Principles and general objectives of education

The new educational laws approved in 1996 on the basis of the White Paper on Education in Slovenia are based on the principles of democracy, freedom of choice, autonomy and professionalism, quality and excellence, and equal opportunities. The general objectives of education include: the provision of equal educational opportunities for the optimal development of all individuals; the promotion of mutual tolerance; the development of life skills for a democratic society within the framework of lifelong learning; the promotion of equal opportunities for both sexes; respect of and cooperation with those who are different; respect of children’s rights and human rights.

Current educational priorities and concerns

An overall reform of the education system was initiated in 1992. The basic principles and the envisaged decisions concerning the future development of education were summarized in the White Paper on Education published in 1995.

The White Paper served as the basis for the systemic and legislative changes prepared between 1993 and 1996. In proposing new solutions, the following urgent problems were considered: the transition from the former regime to a parliamentary democracy and thus to a new system based on pluralism; efforts to join the process of European integration (Slovenia entered the European Union in 2004); and socio-economic and scientific development. In 1996 the National Assembly established the new legislative framework for the reform adopting a set of new educational acts concerning pre-school, elementary, gymnasium, adult, and vocational and technical education. In addition, the Organization and Funding of Education Act was also adopted containing a range of provisions regarding among others: the aims of education; procedures for financing public and private institutions; curriculum development; educational administration and the shared responsibilities of municipalities and the State in the provision of education. New legislation concerning the higher education system had been already introduced at the end of 1993 and came into force at the beginning of 1994. All these laws have completely reshaped the education system. A specific characteristic of the new legislation has been the gradual introduction of changes with a simultaneous provision of material and personnel conditions, as well as financial resources, for its implementation.

A comprehensive reform of curricular contents took place between 1996 and 1999, followed by a process of gradual implementation, monitoring and evaluation of new programmes and syllabi. This reform identified fundamental curricular problems that needed to be solved, including: the autonomy and professional responsibility of schools and teachers; the excessive fragmentation of disciplinary knowledge into school subjects; overloaded curricula and syllabi; a limited use of diversified
approaches, forms, methods and techniques; placing too much stress on teachers as the sole agents of knowledge transfer; an excessive percentage of population without vocational qualifications; the inadequate quality of acquired knowledge; and the need to secure conditions for the implementation of educational programmes. The reform resulted in changed national curricular documents (weekly schedules of subjects, syllabi, and knowledge catalogues) at the pre-university level.

The Platform for the Vocational Education Reform was adopted in 2000, establishing a programme for the reform of vocational education. Since 2002, the higher education system is being reformed in the context of the Bologna process. In 2002, the National Programme of Higher Education in the Republic of Slovenia has been adopted, setting out the strategic goals of development in this area, including: (i) increase the percentage of the employed with higher and/or high education to 25%; (ii) increase the share of young people in tertiary education to 50% of the generation; (iii) a 100% increase of the number of postgraduate students; (iv) promotion of international cooperation with higher education institutions.

The country continues to implement measures supporting Education for All, as well as initiatives aiming at ensuring: equal opportunities; school success; mobility in general, higher education and vocational education and training; foreign language learning; safety at school; non-discrimination; expanded use of educational technologies and distance education; academic and professional recognition of qualifications; improved educational statistics, overall development of general education and vocational training; development of undergraduate and the modernization of postgraduate studies. The main objective is to achieve a high level of education for the highest percentage of the population. Recently, the reform of the education system has expanded to encompass secondary and higher education. Slovenia continues to implement measures supporting education for all - equal opportunities, school success, mobility in general, higher education and vocational education and training, language learning, safety at school, non-discrimination, educational technologies and distance education, academic and professional recognition of qualifications, educational statistics, overall development of general education and vocational training, development of undergraduate and the modernisation of postgraduate studies. The main objective, however, is to achieve a high level of education for the highest percentage of the population. The reform of the educational system has expanded to encompass secondary and higher education.

The following are the key educational challenges as defined by the Development Strategy of Slovenia: (i) increase the percentage of population having completed a four-year secondary education programme; (ii) increase the percentage of young people willing to enter vocational education programmes; (iii) increase the percentage of population having completed a tertiary level education programme; (iv) increase the rate of functional literacy (in particular adult functional literacy); (v) promote cooperation between higher education and employers in designing study programmes; (vi) decrease drop-out rates in secondary education; (vii) increase enrolment in adult-education programmes. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Planned changes for the near future include: to redesign the objectives of compulsory education; to review moral education programmes; and to increase the autonomy of schools by introducing flexible timetables, which has already being

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tested in pilot schools. Particular attention is given to strengthening school-based management, by giving more powers to school councils. Planned changes to be implemented in 2007 in upper secondary education (general and vocational) shall give citizens from European Union countries the right to education at this level under the same conditions as Slovene citizens. A general reform of gymnasium educational programmes has been initiated, in particular in order to increase the teaching of sciences. (Eurydice, April 2007).

**Laws and other basic regulations concerning education**

The new legislative framework for education in Slovenia was adopted at the beginning of 1996 and includes: the **Organization and Funding of Education Act**, the **Pre-school Institutions Act**, the **Elementary Schools Act**, the **Gymnasiums Act**, the **Vocational and Technical Education Act**, and the **Adult Education Act**. A different view of the role of school inspection has been implemented under the new **School Inspection Act**, also approved in 1996.

The Organization and Funding of Education Act contains a variety of provisions including among others: the aims of the education system, its organization and financing modalities; educational programmes, the process of definition, development and implementation of curricula, as well as those responsible for the implementation; textbooks development; the functions, structure and competencies of councils of experts; the supporting activities and tasks required for carrying out educational activities; the purpose, organization and functions of school councils; requirements for the provision of education; and the procedures for establishing private pre-school institutions and schools.

