



Education and Culture

Socrates

Slovenian Paper on Educational and Teaching System



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1. DESCRIPTION OF EDUCATION SYSTEM

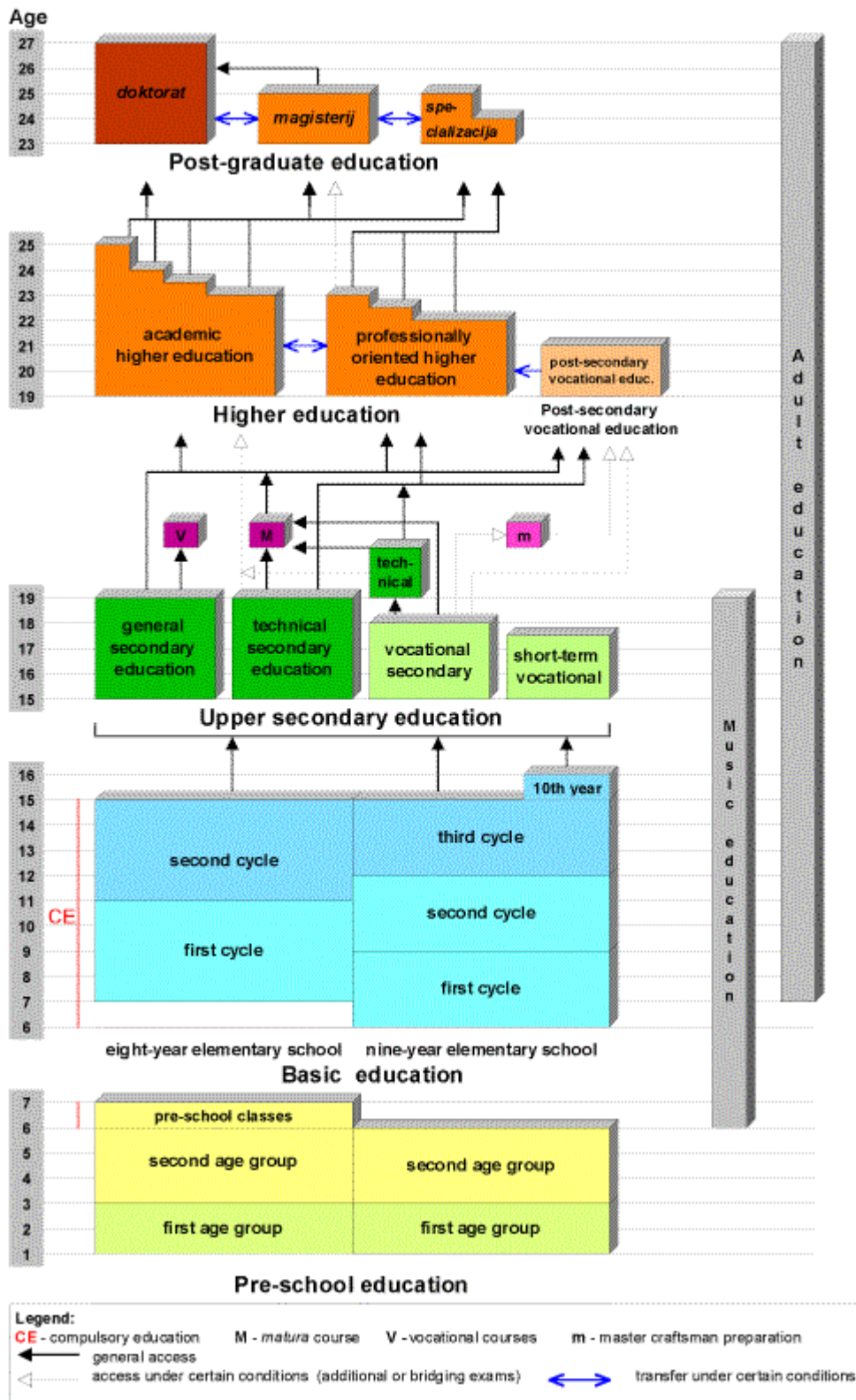
1.1 Education population

The education system in Slovenia includes:

1. Pre-school education
2. Basic education (single structure of primary and lower secondary education)
3. (Upper) secondary education
 - short-term vocational education and secondary vocational education
 - secondary technical education and secondary general education
4. Post-secondary vocational education
5. Higher education
 - undergraduate education (of the professionally oriented and academic type)
 - post-graduate education at levels:
 - *specializacija* and *magisterij*
 - *doktorat*

Specific parts of system:

6. Adult education
7. Music and dance education
8. Special needs education
9. Modified programmes and programmes in ethnically and linguistically mixed areas



Source: Ministry of Education and Sport

1.2 Language of instruction

Slovene is the official language in the Republic of Slovenia. In the areas with the Italian and the Hungarian minority, Italian and Hungarian, respectively, are also official languages.

In areas with Slovene and Italian population that are defined as areas with nationally mixed population, certain *vrtni* (pre-school institutions) and *šole* (schools) offer instruction in Italian. In pre-school institutions and schools with Slovene as the language of instruction children also learn Italian and vice versa.

In areas with Slovene and Hungarian population, *vrtni* (pre-school institutions) and *šole* (schools) provide bilingual education in Slovene and Hungarian (bilingual pre-school institutions and schools).

In compliance with international agreements, children of Slovene emigrants and migrant workers are offered language courses in their mother tongue and courses in their national culture. Courses are provided in the countries where they live.

In compliance with international agreements, compulsory-school-age children of Slovene citizens that live in Slovenia and whose mother tongue is not Slovene are offered language courses in their mother tongue and courses in their national culture; courses in the Slovene language may also be offered.

