

# BASIC SKILLS NATIONAL CONTEXT

## CZECH REPUBLIC

### **I. Introduction.**

The problematics of teaching basic skills is not considered and treated as a special item of government educational policy in the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, there are programmes or courses that deal with this phenomenon. From this reason, for having better understanding of basic skills national context in the Czech Republic, it is necessary to see this problematics in broader historical as well as educational contexts. Therefore, short overviews of these contexts are recalled in the following text. Moreover, facts related to teaching basic skills appear also in all other sections concerning education in the Czech Republic.

The Czech Republic was established on 1 January 1993 after the split of former Czechoslovakia. Its geographical area amounts to 78 866 square kilometres, the population is about 10 224 000.

The existence of the Czech State dates back to the early Middle Ages. The Czech lands became a kingdom in the 13th century and its significance peaked in the 14th century under the rule of Charles IV, the Czech king and Roman emperor. He established a university in the capital Prague in 1348 that was the first institution of higher education north of the Alps. After 1620 the Czech lands became part of the Austrian, and after 1867 the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. After its demise in 1918 Czechoslovakia was established uniting the Czech territory and that of Hungary inhabited by Slovaks and Ruthenians using a similar language. In the 20s and 30s Czechoslovakia belonged to the ten most developed countries in Europe with its efficient industry and high standards of education. After Hitler's occupation of the country in 1938, Czechoslovakia was split into the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the Slovak state. It was restored after the war ended in 1945. Its far Eastern part, Transcarpathian Ukraine was annexed by the Soviet Union.

The events leading to World War II and the war itself strengthened the leftist orientation of a significant part of the population. The nationalisation of mines, key industries, banks and insurance companies in October 1945 concerned more than 60 % of the economy. The Communist party won the 1946 parliamentary elections in Bohemia, giving rise to a government crisis in 1948 and took power. This resulted in a change of regime and brought the country under Soviet influence. The entire economy was nationalised and, to a great extent, run to meet the needs of the Soviet bloc. The state administration became entirely centralised and de facto subjected to the Communist party. The liberalisation of the regime in the late 60s was short lived and was followed by 20 years of relative - though distorted - economic prosperity accompanied by an ideological morass.

The end of 1989 saw the fall of the regime. Free parliamentary elections in June 1990 confirmed the course of democratic development. The unitary state was federalised and changed its name to the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic.

Radical and speedy transition from a centrally administered economy to a market economy was less acceptable for Slovakia. This process was accompanied by the crystallisation of political entities in both countries, in Slovakia often marked by efforts to achieve national independence. After the 1992 election in which parties with incompatible policies won in the two parts of the federation, the split of the Czechoslovak state and the emergence of two independent states - the Czech Republic and Slovakia - was inevitable (from 1 January 1993).

At the beginning the political orientation of the country was right wing. The Civic Democratic Party was leading the country. After the elections in 1998 and 2002 the Czech Social Democratic Party got to the head. The main political parties and their standing after the June 2002 elections: Czech Social Democratic Party (32.20%), Civic Democratic Party (24.47%), Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (18.50%), coalition Christian and Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party and Freedom Union - Democratic Union (14.27%).

Political development is marked by efforts to achieve formal as well as real integration into the European structures. The Czech Republic gained membership of the OECD on 21 December 1995. The Europe Agreement came into force on 1 February 1995 establishing an association between the Czech Republic and the European Communities. In April 1998 the Czech Parliament approved the Czech Republic's membership of NATO and finally on May 1, 2004 Czech Republic became a full member of the European Union.

The official language in the Czech Republic is Czech, that belongs to the western Slavic family of languages. Regional dialects do not possess the status of a language, groups of people using dialects are small and therefore dialect is not a problem in schools.

National minorities in the Czech Republic include Slovaks (1.8 %), Poles (0.5 %) and Germans (0.4 %). Moravians (3 %) and Silesians (1 %) speaks Czech. Romanies represent an ethnic minority. Their precise number cannot be defined as it depends on whether they declare themselves to be Romanies or not. The official 1991 census put it at 33,000 people (0.3 %), qualified estimates put it at 200 to 300 thousand. In 2001 census the number is 11,700, it means that number of people who declare themselves as Romanies decreased by 64% and is now 0.1% of total population. In general the mother tongue of Romanies is not Roma language, but more likely Czech or Slovak. The teaching of Roma language, history and culture was introduced as non-obligatory for Roma children and other interested people.

Due to low numbers and lack of concentration of these minorities their right to be educated in their language is organised by the public administration only for the Polish minority in the north of Moravia. No interest has been expressed in education in Slovak, the reason probably being the close similarity of both languages and cultures. The introduction of preparatory classes redressing insufficient knowledge of the Czech language and assisting in better social integration is a measure trying to meet the needs of the Romany minority above all. It is not intended for Romanies only, but aims at eliminating these problems in all children from socially and culturally disadvantaged backgrounds. The Romany community, however, has so far expressed little interest in such assistance. Children of foreigners are integrated into

classes without a language preparation. Number of foreigners is 1.2% of population. Among them, Slovaks (19%), Ukrainians (16%), Vietnamese (14%) and Russians (6%) are the most numerous.

