with the Inspectorates of the respective Directorates of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC). The inspectors of the Ministry are responsible for supervising the public schools and appraising teaching staff. They also supervise the private schools in order to assure that they comply with the provisions of law, but they do not supervise their teaching personnel. Public schools also carry out an internal evaluation in the form of an informal summary report on the school, which the head-teacher draws up with the cooperation of the teaching staff and submits to the Ministry at the end of the school year. At the tertiary level of education quality assurance is exercised both in the form of internal and external evaluation. Internal evaluation is a form of self-evaluation which every institution is required to carry out. External evaluation is not the same for all institutions, depending on the type and the level of each institution.

Regarding the evaluation of the education system as a whole, the Department of Educational Research and Evaluation of the Pedagogical Institute carries out research and evaluation projects according to the needs and priorities set by the MOEC. The Centre for Research and Evaluation established in 2008 has the task to conduct scientific research in education-related issues (educational policy, curricula, textbooks, training), as well as the ongoing evaluation of the whole education system. (EURYDICE, CEDEFOP and ETF, 2009/10).

“Cyprus participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 1995 and in almost all TIMSS activities since then. Throughout these studies, Cyprus has been performing poorly on mathematics assessments. A comparison between the TIMSS 1995 and 2007 results as well as between the 1999 and 2007 results indicated a decrease in the mathematics achievement of eighth graders. In the 2007 TIMSS the average scale score for grade 8 students in Cyprus on data and chance was 464 whereas the TIMSS scale average was 500. This is not surprising since: i) topics on data and chance taught up to and including grade 8 are considered to be only for the more able students and only 3% of Cypriot eighth graders are taught topics in this domain; and ii) the intended mathematics curriculum in Cyprus revealed that topics in data and chance are only included in the mathematics textbooks for grade 12.” (Papaieronymou, 2010).

Teaching staff

All kindergarten, primary and secondary school teachers in the public sector are required to be university graduates. Access to higher education is subject to the results of the entrance examinations. In the case of pre-primary and primary education, most of the teachers are graduates of the University of Cyprus from the Preschool or the Primary School Section of the Department of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Education, having completed a four-year (on a full-time basis) bachelor's degree programme. In the past, public primary school teachers were graduates of the Cyprus Pedagogical Academy, which was abolished in 1992 when the University of Cyprus



started operating. By an agreement between the teachers' union and the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), the graduates of the two- or three-year programme offered by the Pedagogical Academy were considered as university graduates upon graduating from a special programme which was conducted by the University of Cyprus and other Greek universities in the period 1997-1999.

Students are required to successfully complete at least 240 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) to be awarded the bachelor's degrees in pre-primary or primary education. Compulsory courses represent 190 ECTS for primary teachers and 170 ECTS for pre-primary teachers; electives are assigned 30 (primary) and 55 ECTS (pre-primary); and general education courses represent 20 (primary) and 15 ECTS (pre-primary). School experience is an integral part of the studies and students must complete 30 ECTS as part of the programme. Concerning prospective primary teachers, school experience is completed in four phases starting from the second year of studies; school experience for pre-primary is organized in three phases. The main areas of study are: pedagogical science; teaching methodology; content area courses; specialization (A and B, only for primary teachers); general education; and foreign language (10 ECTS).

Secondary school teachers are holders of a four-year (on a full-time basis) bachelor's degree in the subject of specialization. The content of the initial training programme for secondary teachers is divided up into four sections: common core subjects, elective common core subjects, subject specializations and school practice. Furthermore, the successful completion of a 26-week pre-service training course, offered by the University of Cyprus, is a prerequisite for appointment. The course runs from the first week of September to mid-May, provides for a combination of theory and practice, and participants must successfully complete 48 ECTS, normally including: compulsory core subjects (12 ECTS), compulsory school experience (20 ECTS), subject specialization (4 ECTS), teaching methodology (8 ECTS), and electives (4 ECTS). Special education teachers must hold a first degree and a postgraduate qualification in the specialist area in which they wish to teach.

Teachers in the public sector are civil servants appointed by the Education Service Commission. A university degree makes one eligible to be included in the official register (waiting list of the Education Service Committee) of candidates for appointment. A teacher's appointment comes according to his/her order in the waiting list, which is based on a system of accumulation of credits upon predetermined criteria. Newly-appointed teachers are on probation for the first two years after their appointment to a permanent post. Head-teachers and inspectors are required to complete an evaluation report on the progress of teachers during the two-year probationary period every six months. After completing the probationary period and upon the recommendation of the inspector allocated to the school they serve, the teachers become permanent public education servants. There are also teachers in the public kindergartens who are employed on contract in order to cover immediate needs. A teacher is evaluated once a year for the first two years and then at least once every three years thereafter. This procedure stays in place until a teacher has completed 25 years of service, at which point he/she is evaluated once every four years.



A comprehensive strategy for in-service training of teachers has been adopted, which provides for the systematic identification of training needs and planning of specific programmes to address these needs for upgrading the skills of teachers at various stages of their career, keeping them at the forefront of technological and educational developments and compensating for any weaknesses they may exhibit. The strategy stipulates a combination of institutional and school-based variety of forms of training with a balanced combination of theory and practice. (MOEC, 2008). In 2008/09 the Pedagogical Institute introduced in-service induction programmes for the newly qualified teachers, including secondary vocational education teachers. The aim of these programmes is to enable the induction of newly appointed teachers by providing support to their personal/emotional needs, their professional and practical needs and the development of their critical thinking in relation to their teaching practice.

The Pedagogical Institute has become the official provider of in-service teacher training and provides training at either its own premises or in schools. The training is conducted either by experienced teachers who have been seconded to the Pedagogical Institute, members of the permanent staff of the Institute, highly-qualified individuals from the private sector and academics from universities or experts from abroad. In-service training may also be provided by professional organizations and inspectors. Compulsory courses are provided for newly-appointed head-teachers and deputy head-teachers and practicing teachers.

Pre-primary and primary school teachers normally work from 7:30 a.m. to 13:05 p.m. The weekly load depends on the years of service: 29 lessons for teachers with 1-14 years of experience, 27 for those with 15-20 years of experience, and 25 for teachers with more than 21 years of service or over 50 years old. Primary school teachers also attend staff meetings once a week. In the case of secondary school teachers (gymnasias, lyceums and technical schools), the weekly load ranges from a maximum of 24 lessons (1-7 years of service) to a minimum of 18 (more than 20 years of experience). Secondary teachers attend staff meetings once a month and also attend seminars organized by the inspectorate twice a year.

There is no shortage of pedagogical staff at any level or type of education in Cyprus. In fact, there is a large surplus of qualified secondary school teachers in all specializations. (Eurydice, 2009; EURYDICE, CEDEFOP and ETF, 2009/10; CEDEFOP, 2011).

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Web resources

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Cyprus Higher Education Website: <http://www.highereducation.ac.cy/> [In Greek and English. Last checked: April 2012.]



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Website of the New Curriculum: <http://www.nap.pi.ac.cy/> [In Greek. Last checked: April 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>