Compulsory-school-age children of foreign citizens and stateless persons that live in the Republic of Slovenia have the right to education under the same conditions as the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia. They attend Slovene schools with instruction in Slovene. Additional courses in their mother tongue and national culture are provided in compliance with international agreements.

In compliance with a special statutory instrument issued by the Minister of Education, *gimnazije* (general upper secondary schools) and secondary technical and vocational schools can additionally offer parts of individual subjects in foreign languages to facilitate international exchanges or prepare students for the international baccalaureate examination.

Higher education courses are provided in Slovene throughout the whole state. On principle, *visokošolski zavodi* (higher education institutions) may offer complete study programs or parts of them in a foreign language if so provided by their statutes. Public and concessionaire private higher education institutions provide the study of foreign languages in those languages. In addition to that, parts of study programmes may be offered in foreign languages if *gostujoči visokošolski učitelji* (visiting professors) from abroad participate in their provision; complete programmes may be offered in a foreign language only under the condition that the institutions also offer the same programmes in Slovene.

1.3 Planning functions and extent of public-sector funded education

Within the education system, the resources for funding public services are provided by the State budget and by the municipal budgets. The State budget covers the following fields in their entirety: higher education institutions and post-secondary vocational colleges, secondary schools and secondary school students' halls of residence, and schools and institutions for children with special needs. It covers salaries and partly covers equipment costs in compulsory education and all the other tasks required to improve quality within the education system. The State co-funds adult education.

Local communities provide a proportion of the resources for elementary school education (investments and maintenance, but also equipment expenses), elementary music education and pre-school education. Elementary music schools and pre-school institutions are also financed from parents' contributions. Parents cover the expenses for part of the course according to their financial possibilities. Local communities provide

funding from their own resources (taxes, income taxes, etc.). The economically underdeveloped municipality, which is unable to finance itself from these resources, receives additional finances from the State budget.

The law stipulates in which cases resources can be obtained with contributions from students, apprentices and adults to cover optional and advanced courses. In elementary music schools, pupils pay a fee to cover the cost of materials for the curriculum, and all other expenses are covered by the local community. Furthermore, schools can obtain a State contribution towards all non-compulsory and non-standard services. Everyone unable to pay for reasons of social status is subsidised by the State. In secondary and tertiary education, part-time students pay fees.

The amount of resources allocated to public schools from the State and municipal budgets is determined on the basis of norms and standards issued by the Minister of Education. Councils of experts and representative associations are also involved in the acceptance process. Norms and standards specify the measures to be implemented for the formation of classes and groups, and therefore also the standards and norms for determining the number of employees required and the measurements used to calculate the material expenses of each group.

In the higher education field, the State is responsible for the allocation of resources needed to carry out the Higher Education Master Plan (*nacionalni program visokega šolstva*). It defines the criteria for carrying out higher education activities and determines the framework budget for their implementation. The State provides funds for salaries, direct costs and a proportion of the maintenance costs for buildings and equipment; this is based on criteria taking into account the type and scope of higher education curricula and the number of students and graduates. Higher education institutions must comply with the legislation in force when spending budgetary funds. In the case of non-State sources, they can allocate resources on the basis of their own priorities. The State helps fund the activities of certain private professional institutions of higher education on the basis of a "concession agreement". Public higher education institutions manage the property used by them for their activities. On the basis of priorities, the State provides the major part of resources for investments in new premises and equipment and their maintenance. It also takes care of the construction of student housing and subsidises the accommodation of students in student residence halls and their meals. It manages the higher education infrastructure and the extracurricular activities of students.

The Law regulating higher education was changed in 1999. A new system of lump sum financing has been outlined. It is based on five categories of costs, starting with social sciences as the basic category and going up to medicine and arts as the highest one. The formula for the calculation of funding takes into account enrolment numbers and numbers of graduates. Such system will bring more financial autonomy to higher education institutions and will increase their responsibility, especially the responsibility for the quality of studies.

1.4 Pre-primary education

Pre-school education, offered by pre-school institutions, is not compulsory. It includes children between the ages of 1 and 6. The curriculum is divided in two cycles (from 1 to 3 and from 3 to 6). The new curriculum promotes different types of programme such as: day, half-day and short programmes. There is also possibility of childminders, pre-school education at home or occasional care of children in their homes. The Curriculum for Pre-school Institutions was approved by Council of Experts and it defines six areas of activities: movement, language, art, nature, society and mathematics. The goals set in individual fields of activities provide the framework for selection of contents and activities by teachers.

1.5 Compulsory full-time education

Basic education has been extended from eight years to nine. This has been done gradually. The implementation of the nine-year basic education began in the 1999/2000 school year.

'Basic' education is provided by elementary schools, elementary schools for children with special needs and institutions for the education and training of children with more severe developmental difficulties. Two of the elementary schools are international, one in English and the other in French is private.

The compulsory education is free of charge for children and young persons. So far, no fees have been introduced. However, pupils have to pay their share for the textbooks and learning materials they use, and for their meals. Their transport costs are refunded by the local community.

1.5.1 Phases

Compulsory education is referred to as 'basic' education (*osnovnošolsko izobraževanje*). It lasts 8 years (from the age of 7 to the age of 15) and takes place in elementary schools. According to the law on pre-primary institutions, a one-year pre-primary classes preparing children from 6 to 7 years of age for elementary school is also compulsory. In the 9-year compulsory elementary school schooling is prolonged by one year by an earlier start, children are required to start school at the age of 6 instead of 7.