As far as religion is concerned, the Czech Republic is denominationally neutral, this means that there is no official religion. The freedom of religion is granted and everybody has the right to express his/her religion or belief. The number of people practising religions - traditionally low - after a short period of increase after 1989 - has decreased further. On census 2001 58.3% of inhabitants declared themselves undenominational, 31.7% as believers (in 1991 it was 43.9%), and 10% did not answer the question. Due to historical developments (the reformation movement at the beginning of the 15th century, the strong counter-reformation associated with the arrival of the Habsburg dynasty (1627) and resulting in forcible massive re-catholicisation), the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical denominations are biggest. 21 churches and religious societies are registered in the Czech Republic.

Schools have opened up to religious influences both in curriculum (re-introduction of religion as a subject, and the introduction of information on churches into history and civic education), and in organisation (establishment of denominational schools, abolishing quantitative restrictions on theological studies) only after 1989. Law stipulates provisions concerning religious education.

Table 1. and 2 in Section VII" at the end of this text show selected statistics about the population of the Czech Republic in the year 2001:

## **II. System of Education in the Czech Republic**

### **Historical overview of the education system.**

Throughout Czech history, education has been regarded with great respect in the country. This was reflected in the organisation of the education system: the first university was established in 1348, the Czech Technical University in 1717, compulsory six-year school attendance was introduced in 1774 and extended to eight years in 1869. As a considerable part of the Czech history is linked to Austria, the history of the Czech education runs parallel with that of Austria, but at the same time it is marked by a process of linguistic and national emancipation.

The inter-linking levels that make up the foundations of the education system were laid down by reforms adopted in 1774 and in the years following, when in an effort to consolidate the empire and develop the economy, schooling was brought under state supervision. A more or less coherent education system was created, made up of three inter-linking levels and with a clear division between mass and selective education. The industrial revolution beginning in the 1830s, liberalisation, and rising national awareness created new educational needs which left their mark in the 1869 School Act: compulsory education was prolonged to eight years, the state took over responsibility for school administration and the education of young people, and the setting up and funding of schools became the responsibility of municipalities. The church had the right to set up schools only certain conditions were met. An eight-year community school became the basic type of school. After five years it was possible to go on to a three-year town school offering lower secondary education of a higher standard than that offered by the community schools, or secondary schools, i.e. secondary technical school) or upper secondary general school. After finishing the town school or the lower level of a secondary school, a student could go on to study at a secondary technical school.

After independent Czechoslovak state was established in 1918, one major issue to tackle was the creation of a uniform education system, bringing into line the cultural standards in the three different parts of the country: the Czech lands, Slovakia and Transcarpathian Ukraine. A great amount of legislation was passed between 1919 and 1923, the most important being the so-called 'Small School Act' of June 1922. This act did not change the structure of Czech education, and imposed this structure on Slovakia but not on Transcarpathian Ukraine.

The boom in reform pedagogy in the 1920s and 30s brought about a range of beneficial, partial reforms in the internal life of schools, aimed at improving curricula, reducing the differences between different types of secondary schools, creating a better balance between general and vocational education, and forming a concept of a comprehensive secondary school.

The School Act of April 1948 stipulating the basic principles of comprehensive education nationalised the education system as a whole and eliminated the influence of the Church. Basic education lasting nine years was compulsory, uniform and free of charge. The law also provided for support hours for socially disadvantaged children and non-compulsory education in the form of leisure time activities, which at the same time performed a social function. Basic education was preceded by a non-

compulsory nursery school. After basic education, which was divided into a 1st and a 2nd stage, there were schools of the "third stage" - upper secondary general schools and vocational and technical schools and then higher education institutions.

A 1953 law on the Education System and Teacher Training established a new education system, which unified the existing three levels of general education in terms of organisation. The 2nd and 3rd stages were shortened from four to three years, the length of compulsory schooling was set at eight years, and the path to the maturity exam took eleven years.

The School Act of December 1960 restored nine-year compulsory schooling and accepted the reality of three streams of secondary education: secondary general schools lasting three years, secondary technical schools providing four-year courses and a large number of secondary vocational schools. Adult education was an integral part of this system.

In the 1960s, criticism was directed at the overly uniform nature of schooling and cast doubts on its "work orientation" (each student had to spend a certain time of the year in a manual profession to get "closer to the working class" - an ideological bias) as a feature hindering the achievement of demanding educational aims. Some changes were implemented: the upper secondary general school re-assumed the title of "gymnázium" and returned to its earlier duration of four years.

Another far-reaching reform was represented by a 1976 project called "Further Development of the Czechoslovak Education System". This led to a law in 1978 that introduced ten-year compulsory schooling. Pupils finished a basic school shortened from nine to eight years and had to study at an upper secondary school for at least two further years. The project was set out in its entirety in the School Act (1984) with the system of basic and secondary schools which, with some amendments, is still valid at present. This law provided for the establishment of the education system as a comprehensive entirety from pre-school to adult education. This also entailed various provisions fulfilling different social roles. Education was supposed to be of a practical and vocational nature, and companies and social organisations also provided education, since practical training was a part of schooling from the upper secondary level on. All three streams of secondary education were given an equal status, since even the upper secondary general school, which hitherto had provided only general education, offered vocational training, while secondary vocational schools offered study fields leading to a maturity exam. The possibility of completing secondary technical education and achieving full secondary technical education ending in a maturity exam in a further study remained open. As secondary vocational school lasted at least two years, this arrangement ensured that everybody achieved secondary (i.e. upper secondary) education, and therefore compulsory schooling provided every pupil with some professional qualification. The rationale behind this arrangement, however, had various shortcomings, such as an increase in the volume of study matter at the shortened basic school and, on the whole, disproportional demands placed on pupils, all this in the name of the uniformity of the system and the equality of the three educational streams. The hidden selectivity of the system thus increased. Open selectivity was the result of quantitative restrictions in post-compulsory education and of the important role of political criteria.