The **Higher Education Act**, adopted in December 1993, created a unified and academically autonomous university system and made provisions for the establishment of professional higher education institutions. The **Regulations on the Reorganization of Universities** were adopted by the National Assembly in December 1994, and the universities adopted their respective statutes in June 1995. The Higher Education Act has been amended in 1999, 2001 and on 17 October 2003, progressively adapting the system to the requirements of the Bologna process. Recent legislation includes the **Amendments and Supplements to the Higher Education Act** of 10 June 2004 and June 2006, and the **Higher Vocational Education Act** of 10 July 2004. The changes introduced in 2006 are to be implemented starting from the 2007/08 academic year. (Eurydice, March 2007).

The **Act on the Placement of Children with Special Needs** of 2000 regulates special needs education and establishes that inclusion is the basic principle of education of children with special needs. The **National Occupational Qualifications Act** adopted in 2000 introduced a new certification system and enables the assessment and verification of vocation-related knowledge, skills and experiences acquired out of school. The **Music Schools Act** of 2000 regulates the functioning of public and private music and dance schools.

The **Decree on the Public Financing of Higher Education Institutions from 2004 to 2008** was adopted in 2004. The Decree governs public financing of higher
education and provides for financial autonomy of universities. The provisions of the Decree also apply to private higher education institutions holding a concession and carrying out public programmes if they have acquired public funds.

Article 57 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (1991) guarantees equal rights to education to all citizens by stipulating that: “Education shall be free. Basic education shall be compulsory and shall be financed from public revenues. The State shall provide the opportunity for all citizens to obtain proper education.” Article 58 guarantees the autonomous status of universities.

**Administration and management of the education system**

The education system is under the responsibility of the **Ministry of Education and Sport** (formerly the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport). This Ministry has the authority to decide on administrative matters related to pre-university education and education for ethnic minorities. At the beginning of 2005, responsibilities over science and higher education (universities) have been transferred to the newly created **Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology**.

The Ministry of Education and Sport is responsible for the development of pre-university education policies, inspection procedures, the allocation of funds, the implementation of laws and administrative decisions relating to pre-primary institutions, compulsory, upper secondary and postsecondary vocational schools. Certain powers concerning vocational education and training programmes are vested in the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The Ministry of Education also allocated funds in compliance with the adopted standards and criteria. The local authorities (**municipalities**) are responsible for the administration of pre-schools and basic education establishments.

According to legislation, the headmaster of a school is appointed by the **School Council**, which is also the administrative body of the school. The candidate is selected through a public tender and his/her appointment is subject to the approval of the Minister of Education. As a rule, the school council consists of eleven members, five of whom are teachers; the remaining six are representatives of the founder(s), parents and, in secondary schools, the students.

Councils of experts for individual education sectors have been established in order to develop curricula, syllabi, and examination catalogues. They also serve as consultative bodies to the Government providing professional assistance in decision-making and in the preparation of legislation. The chairperson and members of the councils of experts are appointed by the Government from the ranks of experts in the relevant fields of education, science and arts, as well as from the ranks of relevant ministries, chambers and trade unions. The **Council of Experts for General Education** and the **Council of Experts for Technical and Vocational Education** deal with pre-university education, while the **Council of Experts for Higher Education** is in charge of higher education. A special Council of Experts for Adult Education has been established to deal with issues in this area. Overall responsibility for the Councils is maintained by the Ministry of Education.
The National Curriculum Council, a body of experts from different fields relating to education, was established in 1996 and has the following functions: determining the fundamental aims of the change in the content of the curriculum taking into consideration the basic principles embodied in the White Paper and the new legislation; appointing commissions for specific fields (pre-school institutions, primary schools, grammar schools, vocational education and adult education) and subjects; coordinating the work of the commissions and submitting to the councils of experts proposals on renewed and mutually coordinated programmes for the entire education system.

Inspection is carried out by the National Inspectorate for Education and Sport, under the Ministry of Education. The Inspectorate supervises the work and operations of public educational institutions (with the exception of those in the sphere of higher education) and the implementation of state-approved programmes in private pre-school institutions and schools. It is headed by the Chief Inspector nominated by the Minister of Education and appointed by the Government.

Educational development and consulting services are provided by the National Education Institute, the Institute for Vocational Education and Training, and the Slovenian Adult Education Centre. External examinations at all levels of education are administered by the State Examination Centre. A special Centre for Educational and Extracurricular Activities has been established to provide such activities in out-of-school settings. The sphere of sports is covered by the Slovenian Sports Institute.

The Council for Higher Education, established in 1994, is responsible for determining the criteria for accreditation and re-accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes. It also determines the criteria for the design and accreditation of joint study programmes, applying the principles for establishing a European higher education space, as well as other international principles and recommendations for the design of such programmes. The Council performs its tasks independently.

Internal evaluations are the responsibility of higher education institutions, and their quality assessment commissions prepare annual self-evaluation reports. They are assisted in this task by the National Higher Education Quality Assessment Commission. In October 2004, the Commission issued the Rules on External Evaluation Criteria in order to establish a national system of regular external evaluations. (Eurydice, March 2007).
Structure and organization of the education system

Slovenia: structure of the education system (2006)

Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (http://www.ibe.unesco.org/)
Pre-school education

Pre-school education is not compulsory and caters to children between the ages of 1 and 5. The most widely implemented programmes of pre-school education are full-time (more than six hours); however, the majority of children attend more than eight hours. Children under 3 years of age are placed in crèche groups; those between 3 and 5 years are placed in pre-school groups. All children are expected to receive one year of pre-school education before their enrolment in primary school.

Primary education

Until the end of the 1990s compulsory primary (elementary) education lasted eight years divided into two four-year cycles; children entered primary school at the age of 7 years. The new nine-year primary (basic) education programme divided into three three-year cycles has been introduced in 1999/2000 and fully implemented by 2003/04. Children now start attending primary school at age 6.