'Basic' education is divided into two education cycles each lasting four years: the first stage from class 1 to class 4 and the second stage from class 5 to class 8. Nine-year basic education is divided into 3 three-year cycles (so called "triads").

Elementary schools provide the compulsory and extended curriculum. The compulsory curriculum must be provided by school and studied by all pupils. It consists of compulsory subjects, electives, home-room periods and activity days (culture, science, sports, technology). The optional elementary school curriculum must be provided by school but pupils are free to decide whether they will participate in it or not. It includes educational assistance for children with special needs, remedial classes, additional classes, after-school care and other forms of care for pupils, interest activities and out-of-school classes.

1.5.2 Admission criteria

In the 9-year elementary schools parents enroll children whose sixth birthday occurs in the calendar year of their school entry into the first grade of elementary school.

The level of readiness required to start school is defined by a special school committee. The school committee includes the pre-primary teacher who has taught the pre-primary classes (i.e. the teacher who has been preparing the child for elementary school), the school doctor and the school psychologist. The criteria used to determine the child's readiness are: the psychological and physical development of the individual child throughout the entire pre-primary period (from 1 to 6 years of age), his/her living conditions and the circumstances determining his/her success in 'basic' education.

1.5.3 Length of the school day/week/year

The school year starts on 1 September and ends on 31 August. Summer holidays last 8 to 9 weeks in July and August. In Slovenia there are also Autumn, Christmas-New Year, Winter and the first of May holidays and there are three additional days off at the most. Pupils attend school from Monday to Friday. The number of compulsory weekly lessons is increased in higher classes (from 20.5 lessons a week in the 1st grade to 29 lessons a week in the 8th grade). A lesson lasts 45 minutes. A school year comprises 38 weeks

with classes and other activities. The classes are held in the morning and usually start at 8 a.m. After the classes, the children can have lunch at school. After school, care is also organised for children from the 1st to the 4th class.

All other activities, such as optional or supplementary classes and leisure activities are usually organised after school. As a rule, classes are given in the morning in elementary schools. Only few schools carry out classes in the afternoon because of the lack of space. If necessary, morning care is organised for the youngest pupils in the morning before regular classes start. Day care is organised for pupils that need care and structured assistance in their homework. Care is organised also for commuting pupils.

1.5.4 Class size / student grouping (average)

In primary school (compulsory education) classes there are maximum 28 pupils. For laboratory or group work they are split in smaller groups if there are more than 21 pupils in that class.

For sports education pupils are split in groups by sex (a group for girls and a group of boys is formed).

1.5.5 Curricular control and content

The present curriculum is based on the curriculum document The programme of life and work of the elementary school (1984 with additions until 1997), which includes guidelines for work, the weekly schedule of subjects and the curricula for the subjects. Elementary schools organise the core curriculum and the extracurricular activities and optional classes. The weekly schedule of subjects is defined at national level and, in addition to classes, includes daily activities, supplementary classes, optional classes and other educational activities.

The Program of Work and Life consists of guidelines for the organisation of work in elementary schools, annual and weekly schedule of compulsory subjects (mother tongue, foreign language, social and natural sciences, geography, history, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, drawing, music, physical education, technology, home economics, first aid course, community work, days of culture, science days and sport days), optional compulsory activities and syllabi for individual subjects with instruction for their provision. Optional compulsory activities help pupils to develop their interests and abilities and spend their free time in a well organised manner. Pupils freely choose them, although they are expected to participate in at least one activity; they often choose among elective subjects. In addition to syllabi of compulsory subjects, the Council of Experts also adopted the syllabi of optional subjects.

Optional subjects (or electives) are not defined by the annual and weekly schedule. They are offered by schools for pupils to freely choose among them. Foreign languages, including Latin, and computer literacy courses are given in most cases. Pupils' achievements in electives are marked but the marks do not influence their grade point average.

The classes are arranged according to the subject curricula which are topic oriented and are documented (daily notes, teacher's preparation). The curricula were revised and are process oriented. As regards the core weekly schedule of subjects, all pupils are taught the same subjects at the same level. Optional compulsory activities and optional subjects are carried out throughout the school year, or in the form of short courses, in the following areas: foreign languages, research, culture and arts, sports, health care, human sciences and technologies, especially computer literacy. The school gives every pupil the privilege to select two activities. 1 hour a week at first level and 1.5 hour a week at second level is optional compulsory for pupils.

The school organises supplementary classes for the pupils of all classes who are either weaker (remedial classes) at that particular time or in general. Pupils can attend classes in a subject of their choice generally one hour per week. At second stage, the school organises additional classes for talented pupils where they can get wider and deeper knowledge of the subject. They also prepare for different competitions between schools at regional and national level.

Schools also organise open-air classes with swimming lessons in the summer and skiing lessons in winter. Since the weekly schedule of subjects is unified in the present 8-year compulsory education system, there is no division into orientation and transition periods.

While the weekly schedule of subjects determine in detail the curriculum content, the teaching methods are at the professional discretion of the teachers. There is a variety of teaching material on the market that schools buy regularly and that teachers use in class.

Teachers choose the textbooks they will use in the following school year from a list approved by the governing body, the Council of experts of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education. The school then informs the parents and pupils of their choice.

1.5.6 Assessment, progression and qualifications

Pupils are assessed in all subjects (descriptive and numerical assessment) continuously on the basis of: oral questions, written, artistic, technical, practical and project work and performance. At the end of the school year, overall achievement is defined according to the marks obtained in individual subjects. A pupil's overall achievement can be: excellent, very good, good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory. During the school year, the marks are used for diagnostic purposes. The teacher is responsible for assessment. If a pupil does not agree with the mark, there are some complaint procedures. Also, the school staff or an external party is involved if a complaint is lodged concerning the final mark given at the end of the school year.