A new Higher Education Act was passed in 1990, which restored autonomy and academic freedoms in higher education and, by reducing state interference to a minimum, provided universities with a high degree of independence. Another law was passed concerning state administration and self-government in education. Important amendments were made to the law on educational establishments and, most importantly, to the School Act. In 1998 a new Higher Education Act was passed, and in 2000 an amendment to the School Act was accepted that softened admission requirements to upper secondary schools.

Between 1999 and 2001 the long-term efforts to formulate educational policy began to bear fruit. The strategic aims of the government's education policy in the Czech Republic were approved in April 1999. In May 1999 a general Conception of Education and the Development of the Education System was presented for the discussion. The first stage was professional, and from 1999 the second one was open to the general public. The result is the National Programme for the Development of Education, which was discussed by the government in March 2001. The Concept of the State Information Policy in Education was approved by the government in April 2000 and will be implemented progressively over the next 4 years. In developing it the Ministry of Education took into account the relevant European documents.

### **Basic Principles of present Czech Education System.**

The basic principles governing the provision of education are contained in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which is a part of the Constitution. Education in general in the Czech Republic has been regulated by following basic acts:

- the School Act, i.e. the Act on the System of Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Higher Vocational Schools (the Act No. 29/184)
- the Act on State Administration and Self-government in Lower Education (the Act No. 564/1990)
- the Higher Education Act (the Act No. 111/1998 on Higher Education Institutions).

The School Act defines types of schools and their role, the levels of education provided by them, the forms, course and completion of studies, the responsibilities of administrative authorities and the position of non-state schools. Amendments and additions to the School Act enacted since 1990 can be summarised as follows:

- Compulsory education has been shortened from 10 to 9 years, the eight-year basic school was extended to nine years - a five-year first stage and a four-year second stage.
- The "comprehensive" school was abolished, which means: a) the legal provision laying down a uniform ideological orientation for education was abolished and a certain degree of curricular and pedagogical autonomy was introduced, b) differentiation of instruction according to children's abilities and interests was legitimised, c) selectivity was introduced within compulsory education.
- A new type of post-secondary education has been introduced – post-secondary professional schools, which have replaced the previous post-

secondary study, which provided studies towards a qualification, specialisation or innovation and was considered to be higher secondary education. Post-secondary professional schools, however, are classified as tertiary education.

- The establishment of non-state schools has been made possible, i.e. denominational and private schools (with the right to provide education for payment).

The Act on State Administration and Self-government in Lower Education complements the School Act in terms of processes and procedures.

The Higher Education Act of 1998 significantly changed the structure of organising bodies: the status of state school was limited to military and police schools, while other higher education institutions gained the status of public schools, which increased their autonomy considerably. It allowed the emergence of private higher education institutions. The Act was amended in 2000: the autonomy of higher education institutions was increased with respect to property, and studies within the framework of lifelong learning (which is not considered as higher education) may under certain conditions be recognised as credits towards obtaining a degree.

### **Compulsory education.**

The length of compulsory education is set by the School Act. It lasts nine years starting at the beginning of the school year following the day on which the child reaches six years of age. Compulsory education takes place at a basic school. Gifted children who transfer to a multi-year upper secondary school or to a multi-year conservatoire in the course of compulsory education complete their compulsory education at these schools.

The pupil completes their compulsory education after nine years of school attendance. This also applies in cases when the pupil does not complete the ninth year (e.g. may have repeated a year) and thus does not complete basic education. Basic education may then be completed either by remaining at school the following year or, later on, by attending courses aimed at completing basic education. For disabled children (attending either a standard basic school or a special school), the beginning of compulsory education is based on a judgement of their readiness, and their compulsory education ends upon the completion of all nine years of basic education.

A child with a serious disability may be temporarily exempted from compulsory school attendance by the head of the educational department of a regional authority on the basis of an expert judgement and with the agreement of the child's legal guardian. Such a decision is regularly reviewed to assess whether the child may be capable of being educated at a special school. At the same time, a decision is made on a substitute form of education that meets the child's needs.

Foreign nationals are unconditionally provided with free education within the compulsory schooling. Immigrants are ensured free courses of the Czech language. Upper secondary education is free for them in case they have a valid residence permit.

The responsibility for compulsory education provided at private and denominational schools is with the Ministry of Education. This means, in practical terms, that the state guarantees education at these schools, provided that they are included in the school register. The state also recognises education gained at these schools and guarantees that if a non-state school has any difficulties, its pupils will be able to complete their compulsory schooling in another basic school.