Secondary education

Upper secondary education is offered in gymnasium (general, classic and professional), and the duration of programmes is four years preparing students for further studies. Technical and professional schools offer four-year programmes mainly concentrating on professional subjects and practical training. There are also vocational schools offering three-year programmes and lower vocational schools offering shorter courses (one and a half to two years for students who have completed basic education). Graduates from three-year vocational schools can continue their studies in a programme lasting an additional two years leading to a qualification equal to those students who graduate from technical and professional upper secondary schools. Gymnasium studies end with the matura examination, an externally assessed exam in five subjects (three compulsory and two elective subjects), while students in technical and professional schools as well as vocational schools sit the vocational matura examination, a partly externally assessed exam in four subjects.

Postsecondary vocational education colleges, established in 1996, offer vocationally-oriented programmes lasting two years leading to a professional diploma; graduates can enrol in the second year of a professionally-oriented higher education programmes if the higher education institution providing this type of study allows such arrangements. Higher education is offered in universities and professionally-oriented higher education institutions. University undergraduate degree programmes usually last four years (three years in the case of professional programmes); long-cycle studies take five (veterinary medicine, pharmacy) or six years to complete (medicine). Graduate programmes include specialist (one to two years of study), master’s (two years) and doctoral (four years) degree programmes. In the framework of the implementation of the Bologna process, three-year programmes equivalent to a bachelor’s degree have been introduced; within this scheme, an additional two years are required for a master’s degree. According to new legislation adopted in 2004, doctoral studies last three years.

At the primary and secondary levels, the school year consists of 190 days organized in thirty-eight, five-day working weeks (Monday to Friday). Concerning
the gymnasium four-year programme, thirty-eight weeks of class are obligatory in the first, second and third forms, and thirty-six weeks in the fourth form. The school year begins on 1 September and ends in the last third of June. Summer holidays take place in July and August and last from eight to nine weeks. Autumn holidays in November last one week; Christmas and Easter holidays last one to two weeks; holidays in May last one week.

### The financing of education

Pre-school institutions and primary schools are maintained by local authorities (the country is divided into 147 municipalities), although it is the national government, particularly in the case of primary schools, that pays the salary of school employees and covers almost 50% of the operating costs. The Ministry of Education and Sport is the key body responsible for allocating funds for education. According to recent data, the share of GDP allocated to education is 6%. The system of financial flows is different regarding different levels and types of school. In 2003, the Ministry is adopted a new system of financing higher education and prepared a new financing scheme for secondary education schools.

Pre-school education programmes are mainly funded from local governments’ budgets, fees paid by parents, sale of services and products, donations and other sources. Local governments’ budgets provide funds to cover the difference between the actual price of programmes and the part covered by parents; the funds are also used for salaries and other benefits, taxes and employer contributions for the staff. Starting from January 2000, parents pay no more than 80% and not less than 10% of the cost of the pre-school programme attended by their child, depending on their income. The average expenses of parents in 2001 amounted to 32.4% of the cost of programmes; the difference to the full cost of programmes is provided by municipalities, as stipulated by law. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

As regards basic education, the compulsory part of the programme, which includes compulsory subjects, optional subjects and home-room periods, is financed in full by public funds. In accordance with standards and criteria, the government also finances parts of the extended programme: remedial classes, additional classes, out-of-school classes, assistance to pupils with learning difficulties and work with gifted pupils, after-school care in grades 1-4, and optional activities to the extent determined by the timetable for elementary school. For other activities within the extended programme, for example, out-of-school classes and additional optional activities, schools may charge parent contributions (the Ministry of Education co-finances out-of-school classes for all pupils and assures an additional 15% for those pupils who cannot pay the full price because of their socio-economic condition). Municipalities are responsible to cover the costs for maintenance, renovation, building, and equipment. Municipalities are required to provide funds to cover the costs of elementary school pupils’ transportation and care for children living more than four kilometers away from their schools.

Adult education is financed via three main financial sources: employers, individuals, and public finances. Music schools are funded from the national budget with a smaller share provided by local communities and tuition fees paid by pupils (parents) to cover material costs. Private pre-school and school institutions are entitled
to funds for each student in the total amount of 85% of funds provided by the State for salaries and indirect labour-related costs per pupil of a public school. Public financing also represents certain restrictions for private schools both in determining the tuition and salaries for teachers and the method of carrying out their activities.

Concerning secondary education, costs for programmes (such as teaching and non-teaching staff) are financed in full by public funds. The Ministry covers also the costs for maintenance, renovation, building, and equipment. Within the framework of the reform vocational and technical education and the introduction of the dual system, employers are obliged to financially contribute to organizing and carrying out practical training. For students and apprentices, the state provides a portion of the funds required for transport. State-subsidized transport costs for secondary-school students and for university students vary (with regard to social status, possibility of residential facilities, and distance from the place of residence) from 7% to 70% of the costs of transport.

The Decree approved in 2004 and covering the period 2004-2008 governs public financing of higher education in Slovenia and provides for financial autonomy of universities. The provisions of the Decree also apply to accredited private higher education institutions and carrying out public programmes if they have acquired public funds. The annual budget funds for academic activities will increase in real terms every year by at least 2.5% with regard to the realization of the previous year. Amendments to the Higher Education Act in 2004 increased accessibility of higher education. However, the State will continue to finance undergraduate studies. For all those who opt for postgraduate studies, the state will finance the first year of study. The state will also ensure, to a third of socially disadvantaged students, the fifth year of master’s studies free of charge.