In the 9-year basic education system descriptive assessment is used in the first three classes.

Pupils usually advance to a higher class. If they fail in a subject, they can either go on to the next class on the basis of the overall satisfactory achievement mark (but not if they fail the same subject two years running) or repeat the year if they fail on the basis of overall achievement. This is decided by the Teachers' Assembly. A pupil can also repeat the grade at the parents' request subject to the approval of the Teachers' Assembly.

At the end of the 8th class (i.e. 8 years of compulsory schooling) or at the end of the 9th class (in the 9-year system), pupils also receive a special document that certifies that they have completed compulsory education and gives the marks and overall achievement marks obtained in the final year. At the end of the elementary school, the marks are used as the selection criteria by (upper) secondary schools with limited admissions. The marks are then also used as the criteria for obtaining a grant. The results of assessments are passed on throughout the school and are taken into account when the pupil reaches the final year.

An external assessment that is not compulsory takes place at the end of 6th grade (2nd triad).

On leaving school, at the end of the 8th (9th) grade, there is a common external assessment (i.e. all the pupils take the test at the same time) of knowledge in the mother tongue and mathematics which is compulsory. The result of the test is one of the selection criteria used by secondary schools that have limited admissions.

In the 9-year 'basic' education system a tenth year of education has been planned for pupils who fail or who wish to improve their results in the external knowledge assessment.

Successful completion of basic education enables pupils to proceed to education in their choice of secondary school. Pupils who fulfil the legal compulsory education requirement and successfully complete at least six classes in the eight-year elementary school or at least seven classes in the nine-year elementary school can continue their education in a short-term vocational education programme. Success at that level opens doors to other more demanding secondary school programmes.

1.6 Upper secondary and post-secondary education

A. (UPPER) SECONDARY EDUCATION

1.6.1 Types of education

Secondary education in Slovenia caters for young people from 15 to 18-19 years of age and is free of charge. After finishing the compulsory 8- or 9-year 'basic' education course, the pupils can enter any of the secondary education courses, which last from 2.5 to 4 years and lead either directly to the labour market or to postsecondary vocational, higher professionally oriented courses or to academic courses. All secondary schools are coeducational. Students of both sexes are grouped homogeneously.

Secondary schools offer the following curricula:

1. general education: 4 years (general education curriculum of the *gimnazija*; classical *gimnazija*; specialized *gimnazija*; International Baccalaureate).
2. technical education: 4-year curriculum from different areas; the education curricula in the upgrading system of vocational-technical education (*poklicno tehniško izobraževanje*) - 3 years + 2 years); differential programmes to bridge the gap between 3-year and 4-year curricula; advanced technical education courses for adults.
3. short-term and secondary vocational education: 2-and-a-half year and 3-year curriculum; 3-year vocational curriculum for the dual system.
4. post-secondary non-tertiary vocational courses: from 6 months to 1 year curriculum.

1.6.2 Admission criteria

The transition from elementary to secondary school is regulated at national level according to the following phases: pre-enrolment announcement inviting pupils to apply for admission to secondary schools, the "information day", application to the secondary school, general announcement of the number of candidates according to the available places, non-compulsory group assessment at the end of the 8th (9th) class of the elementary school and then the final phase - admission to schools (with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice of school), which is organised at national level. After this procedure (during the holidays) and after the holidays it is possible to enrol in schools that have any places left.

In the case of limited admission, the following form the selection criteria: the overall achievement and grades in the mother tongue, mathematics and the foreign language (from 5th/6th to 8th/9th class) and the achievements in the group assessment of the mother tongue and mathematics. Schools also have additional assessments based on specific skills.

1.6.3 Curricular control and content

In 1995, the matura examination was adopted as the general admission condition for higher education. The introduction of the matura examination also affected the development of technical schools. At first they offered matura classes for pupils who decided to take matura examination and to continue their education at the academic higher education. Students of technical schools take vocational matura (*poklicna matura*) as a form of final exam.

Overall responsibility for the *matura* and for the rules and procedures of administration lies with the National Matura Commission, which is made up of representatives from the two universities, the Secondary School Association, the Ministry of Education and Sport, the Council of experts of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education, the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts and the National Subject Commissions. The examination papers and marking schemes are set by the National Subject Commissions, which are also responsible for marking the students' scripts.

The work of the curricular review for vocational education is supported and assisted by the Centre for Vocational Education and training and the Slovenian Centre for Adult Education.

1.6.4 Assessment, progression and qualifications

The school year is divided into three assessment periods. The subjects are assessed by the teachers. In each assessment period, the grades are usually oral and written and are numerical. The assessment scale is from 1 to 5, where 1 means that the pupil did not show the satisfactory level of knowledge. At the end of the school year, an overall achievement grade is awarded depending on all grades in individual subjects. Pupils go on to the next class if they have passed all the subjects and have met all the other conditions set by the curriculum. At the end of the school year, pupils can retake the exams in a maximum of three subjects they failed.

The National Examination Centre is responsible for printing and distributing papers and for collecting and analysing results data of ***matura exams***. Furthermore, it plays a central role in supporting the subject commissions and controlling the quality of question papers. The degree of complexity of the content and the organisation of the matura are the same for the *gimnazija* curriculum and all technical curricula.