### III. Educational institutions in the Czech Republic.

Schools or educational institutions in the Czech Republic can be divided into the following types according to the level of education and the nature of education provided:

1. **Basic school** combines primary and lower secondary levels of education (ISCED 1+2) in one organisational unit and provides compulsory education. It is nine years in duration and it corresponds to the length of compulsory schooling. It is divided into a five-year first stage and a four-year second stage. Upon completion of the first stage, pupils who show interest and succeed in the admission procedure may transfer to a multi-year upper secondary school. They may continue in an eight-year upper secondary school after the fifth year or a six-year upper secondary school after the seventh year and complete their compulsory schooling there.
2. **Secondary schools** provide secondary education (i.e. upper secondary - ISCED 3), which can be either general or vocational. General education is always a complete secondary education (ISCED 3A) ending with a maturity exam. Vocational education may consist of two levels: secondary vocational education (ISCED 3B) ending with a final exam, and complete secondary vocational education (ISCED 3A) ending with a maturity exam. The maturity exam in all types of schools entitles pupils to seek admission to post-secondary education. Secondary schools are divided into the following types:
  - a. **upper secondary general schools** providing complete upper secondary education ending with a maturity exam (ISCED 3A) and preparing pupils primarily for higher education. The studies may last four years (only upper secondary level), six or eight years (including part of the lower plus complete upper secondary education);
  - b. **upper secondary technical schools** providing four-year courses leading to complete upper secondary education ending with a maturity exam (ISCED 3A) after which pupils may seek admission to higher education. Pupils are qualified to enter certain technical, economic and other occupations. One special type of upper secondary school is the conservatoire;
  - c. **higher vocational schools** provide qualifications for manual and similar professions in two- and three-year courses (ISCED 3), and in a small number of four-year courses leading to a maturity exam to ensure training for highly skilled workers and operators as well as to open the way to higher education (ISCED 3A);
  - d. **vocational schools** are not formally fully recognised as upper secondary schools - they offer one-year or two-year courses (ISCED 2C) to pupils who completed their compulsory schooling before the ninth year or did not complete the ninth year successfully, and who did not use the opportunity given by the 2000 School Act Amendment and apply for study at a upper secondary school.
3. **Special schools** (or classes) are designated for children with various health (physical or mental) or social disabilities who cannot be integrated into mainstream schools. These schools run in parallel to the mainstream schools

(special basic schools, special upper secondary schools, special vocational schools etc.) and pupils reach the level of education equal to that achieved at ordinary schools (ISCED 2A).

4. Children with more serious learning difficulties may go to a **remedial special school** (ISCED 2C) or to a **auxiliary special school** (ISCED 1) to complete their basic education. Further follow-up education can then be gained in a vocational school (ISCED 2C) or in a **practical school** (ISCED 2C).
5. **Post-secondary professional schools** prepare pupils for demanding, skilled professions. They offer post-secondary specialised education (ISCED 5B) ending with the absolutorium to upper secondary school graduates who have passed the maturity exam.
6. Higher education institutions provide education at three levels of study programmes: Bachelor's, Master's (both ISCED 5A) and Doctoral (following Master's - ISCED 6). Higher education institutions in the Czech Republic are either university-type or non-university-type.

**University-type higher education institutions** provide bachelor, master and doctoral study programmes as well as related scholarly, research, developmental, artistic or other creative activities. **Non-university-type higher education institutions** provide primarily only bachelor study programmes, as well as related research, developmental or other creative activities.

Higher education institutions in the Czech Republic are public, state or private. All traditional universities in the Czech Republic are public higher education institutions. The only state higher education institutions are military and police academies/universities. The first private higher education institutions in the Czech Republic were founded in 2000. The newly established private higher education institutions are at present of non-university type and offer usually either fields of study not fully covered by the public universities or fields of study where the demand significantly exceeds the capacities of public universities.

7. **Other educational institutions** are mostly various profit making institutions providing various types of courses on various educational levels, e.g. language schools, company educational institutions, etc. Generally, educational services of these institutions, provided on a profit basis are not controlled by any governing body. The only exceptions are the institutions that aim to provide recognised further vocational training (which request accreditation from an authorised body of the relevant department) and institutions providing language education (which require accreditation from the Ministry of Education).

A typical feature of the Czech education system is the fact that practically all basic school leavers (almost 95%) continue their studies at post-compulsory educational institutions. In view of the considerable predominance of vocational/technical schools over general education schools, a considerable proportion of pupils at the upper secondary level gain a vocational qualification recognised by the labour market.

The transfer from a basic school to an upper secondary school and then the transfer from an upper secondary school to a higher education institution may be seen as the

decisive moments in the choice of an individual's educational path. In order to enter an upper secondary school or a higher education institution, a pupil must go through an admission procedure, part of which may be (and in general is) an entrance examination.

A prerequisite for entering an upper secondary school is successful completion of the basic school (all nine years). Law 19/2000 opened the access to upper secondary schools also to those who have attended all nine years of compulsory schooling, without necessarily completing the final year successfully, as long as they fulfil the admission requirements. A prerequisite for entering tertiary education is a complete upper secondary education, i.e. education ending with a maturity exam.

If a pupil has only completed secondary education and not complete upper secondary education - meaning that they have not passed a maturity exam- they may complete their education in a follow-up study (level ISCED 4A) ending with a maturity exam. Follow-up study is organised both at higher vocational schools and technical secondary schools. Those who are interested apply for admission to these courses either immediately after completing their previous education, or after a certain period at work. This element of the education system represents a second chance and significantly increases promotion through the system.

In addition to full-time courses, upper secondary schools and higher educational institutions also offer other forms of study. At secondary schools this is an on-the-job study, comprising part-time and distance study, at higher education institutions it can be distance study or a combination of full time and distance study. These forms most often provide for the study of the whole curriculum of the subject field, usually the same as in full time study.

Table 3 in Section VII shows a statistical overview of all types of schools in the Czech Republic in the academic year 2002/2003.