Scholarships are regulated under the Employment and Unemployment Insurance Act implemented by the Employment Service. Student loans are a new form of financial assistance helping students to cover the cost of education or tuition. The purpose is to provide assistance to students who are not eligible for other forms of financial assistance and thus enable a large circle of young people to continue their studies. The state is involved in student loan schemes primarily by assuring equal conditions for all applicants, providing the legal framework for these conditions, granting concessions to the banks providing such loans, subsidizing the real interest rate, and delaying the repayment of the loan until the student finds employment, but not longer than two years after the termination of the loan. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

According to Eurostat, the total public expenditure on education represented 5.96% of GDP in 2004.

The educational process

The leading role in the curricular reform has been played by the National Curriculum Council (NCC) established in November 1995. The NCC was established in order to define the general and specific goals of and methodological frameworks for the reform. The general and specific goals, methodology and logistics of the reform were

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set forth in the document ‘Starting Points for Curricular Reform.’ Other documents adopted by the NCC define cross-curricular areas and their place in the curriculum, methodology for the testing of draft and proposed syllabi by teachers, and the criteria for the determination of electives.

In 1996, the NCC appointed field, programme and subject curricular commissions to prepare proposals for national curricular documents such as schedules and syllabi. Each curricular commission consisted of educational advisers and experts from schools and universities. Commission members were nominated by various institutions, following a call for proposals published by the NCC. While draft curricular documents were being prepared, procedures for assuring horizontal and vertical co-ordination of syllabi for the subjects taught at individual levels of education were defined, and the integration of cross-curricular contents and links verified.

In addition to the curricular commission members, more than 300 specialists, consultants and reviewers were invited to participate in the preparation of other national curricular documents, such as work concepts for talented and gifted students, after-school care, modifications of weekly schedules of subjects, and syllabi. The draft curricular documents were sent to teachers and were assessed in teachers’ circles. Conclusions of discussions were recorded and submitted to the authors of draft syllabi. Teachers’ personal opinions were noted in a special questionnaire. Filled-out questionnaires were returned by almost 80% of all teachers. The members of the curricular commissions had to prepare an analysis of how teachers’ comments were integrated into syllabi proposals and disseminate it to teachers. The analyses formed part of the documents to be submitted for the discussion of syllabi proposals.

In order to be discussed, each such proposal had to include a report on international comparisons, the analysis of the integration of teachers’ comments, and a report on the integration of cross-curricular contents and links. Syllabi proposals were assessed with a view to the goals and principles adopted by the National Curriculum Council. All curricular documents prepared by curricular commissions were finally adopted by appropriate councils of experts. The National Curriculum Council and its commissions made sure that the proposals submitted to competent councils of experts for discussion and adoption were coherent and consistent.

**Pre-primary education**

The general objective of public pre-school education is to ensure a well-rounded development in accordance with the principles of each developmental stage and the characteristics of each child, as well as make it possible for children to develop their own particular abilities and skills. Pre-school education aims at: developing the ability to understand and accept oneself and the others; developing the capacity to negotiate, participate in groups and accept individual differences; developing the capacity to recognize the feelings and encourage emotional experience and expression; fostering curiosity, inquisitive spirit, imagination and intuition and the development of independent thinking; encouraging language development for the efficient and creative use of language and also of reading and writing; encouraging artistic experience and expression; developing motor capacities and skills; developing children’s independence in personal hygiene and in the care for their health.

*Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (http://www.ibe.unesco.org/)*
The country has a well-developed system of pre-school education, reflected in the extent as well as the quality of the effort. The unified system of public pre-schools caters to children aged 1-5. Pre-school education is not compulsory, although all children are expected to receive one preparatory year of pre-primary education before their enrolment in primary school. Pre-school institutions are established and financed by municipalities.

The National Curriculum for Pre-school Institutions was drafted and approved in March 1999 by the Council of Experts for General Education. The national curriculum defines six areas of activities: movement, language, art, nature, society, and arithmetic. For each area of activity, the overall goals and the objectives and activities for individual age groups are specified and the role of adults is defined. The goals defined for individual activities areas provide the teachers with a framework for the selection of contents and activities. In terms of implementing the curriculum, the proposed contents and activities are linked, upgraded, and supplemented by teachers. Interdisciplinary activities, such as moral development, health care, safety, and traffic education, are interwoven into all parts of life and work in pre-school institutions.

Pre-school institutions provide different programmes such as day programmes, short programmes, and pre-school education at home. The most widely implemented programmes for pre-schools are full-time (more than six hours), although the majority of children attend more than eight hours. Children under 2 years are placed in crèche groups, those between the ages of 2 and 5, in pre-school groups. As a rule, groups are homogeneous in terms of age. The law permits the organization of mixed-age groups (children aged 3-5) only on an exceptional basis.

Part-time programmes can take place during the whole school year or be concentrated during a specific period. They are not necessarily scheduled every day and their duration is less than six daily hours. Children aged 3-5 may attend a part-time programme—the so-called Ciciban’s hours (nursery rhymes of a famous Slovene poet). Children aged 4-5 years not enrolled in full-time programmes may attend a part-time pre-primary school.

One of the most important conditions for the high quality of pre-school programmes is the size of groups and the pupil-teacher ratio. Personnel standards stipulate that there should be one pre-school teacher and one pre-school teacher assistant in crèche groups and an average of one teacher and 0.5 assistants in all other classes. This standard applies to the nine-hour working day of pre-school institutions. Bearing in mind the fact that pre-school teachers work in classes with children six hours per day, this means that both workers are in a crèche class five hours per day together, while in other classes this time amounts to one hour only. In some municipalities (all Ljubljana municipalities, for example), eleven hours of working time is agreed upon and financed, so that there is an average of one pre-school teacher and 0.9 teacher assistants in classes with children over 3 years of age.

Generally, children with special needs attend special classes, although recently mainstreaming into the regular educational process is being favoured as much as possible. Special education is intended for children with mental disorders, learning disabilities, gifted pupils, the blind and the visually impaired, the deaf and the hearing impaired, children with speech disorders, motor impaired children, and children with...
behaviour and personality disorders. In nationally-mixed areas, pre-school education is carried out in the mother tongue. The State organizes and finances pre-school classes for children of migrant workers and special forms are also organized for Roma children.