The *matura* is an external examination in five subjects required for admission to academic higher education courses. There are both compulsory subjects and optional subjects. The compulsory subjects are mother tongue, mathematics and foreign language. All other subjects that are a part of the compulsory *gimnazija* syllabus are optional. Pupils have to choose two subjects. After completing the vocational curriculum, pupils receive a certificate of achievement, which is a public document. Pupils are awarded a matura certificate after completing the general curriculum and the matura examination.

After completing the technical curriculum, they receive a final examination certificate with the title of the course and the qualification they have achieved. After completing the technical curriculum, the qualification of technician is obtained (the qualification specifies the relevant occupation or range of occupations). A student that successfully finished four years of education in secondary technical school takes vocational matura (*poklicna matura*) in front of commission (board of examiners) where members are not only teachers but also experts proposed by the appropriate chamber of employers.

The certificate of completion, *spričevalo o poklicni maturi*, gives entry to the labour market in specific occupations, and a possibility to continue education in vocational colleges (*višje strokovno izobraževanje*) or in professionally oriented tertiary courses (*visoko strokovno izobraževanje*).

The teacher assesses knowledge of students **in vocational courses** continuously, in every grading period the student has to be graded at least twice. The education programme defines compulsory methods for grading knowledge. Mainly it is oral examination; for Slovenian language, foreign language and professional arithmetic the assessment is also written.

Knowledge of subjects is marked using a fivemark scale from 1 to 5. Mark 1 (unsatisfactory) is negative (fail), others: 2 (satisfactory), 3 (good), 4 (very good) and 5 (excellent) are positive (pass). If a student did not obtain a positive mark in at least three subjects or in case of absence (because of an illness or other excusable reasons) has not been graded at all in individual subjects, the grading with examinations is allowed.

A student that has successfully finished two and half years of education in **short-term vocational school** takes final examination (*zaključni izpit*) in front of commission (board of examiners) where members are not only teachers but also experts proposed by the appropriate chamber of employers.

Final examination (*Zaključni izpit*) has a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part has written and oral parts in Slovenian language, the practical part represents a product or a service and an oral representation where the candidate proves a connection of technical theory, knowledge and practical skills.

A student that successfully finished three years of education in **secondary vocational school** takes final examination (*zaključni izpit*) in front of a commission (board of examiners) composed of members that are not only teachers but also experts proposed by the appropriate chamber of employers.

Final examination has a theoretical and a practical part. Apprentices (*vajenci*) that finished secondary vocational education in dual system (*dualni sistem*) take practical part of final examination in front of the commission (board of examiners) of the appropriate chamber of employers. The theoretical part has written and oral part in the Slovenian language, and written and oral part from subjects of specialisation, practical part is a product or a service with explanation where candidate is proving also the connection between technical theory knowledge and practical skills.

A successful student receives final examination certificate (*spričevalo o zaključnem izpitu*).

B) POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY VOCATIONAL COURSES (*POKLICNI TEČAJI*)

A transition possibility from general education to vocational education is available in the form of post-secondary non-tertiary vocational courses. These courses are designed for graduates of *gimnazija* who wish to enter the labour market or continue professionally oriented higher education. They take six months to one year, and end with a final exam. Students get a technical-vocational qualification. The implementation of these courses started on pilot bases in 1996-1997.

Another innovation in the VET system are master craft, foremen and managerial preparatory courses and examinations which started in 1998.

C) POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Post-secondary vocational education was introduced by the new law on vocational and technical education (1996). The introduction of post-secondary vocational colleges is

being organised with the help of EU PHARE Programme. In academic year 1996-1997, the first 5 higher vocational colleges were set up by the State in co-operation with the municipality, and one was set up by a commercial firm. They offer 2-year post-secondary vocational courses that are designed as a particular form of tertiary education but are markedly practical in content and are distinct from higher education (from professionally oriented and academic courses). In these courses, practical training accounts for around 40% of the curriculum and is completed within companies.

We can thus say that post-secondary vocational education is organised in parallel with higher education, and not as an integral part thereof.

Organisation, admission, school year

The entrance requirement for post-secondary vocational colleges is completion of an appropriate 4-year secondary technical school or *gimnazija*. It is also possible to enrol in a post-secondary vocational college after completing an appropriate 3-year secondary vocational school, three years of working practice and additional (entrance) exams (in mother tongue and mathematics or a foreign language). In the event of limited admissions due to too many applications, the candidates are selected on the basis of their achievement in practical education i.e. practice-oriented subjects in secondary school. The school year lasts from 1 September to 31 August. It is divided into two semesters, together lasting 34 weeks. The weekly obligation of a high school student is 25 hours of lectures, exercises and seminars. All forms of academic work can last up to 35 hours per week. Practical education is either spread over the year or condensed at the end of each year; around 40% of the curriculum is devoted to practical training within companies. Up to 8% of the curriculum are optional compulsory subjects.

Assessment

Assessment of knowledge in vocational colleges is regulated by special rules (Rules Regulating Assessment of Knowledge, Public Documents, and Student Records in Vocational Colleges). Knowledge is assessed by examinations, exercises, and seminar papers. Furthermore, knowledge is assessed on a regular basis by midterm examinations. In exercises, knowledge is assessed by evaluating graphical and technical projects, project work, services, presentations, and similar activities. Practical training is an additional form of knowledge assessment.

At vocational colleges (*višje strokovne šole*), students are required to pass examinations in respective subjects and diploma examinations (*diplomski izpit*), which consist of presenting and defending diploma papers (*diplomsko delo*). Sometimes, diploma examinations are substituted with examinations of specific subjects defined by the curriculum.