## **IV. Kinds and levels of Education.**

### **Primary education.**

A basic school provides basic education and mental, moral, aesthetic, labour, health, physical and environmental education; it allows religious education as well. It prepares its pupils for further studies and work. Educational objectives of a basic school are specified in the Standard for Basic Education published in the Bulletin of Ministry of Education in 1995; in 1997 curriculum connected with the integration of the Czech Republic to international structures was added. It defines an idea of a socially desirable form of compulsory basic education and training. The basic education standard stipulates educational objectives in seven specified educational areas that are divided into educational branches. Core subject matter for basic education, which ensures education in sequence and comparability in all types of schools, is then specified within the particular branches. Core subject matter for the 1st stage is dealt with separately since the 1st stage is relatively independent and because of the expected evaluation of educational results upon its completion. The basic education standard is a binding norm when designing educational programmes and it serves as a criterion for evaluation of educational activities' results.

The educational objectives are defined

- at the cognitive level - pupils are required to learn knowledge that is the foundation of general culture, prepares conditions for communication and helps them to orientate themselves in incentives occurring out of school,
- at the skills and competencies level - i.e. ability to employ acquired skills in real-life situations,
- at the value and attitude level - human moral values, that are part of European traditions, are fundamental, values on which democratic society and legal order depend and values that enable the pupils to form responsible relationship to their own actions.

Educational objectives are divided into seven areas: languages, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, aesthetic education, health and life-style education, crafts and technology.

Regarding proposals or recommendations articulated in the educational programme, it is up to the teacher to choose methods. Different educational technologies (television, video) are in common use and under the project Internet to schools the information technology more are used and more often. As for theoretical teaching, classic teaching methods (teacher lecturing in the classroom) prevail. The practical part of instruction includes practical exercises and work in laboratories, which is usually a part of subjects. During such exercises the class is divided into groups. Foreign languages are always taught in groups.

Having passed the 9th year, a pupil achieves basic education that is not certified. A pupil who does not acquire basic education, e.g. he/she finished the compulsory attendance in lower than 9th year, has the opportunity to achieve it in courses organised either by a basic school or a secondary school. Many pupils that leave the school early continue their education and training at vocational school, in the

apprentice courses with specially modified curricula where they get a professional qualification.

## **Secondary education.**

### **Upper secondary general schools.**

Upper secondary general schools provide their pupils with a deep-reaching general education in the areas of languages, social sciences, mathematics and information technology, natural sciences, aesthetic education and in health and lifestyle subjects. Apart from theoretical knowledge, the pupils acquire various important skills, techniques and habits, and their academic motivation is fostered.

The main function of an upper secondary general school is to prepare pupils for admission to a university or post-secondary professional school. In spite of the fact that there are many graduates of upper secondary technical schools who have a professional qualification, upper secondary general school graduates who were not admitted to study at a higher education institution or do not want to continue their studies have the least problems finding employment. Unemployment among upper secondary general school graduates is constantly the lowest of all types of upper secondary schools. It reached 7.9% in 1999, in 2000 it was 10.5%, in 2001 it was 8.9%, in 2002 9.6% (always in April, measured for graduates who had not worked for at least two years after finishing school).

### **Upper secondary technical schools.**

Upper secondary technical schools provide their pupils with general education as well as with broadly conceived technical education with the possibility of specialisation depending on the type of school and the field of study. Through their educational activities the schools nurture the pupils' personal, intellectual and moral qualities. They provide for aesthetic, health, physical and ecological education and also offer religious education. They provide pupils with qualifications to perform activities and professions mainly of an intellectual nature and prepare them for further studies including university.

On 1 January 1998 a Standard of Secondary Vocational Education came into the effect, which defines the required level of vocational education. It concerns both study and training courses and breaks down into three parts:

1. general education - it defines its share in the overall provision, educational aims and content areas;
2. key skills - generally applicable communication, personal and inter-personal skills, problem-solving, numerical applications and the use of information technologies;
3. basic vocational education - the educational aims and general requirements related to the given areas of vocational education.

Teaching methods in upper secondary technical schools are still traditional, but new methodology is being sought to adapt the instruction better to the varying abilities of pupils, to strengthen the broad educational nature of teaching, to place greater

emphasis on pupils' independent work, etc. Instruction takes place in classrooms, in subject classrooms or in laboratories.

The number of pupils studying various fields is not in any way set centrally. As a result, attractive areas of study (i.e. in banking, the travel industry, electrical engineering etc.) draw more pupils than the potential number of jobs in the labour market. On the other hand, other fields (primarily those of a technical and operational nature) suffer from a chronic lack of pupils. The inclusion of work placements in companies in the study plans of upper secondary technical schools makes it possible to establish relationships between the pupils and the employers which may have some impact on future employment decisions. Unemployment among upper secondary technical school graduates, which used to be the lowest of all secondary schools, has risen sharply from 2.9% to 5.3%, 8.6% and 15.4% between 1996 and 1999. In 2000 - 2001 it remained at 16.1% - 15.8%, but in 2002 rose again to 20.8%.

### **Upper secondary vocational schools.**

Upper secondary vocational schools provide both general and vocational education related to the relevant branch of training. The important part is dedicated to professional training where pupils acquire practical skills necessary to carry out a job. Their educational provision seeks to develop the pupils' personalities and nurtures their intellectual and moral qualities. The schools also ensure the aesthetic education, health care, physical and environmental education of their pupils. Pupils get qualifications for the performance of certain professions and skills and they are also prepared for further education. Through study courses offering complete upper secondary education, pupils develop their potential to study at higher education institutions.