In 1980, 38% of children were in pre-school institutions; in 1987, the number rose to 52%; it was 56.9% in 1995. From 1999 to 2001, the gross enrolment ratio at the pre-primary level was estimated at 75%, and the pupil-teacher ratio for that period was 18:1. In 2005 there were 54,815 children enrolled in pre-schools, of whom 13,157 up to 3 years of age and 41,658 above 3 years. In 2004/05 there were 108 pre-school institutions, 178 pre-school branches of basic schools and 18 private kindergartens. In 2004/05, the percentage of children enrolled at the pre-primary level was estimated at 61.4% (80% in the case of 3-5-year-olds). (Eurydice, April 2007).

**Primary education**

The main objectives of elementary (basic) education are: to provide general education to the whole population; to promote a well-coordinated cognitive, emotional, spiritual and social development of individuals; to foster literacy and the ability to understand, communicate and express oneself in the Slovene language and, in the areas defined as ethnically mixed, also in Italian and Hungarian; to promote awareness of individual’s integrity; to foster the national identity as well as the knowledge of history and culture of Slovenia; to teach about general cultural values and civilization stemming from the European tradition; to educate for mutual tolerance and respect for being different, willingness to cooperate, respect for human rights and basic freedoms and, consequently, develop the ability to live in a democratic society; to acquire the knowledge necessary to continue studies; to provide general and applied knowledge enabling pupils to face their social and natural environment independently, efficiently and creatively and to develop the capacity of critical thinking; to learn about other cultures and languages; to foster pupils’ talents and artistic appreciation and expression; to promote a healthy way of life and a responsible attitude towards the natural environment.

The implementation of the nine-year primary (basic) education began in the 1999/2000 school year and has been completed in 2003/04. Children now enter primary school at age 6 rather than at age 7, and compulsory basic education lasts nine years. Previously, the eight-year educational programme was divided into two four-year cycles, while now the nine-year basic education programme is divided into three three-year cycles, adapted to pupils’ development level. In the first grade, the teacher works together with a kindergarten teacher; the first cycle is for classroom teaching. In the second cycle there is a mix of classroom and subject teaching, while the third cycle is for subject teaching.

Another reform at the primary level has been the introduction of an optional tenth year designed for pupils who decide not to enrol in secondary school, or for those pupils who have failed and wish to improve their results (abolished in 2006). An optional school curriculum was also introduced, including 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.

Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (http://www.ibe.unesco.org/)
Pupils attend school from Monday through Friday. Classes are held in the morning and generally start at 8:00. Classes in shifts, that is, classes held in the morning one week and in the afternoon the next week, are still organized. After classes, pupils may take lunch at school, and day care is organized for Grades I-IV pupils until 15:00 or 16:00. Several other activities, such as optional, remedial and additional classes and extracurricular activities, generally take place immediately after school and, only rarely, later in the afternoon or early in the morning before school. Field activities include cultural, science and sports days. Schools organize them in accordance with the syllabus and the education programmes—combining the contents of various subjects. Their organization also emphasizes the school’s particular characteristics in relation to the local environment.

Pupils do most of their homework at home, although pupils attending day-care after school do most of their homework during their day care stay (it represents the school-related workload of such pupils). Some schools are already looking for solutions aimed at integrating a large portion of the homework currently done by pupils at home into classes at school; however, this would require an increased number of teaching periods.

The table below shows the weekly lesson timetable of the former eight-year primary education programme:

**Primary education: weekly lesson timetable (1998)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Number of weekly periods in each grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenian language</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic education</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and social studies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and technology</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home economics</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial and additional classes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular activities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-class periods</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total weekly periods** 23.5 23.5 24.5 26.5 29.5 31.5 31.5 32.5

Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes.

Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (http://www.ibe.unesco.org/)
The school organizes and carries out extracurricular activities throughout the school year, or in the form of short-term courses, in the following areas: production-technical, research, culture and arts, sports, health care and socio-humanitarian. The school gives every pupil the possibility to participate in at least one extracurricular activity and the privilege of selecting another activity if the first is not satisfactory. Activities are co-ordinated by a mentor. Schools also organize additional classes for talented and gifted pupils, in which the emphasis is placed primarily on independent work. Pupils attend classes in a subject of their choice, generally one hour per week—exceptionally two hours.

Schools organize remedial classes for pupils who fail to achieve satisfactory results in individual subjects and, therefore, require special assistance in learning on an individual basis. This type of instruction is generally provided by subject area teachers. Pupils attend such classes no more than two hours a week. Schools offer up to two hours of remedial classes in individual subjects per week. The organization of remedial classes before or after regular classes has not proved very efficient.

In the eight-year elementary school, pupils’ achievement in individual subjects was measured in terms of descriptive and numerical assessment, depending on the subject. In numerically-graded subjects, marks are given for written and oral achievements. In the new nine-year elementary (basic) school, the type of assessment varies from one cycle to another. In the first cycle (Grades I-III), assessment is descriptive; in the second cycle (Grades IV-VI), it is a combination of descriptive and numerical; and in the third cycle (Grades VII-IX), it is numerical only. As a rule, pupils advance to a higher grade. The decision that a pupil must repeat a year is usually taken by the teacher. Pupils cannot pass to a higher grade if they fail in the same subject for two subsequent years.

Music education is offered at all levels, from elementary schools to universities. Providers of music and dance education at the basic level are called music schools. Music and dance programmes at the secondary level are provided by art gymnasia, and at the higher education level by the Academy of Music in Ljubljana (pure art and educational options), the Faculty of Education in Maribor (music education), and the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana (musicology). The programmes of elementary music and dance education are provided by 53 public music schools and four private establishments. Most often, music and dance education is offered in parallel with compulsory basic education. In 2004, 12.5% of pupils in basic education attended music schools. (Ministry of Education, 2003 and 2004).