Marks given for knowledge demonstrated by examinations of specific subjects, the diploma examination, exercises, seminars, and practical training are as follows: excellent (10), very good (9 and 8), good (7), poor (6), and unsatisfactory (1 through 5). Marks 1 through 5 are failing marks. Attendance at exercises and seminar papers, which are required for admission to the examination, are graded pass or fail. Marks received in midterm examinations, individual exercises, and seminars are included in the final grade calculation. The final grade is the average grade calculated from individual marks. The final grade of the diploma examination is the average grade, calculated from passing marks of individual parts of the diploma examination. Bridging examinations are graded pass or fail. Examinations may be administered as oral and/or written examinations. Those who successfully complete higher vocational college can be employed to carry out assignments with a medium level of responsibility within specific fields of work.

C) HIGHER EDUCATION

The legal basis for the existing higher education system is set out in the Constitution, which recognises the right of universities and other higher education institutions to act

autonomously within the limits set by the law (Higher Education Act, 1993, Amendments 1999). Higher education is provided in Slovenia at:

1. state universities (*državne univerze*) which are divided into: faculties (*fakultete*), art academies (*umetniške akademije*) and professional colleges (*visoke strokovne šole*);
2. single higher education institutions (higher education institution which is not a member of university):
 - public professional colleges can also be organised outside the universities
 - private faculties and professional colleges; according to the law it is also allowed to establish private universities and single art academies.

The responsibility to secure minimum standards (ex-ante control) in higher education lies with the Council for Higher education of the Republic of Slovenia (*Svet za visoko šolstvo Republike Slovenije*), which is a consultative body of the Government and consists of the representatives of universities and single higher education institutions and of other experts. It is authorised to accredit new HE institutions, to evaluate new study programmes of universities and to issue opinions on them, to accredit state-approved programmes of single higher education institutions. University study and research programmes are approved by the senates of university member institutions upon previous consent of the university senate.

The Council of HE forms commissions and independent groups of experts for individual fields of its activities. Among them there is the Teacher Education and Training Commission. The Higher Education Quality Assessment Commission (HEQAC) is to monitor and assess the quality and effectiveness of teaching, research, art and professional activities of HE institutions and reports once a year to the senates of HE institutions, the Council for HE and to the Council for Research and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia (*Svet za znanost in tehnologijo Republike Slovenije*).

The College of Police and Security Studies is affiliated to the University of Ljubljana. It is a State-founded higher education institution financed by the Ministry of the Interior.

Higher education has a twin-track structure: academic higher education and professionally oriented higher education. Universities (and single faculties established as private institutions) may offer through its members both types of courses, while professional colleges offer only professionally oriented courses.

The courses are organised at two levels: at undergraduate level students receive a diploma leading to a first degree, while at post-graduate level students receive either the second degree of specializacija or the academic degree of magisterij or doktorat. Institutions of higher education carry out basic and applied research, development and other projects in compliance with the Act regulating research.

Admission requirements

Applicants must have completed the *matura* to be accepted for an academic course. For candidates with *poklicna matura* is also an option to take additional subject from matura examination and qualify to enrol in academic higher education programmes. In addition to the candidates who have completed the matura, those who have completed the final examination (*poklicna matura*) after an appropriate 4-year technical course can enrol for the higher professionally oriented course. The entrance requirement for some courses can also consist in a test of certain skills, such as art and music talent and psychological and/or physical abilities.

The entrance requirements for postgraduate studies are defined in the curriculum. In most cases, the most important criterion is the average grade in the graduate period. Participation in research work and work experience may also be required. Higher education institutions define their own admission requirements in compliance with a law in each study programme separately.

The basic rules concerning the application procedure are defined by the minister. The procedure itself begins with the pre-enrolment announcement of the number of places available for new applicants. It is usually published in February. It includes basic information on courses, the number of places available, the entrance requirements and the application procedures and deadlines. The announcement is adopted by the university or single higher education institution with the consent of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. There are two application terms: Spring and Autumn. In the Spring term, candidates send their application to the Higher Education Admissions Office (*Visokošolska prijavno-informacijska služba*). The application includes up to three courses in which candidates would like to enrol.

They are admitted to the first course for which they meet the requirements. In case of limited admissions, their overall achievement at secondary school and in the matura or final examination results are taken into account. If any specific skills are required for a particular course, their achievement in tests of these skills is taken into account. The candidates who do not pass in Spring try for the available places in the Autumn term. The applications are no longer sent to the central admission service but to individual higher education institutions. The same requirements are applied as in the Spring term.

The available places in postgraduate courses are also announced, and the universities and single higher education institutions handle the application procedure.

Assessment/Qualifications

The study obligations are defined by the course. The assessment scale, examination conditions and examination rules are determined by the statutes of the university or single higher education institution. The details are defined in the examination regulations of individual faculties, art academies and professional colleges.

Marks given for knowledge demonstrated by examinations, exercises, seminars, and practical training are as follows: excellent (10), very good (9 and 8), good (7), poor (6), and unsatisfactory (1 through 5). Marks 1 through 5 are failing marks. Students can take an examination in the same subject three times in the same academic year.

Examinations are conducted during the various terms and usually in three sessions: June-July, September and January-February. If a student has failed an examination three times running, he/she must take the examination before a three-member examination committee. Other course requirements include seminar papers, colloquiums and the student's defence of his or her degree thesis.