Upper secondary vocational schools offer more than 15 two-year training courses, about 200 three-year training courses, about 50 four-year study courses and about 60 courses for graduates of three-year training courses. Three-year courses are the predominant type.

The numbers of pupils who may study individual fields are not at present set centrally. Consequently certain fields (services, electrical engineering etc.) attract more pupils than the potential number of jobs in the labour market, while other fields suffer from a chronic lack of pupils. Practical training, through which the pupils get a feel of a real workplace, makes it possible to establish contacts between the pupils and employers, which may influence future employment decisions. In 1998 - 2001 the unemployment rate among upper secondary vocational school graduates with a final exam was 9.3%, 20.9%, 26.4%, 32.7% and 23.8% and among graduates with a maturity exam was 5.6%, 13.3%, 17.8%, 19.0% and 25.5%.

### **Post-secondary professional schools.**

Post-secondary professional schools prepare pupils to perform demanding professional activities or deepen the knowledge already gained so that the pupils are able to perform specific demanding jobs. The schools provide higher professional education (ISCED 5B) that includes general education, specific vocational education and demanding practical training. The studies last between two and three years. If

the course includes practical work for a period longer than three months, the maximum length of the studies is three and a half years. Post-secondary professional schools were introduced in the 1992/93 school year on an experimental basis. Their position and status was then strengthened by the June 1995 amendment to the School Act, which recognised them as part of the country's education system.

Post-secondary professional schools are designed to cover that area of qualifications which exists in the gap between secondary vocational/technical education and university education. The courses should provide the pupils with theoretical knowledge that meets his/her professional needs and with practical training. The studies should be of an interdisciplinary nature and their organisation should approach that of universities. There is an emphasis on individual work. Teaching methods approximate those at higher education institutions.

As post-secondary professional schools have only been introduced recently, it was difficult to evaluate the employment of their graduates. Between 1998 and 2002 the level of unemployment among graduates was 8.8%, 13.8%, 11.5%, 8.0% and 9.9%. The job market is gradually coming to accept this qualification.

### **Tertiary education.**

Tertiary or higher education in the Czech Republic has been regulated by the Higher Education Act (the Act No. 111/1998 on Higher Education Institutions). Higher education institutions represent the highest level of the educational system in the Czech Republic. They provide accredited study programmes as well as lifelong learning programmes. The type of higher education activities is determined by the type of accredited study programmes being provided. Each study programme is one of the following types: bachelor, master, or doctoral.

## **V. Adult Education.**

### **Historical overview.**

In initial stages, adult education was a matter of individual initiative. At the beginning of the last century trade organisations in certain professions (e.g. medical) or fields (e.g. agriculture) became the main providers of such education. To a certain extent, schools have also provided it as well.

The period following 1948 saw a boom in adult education, especially its school-based form, due to two phenomena of post-war development. First, the re-structuring of the economy required a different structure of the workforce; and second, many people were prevented from continuing their career for political reasons and had to be replaced by others. Selected "workers" were allowed to take up regular full-time studies, and even more importantly, there were new possibilities for employed people to study at secondary schools or universities. There were two options for on-the-job study: evening classes or distant study (attendance at the latter being limited just to monthly consultations). These courses used the same curricula as regular full-time study. Graduates received the same certification as graduates from full-time courses. Participation in such programmes was conditional on the consent of employers, but employers were obliged to provide their employees with study leave as specified by the law. Learner numbers on these courses were remarkably high. They reached their peak at the beginning of the 1960s, when adults made up 22% of all secondary school students and 37% of all university students. In the 1980s, for instance, learners in secondary on-the-job study programmes represented 13-15% of all secondary students, and 20-24% of the total number of students at the university level. Adult education represented a "second chance" for those who had earlier decided not to finish their studies for various personal reasons or those who had been prevented from studying for political reasons which later disappeared. In the past, when there was a wide range of on-the-job study, there were specialised upper secondary schools for "workers". Nowadays, in general, education takes place in regular schools offering full-time study.

The whole area of further education, both in the professional and personal development sphere, has been deeply affected by the social and political changes following 1989. The transformation of the economy brought a decrease in the GNP, changes in the structure of industries and in the requirements for qualifications, a breaking up of enterprises into small units, and unclear perspectives for future development. This initially had a negative impact on education within organisations and later also on school education, because this was dependent on the interest of the organisations, since enterprises gave their employees study leave. Changes in state administration and a shift toward self-administration did not provide a good context for educational activities organised by local government bodies. There was a rapid decrease in the level of educational activities for adults. The number of private educational initiatives, on the other hand, increased slightly. The development of commercial adult education is controlled only by the market principles of supply and demand. The supply is very flexible, but suffers from a general lack of co-ordination and an insufficient flow of information. The quality of the education is yet another concern. At first, the demand was aroused by the need to compensate for the insufficient access to education under the previous political system. Nowadays, it is

stimulated by the changing labour market, but at the same time it is impaired by a lack of knowledge about present and future educational needs.

Educational activities associated with employment policy, especially retraining, are a new phenomenon. The national employment plan approved in May 1999 is a new challenge for their development. Schools can provide adult education leading to qualifications identical with those provided by initial education. They also can provide retraining courses and recreational education on a commercial basis.

As for the forms of teaching and learning, distance education based on multi-media, organised both by schools and non-school institutions, has been developing alongside more traditional forms. The main aims of adult education are outlined in The National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic , which the Government debated at the beginning of 2001. Three key recommendations are as follows:

- to create a legal framework for the development of adult education,
- to develop and introduce a system of financial and non-financial incentives,
- to establish mechanisms for the systematic development of adult education.