In 2000/01, the gross enrolment ratio at the basic education level was about 100%, and the pupil/teacher ratio was 13:1. The share of elementary school pupils continuing their education at the secondary level was 98% in 2003/04. (Ministry of Education, 2004). According to national data, at the beginning of the school year 2003/04 there were 177,535 pupils enrolled in basic education (Website of the Ministry of Education and Science, June 2007).
Secondary education

The four-year gymnasium is the main (upper) secondary education programme preparing students for further studies. The gymnasium also offers classical programmes, the International Baccalaureate programme, and the programmes of private Catholic establishments. The general objectives of the gymnasium programme are: to develop knowledge, capacities and skills for further studies; to achieve internationally comparable levels of knowledge; to ensure a global, holistic approach to education based on the complexity of the world and interdependence of knowledge in various fields; to encourage the interest in theoretical knowledge and develop the capacity for independent critical thinking and judgment; to develop communication skills; to develop the capacity for forming one’s own world view; to develop awareness of belonging to a common culture; to develop committed responsibility to oneself, the others, and the natural and social environment.

The gymnasium syllabus adopted by the Council of Experts was modified for schools with Italian as the language of instruction, those in nationally-mixed regions with Slovene as the language of instruction, and for bilingual schools in Prekmurje (Hungarian minority). The syllabus consists of three basic parts: (i) four-year compulsory subjects, for which the number, content and the scope are defined on national level; (ii) a certain number of undetermined periods (14% of the entire programme), allocated independently by each school and intended to deepen the knowledge in fields more familiar to students, and prepare them for the matura examination; (iii) a certain number of compulsory electives (6.6% of the entire programme) covering various fields of knowledge not (or only partially) included in school subjects but meeting students individual interests.

Compulsory four-year subjects include: Slovene language and literature; mathematics; first and second foreign language; history; physical education; and art. All schools must offer these subjects in the scope determined by the syllabus. Other compulsory subjects, as well, must be offered within the scope determined by the syllabus: geography; biology with environmental science; chemistry; psychology; sociology and philosophy; computer science and informatics. The table below shows the weekly lesson timetable:
Within the parameters of such a programme, schools have been given the possibility of designing their own syllabi which, at least partially, take into account the wishes of students and parents, requirements of the environment, school situation, etc.

As mentioned, gymnasium (general education) studies end with the matura examination, an externally assessed exam in five subjects (three compulsory and two elective subjects).

The professional gymnasium offers general education with a certain professional orientation such as engineering, business, or art. In addition to general courses, students are offered a choice of profession-specific electives to be taken at the matura examination. The engineering gymnasium develops technical thinking, stimulates understanding of complex interrelationships between the development of sciences, engineering, and society, and qualifies its graduates for engineering studies at universities. The business-oriented gymnasium has been designed to meet the interests of students seeking to gain some knowledge in economics. Students obtain liberal education along with the fundamentals of economics and business and develop analytical thinking, organizational and management skills, capacity for teamwork, and entrepreneurial and managerial skills. The art gymnasium offers programmes in the fields of music, dance, fine arts, drama, and theatre.

Technical and professional schools offer four-year programmes mainly concentrating on professional subjects and practical training. There are also vocational schools offering three-year programmes and lower vocational schools offering shorter courses, usually lasting two years for students who have completed basic education.

Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (http://www.ibe.unesco.org/)
Three-year vocational education programmes are intended to provide qualifications for work in the industrial, crafts and service sectors. These programmes can be offered by vocational schools or in cooperation with employers as a dual system of apprenticeship and school education.

Graduates from three-year vocational schools can continue their studies in a programme lasting an additional two years leading to a qualification equal to those students who graduate from technical and professional upper secondary schools. At the end of their studies, students in technical and professional schools as well as vocational schools sit the vocational matura examination, a partly externally assessed exam in four subjects. Secondary vocational programmes are offered either in the apprenticeship system or in the school-based system. The core curriculum is common to all programmes and includes both theoretical and practical training. This core consists of subjects that are academic and more occupation-specific, a practical training component, and other activities. The practical training component is usually offered by employers.

Vocational courses are also available in order to provide a bridge between general and vocational education. They are based on the principle that applicants who have completed a secondary school programme (general, classical, or technical gymnasium) can achieve a high level of vocational or professional qualification by enrolling in a a shorter, suitably planned vocational education and training course. The basic aim of vocational courses is to make it possible for graduates from general, classical, and technical gymnasium to obtain initial vocational qualifications.

In addition to the programmes of private Catholic schools, the Council of Experts for General Education also approved the gymnasium programme of the Waldorf School in Ljubljana and a programme of a private art gymnasium, drama and theatre option.

In 1999/2000, out of all the students in upper secondary education, about 70% were enrolled in vocational and technical education programmes and about 30% in general secondary education programmes. The breakdown of students enrolled in full-time upper secondary education programmes was as follows: 2.6% were enrolled in short-term vocational programmes; 26.4% were enrolled in three-year vocational education programmes; 34.2% were in four-year technical education programmes; 6.9% were in vocational-technical programmes; and 29.6% were enrolled in general education programmes (general, classical and professionally-oriented gymnasias). (Geržina, 2001).

In 2000/01, the gross enrolment ratio for general secondary education was 106%, and the pupil/teacher ratio was 13:1. According to national data, at the beginning of the school year 2003/04 there were 103,203 students enrolled in upper secondary education (Website of the Ministry of Education and Science, June 2007).