The Professional and Academic Titles Act (*Zakon o strokovnih in znanstvenih naslovih*) governs professional titles (*strokovni naslovi*) and academic titles (*znanstveni naslovi*) awarded after successful completion of undergraduate or post-graduate courses. After the completion of professionally oriented courses graduates obtain the professional title of graduate (*diplomirani ...*, abb.: *dipl.*) with the name of profession, in the technical fields graduate engineer (*diplomirani inženir ...*, abb.: *dipl. inž.*) with the name of profession. Students who have completed academic courses obtain the professional title of university graduate (*univerzitetni diplomirani ...*, abb.: *univ. dipl.*) with the name of profession; in technical fields university graduate engineer (*univerzitetni diplomirani inženir ...*, abb. *univ. dipl. inž.*) with the name of profession; in artistic fields *akademski ...* (abb.: *akad.*) with the name of profession; in courses that qualify graduates for teaching the professional title *profesor ...* (*prof.*) with the name of study course; some exceptions exist in medicine, stomatology, veterinary medicine, pharmacy: graduates earn professional titles of *doktor medicine* (*dr. med.*), *doktor stomatologije* (*dr. stom.*), *doktor veterinarske medicine* (*dr. vet. med.*) or *magister farmacije* (*mag. farm.*)

The students who have finished post-graduate courses of *specializacija* earn the second professional title of *specialist* (abb. *spec.*).

Students who have finished courses leading to *magisterij* earn academic title (*znanstveni naslov*) of *magister znanosti* or *magister umetnosti* (abb. *mag.*) in artistic fields.

Students who have finished doctoral study and defended their doctoral dissertations earn academic title of *doktor znanosti* (dr.). Professional titles (except the second professional title of specialist) follow the graduate's first and last name, academic titles precede the first and last name.

2. EDUCATION SYSTEMS FOR PEOPLE IN SPECIAL NEEDS

The education of children with special needs in *vrtci* (pre-school institutions) begins at the age of three, in classes for children with special educational needs; it finishes when children go to *osnovna šola* (elementary school) at the age of seven. Pre-school institutions provide specially adapted programmes for children with moderate and severe disorders in physical and mental development.

Adapted programmes in basic education are provided in *zavodi za vzgojo in izobraževanje otrok in mladostnikov s posebnimi potrebami* (schools for children with special needs), and institutions for education and training of children with severe developmental difficulties. Adapted programmes educate the following categories of children with special needs:

- Pupils with hearing impairments,
- Pupils with sight impairments,
- Pupils with mental disabilities,
- Pupils with personal and behavioural disturbances,
- Pupils with physical disabilities.

Children with learning difficulties receive education in normal elementary schools; various forms of individual and group help are provided for them.

During hospitalisation, children with chronic diseases attend *osnovna šola* (elementary school) in hospital; after they are discharged, they continue their education in the elementary school they normally attend.

Schools with adapted programmes and institutions are exclusively in the public sector. In accordance with the current legislation, privately maintained activities in the area of education of children with special needs can only be conducted on the basis of a concession granted by the Minister of Education.

At present, co-operation with normal *vrtci* (pre-school institutions) and *šole* (schools) is organised within such institutions' and schools' units for children with special needs; alternatively, teachers from schools for children with special needs provide help to children through a mobile service. There is also high-quality co-operation between normal schools attended by children with sensory disorders and institutions for deaf and blind children offering special professional support to children and their teachers. This kind of co-operation also exists between institutions for children with personal and behavioural disturbances and normal schools such children attend.

The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act enable the integration into regular forms of education of those children who, with additional professional help and the provision of adapted programmes, will be able to achieve comparable educational standards. These are mostly children with sensory disorders and milder forms of behavioural disturbances. A mobile special-education service provides additional help to children with sensory disorders.

3. METHODS OF TEACHING

There are different teaching methods at all levels of the education system (lectures, exercises, seminars, fieldwork (training), and research camps) and are left to the teacher's choice.

4. THE USE OF ICT IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Modern information and communication technologies require efficient information management. The Computer Literacy Project (Ro Project), instituted in 1994 by the School Tolar Act, raised the level of computerisation of Slovenian schools. This was a significant contribution to more efficient, modern, creative and friendly educational institutions.

The principal goals of the project were:

- to train teachers and students in using modern information and communication technologies and thus raise the quality of teaching and learning;
- to computerise the educational contents and work methods, set up computer networks at schools, unify the software, provide adequate software and hardware and provide appropriate organisational structure for the computerisation of schools;
- to provide the possibility for research and development in the field of the introduction of new information technologies into education.

The Slovenian education network is a full member of the European School Network - EUN Schoolnet. A cost-free access to the Internet and support to its users, teachers, and students is available through ARNES (Academic Research and Education Network of Slovenia).

Elementary schools are well equipped with modern teaching technology. Each elementary school has a computer classroom. Many have installed small computer laboratories in school libraries and multimedia equipment in at least one classroom. Computers are most often used in individual parts of lessons (most frequently to obtain new materials), but an integrated approach remains very rare. Schools and teachers use textbooks and teaching aids (also computer software) from the list of textbooks approved by the Council of Experts for General Education. The procedure for preparing and approving textbooks and teaching aids is regulated by the minister. In addition to the approved textbooks and teaching aids, teachers may also use other optional means and aids.

In (upper) **secondary schools** computing lessons are provided as an independent subject under the prescribed teaching plan: some of the lessons are devoted to theoretical classes and some of them to exercises. Most secondary schools provide individual work or pair work.