Its implementation is the Long-term Concept of Education and Education System Development of the Czech Republic that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports was obliged to prepare on the basis of an amendment to the Law on State Administration and Self-government in Education from 2000. It was approved in March 2002. It lays down the measures on the State level and determines the space for solutions on the regional level. The task of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is

- to prepare a Law on Further Education;
- to prepare a design of complete system of the financial incentives motivating demand;
- to prepare a Development Support Programme for Further Education at Schools;
- to support the development of module structure of educational programmes;
- to prepare and implement an accreditation system of further education;
- to prepare and implement a system of information, quality monitoring and certification.

All the tasks are under preparation. Efforts to put into practice the ideas of the European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning from 2000 are another positive trend. A discussion on the Memorandum was organised by the National Observatory for Vocational Education and Labour Market of the National Training Fund and sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The results of the discussion were presented at a national seminar in the middle of 2001. The 2001 National Action Employment Scheme put some tasks into concrete terms: it suggested increasing the scope of retraining activities and, above all, "defining powers and responsibilities in the area of further education, and stipulating basic

rules, including those for funding". However, these measures have been implemented rather slowly.

### **Legislative framework for adult education.**

There has never been legal provision in the Czech Republic for adult education as a whole. Educational policy for this sphere that would shape public interest was only formulated in the 2001 National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic. The proposals of the Act on Lifelong Education worked out between 1991 and 1994 have not been debated in Parliament because issues connected with funding had not been successfully resolved, particularly those relating to the tax system and the responsibilities of employers. The work on the new bill started again in 2002.

The current legislation consists of older regulations of lesser legal value and of various new laws and decrees. Four types of regulations can be distinguished:

- The School Act and the Higher Education Act, which specify the forms that adult education may take at various educational levels (including the attainment of basic education).
- Regulations related to work performance: the Labour Code, the Employment Law, government decrees on the provision of requalification opportunities. In general, it can be said that various amendments have made the responsibilities of employers in terms of vocational training for their employees looser. Their obligation to take responsibility for the development of their employees' qualifications, for example, has been removed from the Labour Code.
- The Law on Technical Standards and the Law on State Supervision: these form the basis for rules on vocational skills and qualification requirements, regular in-service training and re-examination; they include laws regulating qualification requirements for non-manual jobs (the law on courts and judges, the law on patent representatives, on tax advisers, etc.).
- The Commercial Code, which regulates the provision of education on a profit basis without specifying any educational, organisational or personnel requirements or conditions. When educational institutions want to offer retraining programmes, these must be accredited by from the Ministry of Education.

The Labour Code states that employees are required to maintain, extend and renew their qualifications. Employers are entitled to require their employees to participate in training to upgrade their qualifications. For employees without qualifications, employers provide training and issue certificates upon completion. If employees are transferred to another position or are required to switch to a different type of work, they are entitled to further training.

Retraining is one of the tools of active employment policy and is controlled by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs through Labour Offices. Most of participants are employment seekers registered in the Labour Office. Less participants in retraining are persons employed, that their employer intends to transfer to other work or dismiss from employment or persons that take part in retraining on their own will.

Labour Offices organise courses on the basis of the current state of unemployment in their areas. These courses may be provided only by educational institutions with study programmes accredited by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Accreditation is granted for a period of three years (the Employment Act and a related decree on accreditation of retraining courses). By the year 2000, about 1 500 retraining courses within 1 800 institutions had been accredited.

Adult education at universities offers study towards specific educational qualifications, organised in the form of combined study. Distance learning, the University of the Third Age and other forms of lifelong learning also fall within the area of competence of authorised higher education institutions.

The education of employees of enterprises and organisations is managed by the enterprises themselves. They organise it either through their own departments of education or through external educational institutions, mostly commercial ones.

### **Adult education institutions.**

Adult education institutions in the Czech Republic can be divided into two types, namely school institutions and non-school institutions.

**School institutions** can offer adult education that can take the place of full-time education and leads to a state educational qualification. It is organised at the upper secondary level in the form of work release studies and at higher levels either in the form of distance studies at post-secondary professional schools or combined study at the higher education institutions. (The combined study is a combination of full-time and part-time study). This applies to the majority of subjects and vocational training branches that exist in full-time form. The extent of such programmes depends on the applicants' interests and on the conditions of each school.

For those who have reached the end of their compulsory school attendance but have not completed basic education, both primary and secondary schools can organise courses aimed at completing this. Usually the same schools organise courses of supplementing education provided for people who passed remedial special school or auxiliary special school.

For persons with secondary education who want to achieve complete secondary education (i.e. to pass the maturity exam), upper secondary schools organise follow-up study. Achieving complete secondary education is a necessary precondition for access to university education and for some jobs. The number of learners in follow-up studies rose significantly, reaching three quarters of all learners in work release studies. Nevertheless, after 1998 their numbers went down by almost 40% as a consequence of decreased funding possibilities.

Secondary schools also organise short courses for adults. There is no statistical register on vocational training courses organised at technical and vocational secondary schools. These courses are provided on a commercial basis. If the courses are to be recognised as retraining for unemployed people registered at Labour Offices, the schools must be accredited by the Ministry of Education. About one third of secondary schools offer retraining courses. As far as enterprise

education is concerned, schools are one of the smallest providers: secondary schools 1.4%, higher education institutions 3.7% (survey by the Czech Statistical Office in 1999).