**Assessing learning achievement nationwide**

In 1999, the Ministry of Education approved some projects aiming at assessing and self-evaluating the quality of the teaching-learning process. The Minister appointed a special commission in charge of drafting the national concept of school self-
evaluation, designing the relevant criteria and mechanisms for the measurement of quality, and in particular setting up the tools necessary for ensuring quality assessment. The assessment and quality assurance project, based on the concept of self-evaluation, was introduced in pre-school institutions in 2002/03, and in primary and secondary schools in 2003/04. It is in line with one of the most important goals of the curricular reform, i.e. the development of autonomy and professional responsibility of schools and professionals.

The project encompasses all the actors participating in the education process: pupils, teachers, parents, and the local community. It covers different areas of school activities, such as: achievement of the objectives of the curriculum, classes, pupils, teachers, school and parents, and leadership. The project also defines the quality assessment indicators. Schools compile data concerning quality in different ways: by questionnaires, evaluation scales and other instruments. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

**Higher education**

Postsecondary, tertiary-level vocational education is a relatively new feature in the education system and has been introduced in 1996/97. Two-year programmes offered by postsecondary vocational colleges leading to a professional diploma are markedly practice-oriented and tightly connected with the world of work. The postsecondary vocational diploma enables students to start work in specific occupations. Since 1998/99, vocational college graduates can enrol in the second year of a professionally-oriented higher education programmes if the higher education institution providing this type of course allows such arrangements.

Higher education is offered in universities and professionally-oriented higher education institutions. University undergraduate degree programmes usually last four years (three years in the case of professional programmes); long-cycle studies take five (veterinary medicine, pharmacy, theology) or six years to complete (medicine). Graduate programmes include specialist (one to two years of study), master’s (two years) and doctoral (four years) degree programmes. In the framework of the implementation of the Bologna process, three-year programmes equivalent to a bachelor’s degree have been introduced; within this scheme, an additional two years are required for a master’s degree. According to new legislation adopted in 2004, doctoral studies last three years.

The 1993 Higher Education Act introduced important changes concerning the status of higher education institutions. The Act defines the university as an academic community assuring the development of scientific and art disciplines and the transfer of knowledge. It specifically defines university autonomy and the autonomy of higher education in general. All academic questions shall be discussed and decided by the academic bodies of the university or its faculties and other member institutions. The Act also introduced professionally-oriented higher education institutions. The latter can join one of the universities or, in contrast to faculties and art academies, decide to remain free-standing. The other novelty is that it is possible to establish a private higher education institution provided that the respective legal requirements are satisfied and accreditation is obtained. Higher education institutions are accredited by the Council for Higher Education.
As mentioned the Higher Education Act has been amended in 1999, 2001 and on 17 October 2003, progressively adapting the system to the requirements of the Bologna process. Recent legislation includes the Amendments and Supplements to the Higher Education Act of 10 June 2004 and June 2006, and the Higher Vocational Education Act of 10 July 2004. The changes introduced in 2006 are to be implemented starting from the 2007/08 academic year. Internal evaluations are the responsibility of higher education institutions, and their quality assessment commissions prepare annual self-evaluation reports. They are assisted in this task by the National Higher Education Quality Assessment Commission. In October 2004, the Commission issued the Rules on External Evaluation Criteria in order to establish a national system of regular external evaluations. (Eurydice, March 2007).

In 2006/07, there were 91,873 students enrolled in former (three- to four-year professional, four- to six-year university) and new (three- to four-year first cycle) undergraduate study programmes in: three public universities (University of Ljubljana, with 57,657 undergraduate students; University of Maribor, with 23,833 undergraduate students; University of Primorska with 5,394 undergraduate students); one private university (University of Nova Gorica, with 526 undergraduate students); seven private single higher education institutions (one faculty and six higher professional colleges with 4,463 undergraduate students). (National report of Slovenia within the framework of the Bologna process, 2005-2007, December 2006).

**Special education**

Special needs education aims to train individuals for a job and active participation in the social life. This is provided as early as the pre-school level in special development classes. Basic education is provided by elementary schools offering adapted curricula for pupils with minor mental disabilities and in special classes for children with moderate and severe mental disabilities.

Mainstream secondary schools and special schools that are part of care and training centres for the disabled offer adapted lower and upper secondary vocational education and training programmes. Special education institutions provide educational programmes from pre-school to the end of secondary school, day care and all necessary health services. Children with learning difficulties attend regular schools offering various forms of individual and group assistance. Children who need to be hospitalized for an extended period attend schools in hospitals. Children, pupils and students with special needs, in particular those with poor sensory integration, poor motor skills or minor behaviour disorders, can also be included in mainstream education. If this is the case, the following is required by law: a smaller number of pupils or students in a class, additional professional support provided by a specially qualified educator, modifications in curriculum delivery, and other possible modifications, such as special rooms or equipment. Further assistance can be provided by mobile special education services.

The new Act passed in 2000 sets out the procedures for the placement of children with special needs into the most appropriate educational programme, based on the principle of inclusion. Placement will be carried out by special commissions, and programmes will be more individualized and better adapted to the individual’s needs. Transfers between programmes will be possible because the development of education.
each child will be monitored and the appropriateness of the initial placement continuously assessed. Parents will participate in decision making, planning and direct work with children at all levels. Since 2001, different programmes have been developed together with compensation programmes. A process of reorganization and re-conceptualization of institutions for children with special needs has started. (Ministry of Education, 2003 and 2004).

The findings of research conducted in Slovenia show that during their primary education, almost one-half of pupils experience problems that require special assistance. Thus, difficulties with reading at an initial stage are experienced by about 25% of pupils (approximately 10% because of specific reading and writing disorders, and some because of insufficiently developed sensorial capacity); in addition, 15% of pupils have problems with mathematics (about 3% because of specific disorders in calculation). These problems may be recurrent or may be associated with a particular subject, subject matter or teacher. Statistical data also show that since 1976, the number of pupils in special primary schools has declined by more than 50%.