5. ONGOING REFORMS

A group of Slovenian experts worked for several years to draft a White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (published in English 1996 – <http://www.mszs.si/eng/ministry/publications/white/>). The suggestions put forward in the White Paper served as the basis for the preparation and adoption of new legislation (1996 – 2000). After 8 years of exercising of the 1996 legislation, some aspects of the system are under discussion, novelties are being planned and the amendments to the current legislation have been proposed to the Government.

a) Changes of the 9-year compulsory education

The major debates currently taking place are focused on the follow up and the evaluation results of the new 9-year compulsory school. A group of parents supported by opposing parties initiated a great public debate on the supposed study overload of pupils (too many subjects in the last cycle, too extensive home work and out-of-school activities). Another argumentation was raised within the selected expert circles in connection with the external national examinations at the end of each cycle. was argued. The debate was about the existing system of final evaluation of pupils, the relation between written and oral part and how should the results obtained in final examinations be expressed in the certificate awarded to pupils (combining with the marks and the work over the final year).

As a response, the Amendments to the Elementary School Act were prepared and have just passed the Government procedure. They are expected to bring some changes. Pupils in the last cycle (7-9 grades) will be allowed to choose two or three optional compulsory subjects henceforth (as distinguished from the current situation of three compulsory subjects at choice). The final grade shall base on the two highest marked subjects only, instead of three as at present. The second change refers to more appropriate standards of knowledge, assessed at the end of three cycles of compulsory education through the external national examinations.

b) Further development of upper secondary education

The *gimnazija* programme has undergone considerable modernisation. Specialized *gimnazija* programmes were developed, focusing respectively on classical languages, economics, technologies and arts (music, painting, theatre, dancing). Technical programmes and vocational education programmes have been modernized too and adapted to the students with special needs.

To further promote the development of European dimension in the upper secondary education, a group of experts has designed a special adaptation of the *gimnazija* programme in which a sense of European awareness is evident throughout the curriculum. Besides focusing on learning foreign languages the European Classes curriculum aims at making students acquire a deeper understanding of European geography, European history, the role of the European Union and its institutions as well as a greater understanding of the daily lives of other Europeans and their cultural heritage. European awareness is also demonstrated in subjects such as music and art, but most of all through various international exchange projects. This adaptation of the *gimnazija* programme, known as 'European classes', will be implemented on a pilot basis, starting with the school year 2004/05.

The educational process is guided by official documents: the Framework Curriculum documents for each school subject (indicating the content areas that should be taught in schools and objectives to be achieved) and the *Matura* Catalogue and the Vocational *Matura* Catalogue (defining what is to be assessed). The *Matura* Catalogue and the Vocational *Matura* Catalogue Catalogues have been supplemented with new content and subject. Major debates, which took place a year ago, resulted in the new guidelines for the development of vocational and technical education and the changes in the financial system of schools, adopted in 2003. The first vocational education programme based on the new guidelines document was adopted and will start in 2004/05 as a pilot project. The changes include a modular structure of the programme. The open curriculum ensures that the school and its partners may decide upon 20 % of the curriculum content. The programme anticipates the general and occupational specific competences. The strict distinction between dual and school organisation has been moderated and replaced by the recommendation for the minimum duration of 24 weeks of practical training in an enterprise. The lump sum model of financing the selected pilot schools will be introduced.

c) New legislation for the vocational colleges

The new Vocational Colleges Act was prepared and sent to the governmental procedure. The vocational colleges should be given more solid position within tertiary education. As

the way of describing programmes, the ECTS shall be extended also to the short sub-degree programmes, offered by vocational colleges. All post-secondary vocational programmes shall be evaluated by attaching credits to its components. The new body, a commission for the accreditation of programmes, will be appointed by the National Council of Experts for Vocational Education and Training. The quality of vocational colleges will be supervised by colleges themselves (self-evaluation) and by the new Council for the Evaluation of Higher Education. The new law will bring more rigorous provisions regarding obligatory full-time employment of the teaching staff.

The major debates concerning the new legislation are focused on the aspects that affect private colleges. They resist the teaching staff requirements, because vocational college teachers are mostly experts from enterprises, who are willing to make only part-time contractual arrangements with the colleges. 'Such arrangements, if prevail, raise the question of quality of education and need to be regulated', was explained in the introductory argumentation of the new law.

d) Next steps in the development of higher education

Moves to bring the higher education system in Slovenia into line with the principles of the Bologna Process got under way in 2002, when the National Assembly adopted the Master Plan for Higher Education. Two years later, the Government adopted the Amendments to the Higher Education Act (2004), which will form the basis of further development of Slovenian higher education system by incorporating the aims of Bologna Declaration. The Bill anticipates a three-stage structure consisting of undergraduate programmes (3- 4 years, 180-240 CP), followed by the post-graduate programmes (1-2 years, 60-120 CP). The variations of 3+2 and 4 + 1 will be possible. The studies for regulated professions are exempted from this two-stage rule. The professional titles will be preserved (graduate, university graduate, magister, doktor), with the exception of specialist, which will be abolished. The substance of actual research based academic qualification magister will be redefined so that it will represent a qualification known as 'master' in Bologna terms. The third stage – doctoral level – will require 3 years of study (180 CP).

The new structure of study programmes, including joint degree programmes, will be gradually implemented. The last enrolment of students according to the old system will be possible in 2007/08.

The Council for Higher Education will preserve the responsibilities of counselling, planning and managing the accreditation system however its membership will be complemented with the representatives of employers and students.

The quality assurance system will be provided by the new National Agency and the new Council for the Evaluation of Tertiary Education.

e) To more integrated forms of special education

The new Law on special education was adopted in 2000. Instead of a static placement scheme, placements based on children's development and a scheme enabling transfers of children from one program to the other was introduced. The new law is based on the contemporary principles of mainstreaming the children, a gradual introduction of changes, equal opportunity taking into account the differences in children, the right to choose the school and type of education, possibilities for parents to become involved in the educational process, differentiated and individualised programs and co-operation of various professions.

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