Higher education institutions can provide lifelong education courses in addition to their regular study programmes. Usually they do not aim at a diploma. The number of participants on courses organised by universities has been rising. Statistical records are not kept. Lifelong education courses can be work-related or personal development oriented (e.g. the University of the Third Age). Explicit conditions of lifelong education are specified in the internal regulations of each institution. In keeping with the Higher Education Act, participants in lifelong education are not seen as students as such. Graduates of lifelong education courses receive certificates. A higher education institution can recognise up to 60% of credits of successful graduates of lifelong education courses in accredited study programmes needed for continuing in the regular courses.

**Non-school institutions** providing adult education are:

- training centres within companies, organisations and state administration bodies;
- specialised profit and non-profit organisations.

There is no obligation to be registered or report, and consequently it is not possible to obtain complete information or statistics on this type of institutions.

### **Company training.**

Extensive restructuring of the business sphere after 1989, particularly reductions in company size, soon led to the closing of the former company education organisation. A new organisation is taking shape only very slowly because of the vague definition of educational needs - a problem rooted in the lack of long-term perspectives in the majority of companies, and a possibility to purchase training from specialised institutions.

Sociological survey focused on problems of company training was carried out in 2002 by the Institute for Information on Education. The sample represented 428 companies with more than 10 employees, covering all spheres except education, health and state administration. Regional sample composition corresponded to the regional distribution of the companies. More than 70% of companies train their employees and at the same time more than 40% of them contribute to their education even if this is out of scope of their request. Courses are most often dedicated to the economy and accountancy, languages, computers and their use, technology, marketing, and driving. As far as organisation concerns, the courses are most often provided through specialised training institutions.

### **Training organised by specialised training agencies.**

After 1990, private training institutions were founded rapidly. These institutions have the possibility to apply for the accreditation for offered training programmes. Research of the Ministry of Education has shown that there were about 1500 of such

institutions in 1995, and they provided the largest amount of adult education. At the end of 1999, 1578 educational and non-educational institutions had been accredited. The 2000 survey of the Ministry of Education shows considerable movement on the providers' market; institutions appear and vanish, and some of those with accredited programmes reduce their activities.

Teachers of adult education do not receive any special training. However, topics relevant to adult education are part of in-service training of primary and secondary school teachers.

### **Adult education statistics.**

There are no country-wide general statistics on adult education. Relevant and available statistics are especially statistics of further education provided by schools included in the school register, then statistical surveys of company training done by Czech Statistical Office and statistics of retraining registered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Table 4 and 5 in Section VII shows statistics for study at individual levels in both the full-time and other forms than in the full-time courses in the academic year 2002/2003.

## **VI: Basic skills.**

In the Czech Republic there is no unified concept of teaching basic skills, similar to that in UK. There are opinions pointing out that the level of numeracy and literacy might not be so satisfactory as generally accepted, but basically there are no systematic attempts to deeply analyse this problematics.

On the other hand, in the Czech education system there obviously exist courses or schemes that deal with problematics of teaching basic skills, as can be seen from the previous sections. Nevertheless, the percentage of persons attending such sort of courses is rather low. For example the proportion of persons attending basic education courses for those who finished their compulsory attendance at a basic school before completing the final year, or those who attended a remedial special school or a auxiliary special school is estimated at about 1% of those persons.

Table 6 in Section VII shows statistics of courses for complementing of lower levels of education in academic year 2002/2003.

## VII. Statistical data.

Table 1. Population of the Czech Republic by age in 2001:

Age	Population
0 - 5	535 945
6 - 10	570 002
11 - 15	647 503
16 - 19	542 870
20 - 24	809 490
25 - 39	2 280 462
40 - 59	2 915 133
over 60	1 905 031
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 206 436</b>

Table 2. Percentage of population that has attained a specific level of education by age group in 2001 (source: "Education at a glance 2002")

Age group	Upper secondary education	Higher education (only long programmes)
25 – 34	93 %	11 %
25 – 64	86 %	11 %

Table 3. Overview on all types of schools in the Czech Republic in the academic year 2002/2003.

Type of school	Schools	Pupils / students
Basic schools – 1st stage	3 956	544 554
Basic schools – 2nd stage	2 457	449 576
Upper secondary schools	1 718	509 225
Post-secondary professional schools	166	27 584
Higher education institutions (incl. privates)	49	236 678

Table 4. Statistics for study at individual levels in **full-time courses** in the academic year 2002/2003.

Level of education	Number of learners	Number of schools
Upper secondary schools in total of which	479 404	1 718
Upper secondary general schools	99 439	343
Upper secondary technical schools	197 910	813
Upper secondary vocational schools	182 055	562
Post-secondary professional schools	22 858	166

Table 5. Statistics for study at individual levels in **other forms than in the full-time courses** in the academic year 2002/2003.

Level of education	Number of learners	% of the total learners of level in question
Upper secondary schools in total of which	29 821	5.8
Upper secondary general schools	789	0.8
Upper secondary technical schools, including follow-up courses	15 072	7.1
Upper secondary vocational schools	13 960	7.1
Post-secondary professional schools	4 726	17.1
Continuing education	29 837	-
of which distance learning	7 596	-

Table 6. Statistics of courses for complementing of lower levels of education in academic year 2002/2003.

Courses for complementing of :	
basic education	784
education provided by remedial special schools	84
education provided by auxiliary special schools	174