In 2002 there were eight institutions for training, work and social welfare of moderately and seriously mentally disabled children and youth (with a total of 802 learners assisted by 823 professional staff), 19 institutions for training slightly, moderately or seriously physically and mentally handicapped children and youth with a total of 1,147 learners assisted by 468 professional staff); and eleven institutions for behaviourally and personally disturbed children and youth (with 453 learners assisted by 391 professional staff). In the first group there were 802 children and youth and 823 employees were taking care of them. In the second group there were 1,147 children and youth and 468 employees were taking care of them. In the third group there were 453 children and youth and 391 employees were taking care of them. (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, April 2004).

**Private education**

The Organization and Financing of Education Act considers two types of private educational institutions: those with a concession, which must meet regulatory requirements for public institutions and whose programmes do not differ from programmes of public pre-school institutions and schools; and those without a concession (private initiative by individuals or groups of individuals). Private pre-school institutions and schools without a concession are not part of the public education system. Private pre-school institutions and schools may offer its own programmes. In order to make these programmes state-approved, private schools must ask the relevant council of experts for its opinion, so that the programme may guarantee the attainment of equal educational standards.

The expression “private pre-school institutions and schools” also includes private pre-school institutions and schools which carry out their educational programmes according to special pedagogical principles (such as Steiner, Freinet, Decroly, Montessori). Their programmes must provide the minimum knowledge enabling students to successfully complete their education and must be recognized by a relevant international association of such schools.
In the sphere of higher education, public and private higher education institutions are treated on an equal footing with regard to the conditions that must be satisfied for their establishment. Unlike private educational institutions in the sphere of pre-university education, which are financed from the budget (even if they do not perform a public service), private institutions in higher education are financed only if they are granted a concession by the state. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The foreign schools are considered on a case-to-case basis. These are the schools founded by others than Slovene citizens, international schools offering instruction in a foreign language or founded by a foreign or Slovene citizen and designed primarily for the children of foreign citizens.

**Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure**

In recent years, the Ministry of Education has begun to solve the problems concerning educational technology at schools in a systematic way. The Centre for Educational Technology has been reorganized, so that today support is ensured for textbooks, teaching materials and aids, the use of different media in class, and the introduction of information systems in the educational process.

The fundamental aims of the introduction of modern technology into schools are: to build the infrastructure for media centres at school, and equip the schools with modern information technology; to implement multimedia applications in classroom teaching; to design a system of continuous monitoring of teacher training in the use of modern educational technology in class; and to ensure an efficient development of modern educational technology in class.

The Computer Literacy Project, launched in 1994 by the School Tolar Act, raised the level of computerization of Slovenian schools. This was a significant contribution to more efficient, modern, creative and friendly educational institutions. 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). In 2004, one computer was used, on average, by 10 secondary-school students and 19 primary school pupils. In 2004, the Ministry supplied schools with several thousand new computers and digital projectors and cameras, printers and video conference equipment.

Since 1992, the Ministry of Education has been reimbursing one school meal per day to socially disadvantaged pupils, students and apprentices. In 2004, the Ministry increased the funds necessary to subsidize school meals. At the same time, rules were adopted concerning the determination of the method of subsidizing school meals. The Ministry allocates the funds to schools, and these funds are then divided according to the criteria adopted by school councils. In 2003/04, 33% of pupils in primary schools and 30% of students in secondary schools received subsidies for school meals.

During the past decade, the Ministry of Education has been promoting the establishment of textbook holdings in elementary and secondary schools. The number
of children who have borrowed the textbooks has been increasing every year. All
elementary and more than 83.4% of secondary schools opted to set up a textbook
fund. The Ministry has been subsidizing limited edition textbooks for a number of
years. These are mainly textbooks for technical subjects, ethnic minorities and
children with special needs.

There is also a public network of dormitories. Dormitories (boarding schools)
are educational institutions providing state-approved education programme on the
basis of the Organization and Financing of Education Act. They are established by the
state for secondary school students who, after completing elementary school, continue
their education in a secondary school outside their place of permanent residence. The
public network consists of 42 dormitories. Budgetary funds are also allocated to three
private establishments. The network of dormitories is diverse and has sufficient
capacity to meet the needs of all the students in the country. Every year between 7,000
and 8,000 students are lodged in dormitories. In addition to providing room and
board, dormitories also provide education. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

**Adult and non-formal education**

There is a wide range of adult education programmes in the country. Schools and
higher education institutions, basically providing youth education, also offer formal
education courses for adults, adapting the organization and programmes to the needs
of adult learners. Non-formal education programmes are designed for various target
groups, including employees seeking to improve their job opportunities or gain
promotion, individuals wishing to enhance the quality of their life, individuals
pursuing a hobby, the unemployed, marginal groups, ethnic groups, and foreigners.
Access to the majority of non-formal education courses is unrestricted.

The new certification system introduced in 2000 enables the assessment and
verification of vocation-related knowledge, skills and experiences acquired out of
school. It thus makes it possible for individuals to obtain a vocational qualification
through modalities other than formal schooling. Candidates undergo a knowledge
assessment procedure by a special commission to obtain a state-approved certificate
attesting their competence in performing certain vocational tasks. Vocational
qualifications obtained in this way can be used by their holders to find a job or, in
further training, demonstrating that part of an education programme has already been
mastered.

Adult education providers can be classified into three main groups: (i) adult
education institutions (people’s universities) whose main activity is the education of
adults; they are established by local authorities and in 1995 there were some 45
institutions of this type; (ii) youth and adult education institutions; their main activity
is youth education, but they also organize and offer adult education programmes
(provided also by some private educational institutions); (iii) other adult education
providers, mainly offering non-formal adult education as an important part of their
overall business programme along with their main activity (which is not educational).
This latter group also includes cultural and art institutions, e.g. libraries, museums,
thatres, archives, community centres, as well as political organizations and parties,
organizations specifically targeting rural and farm populations, local community
organizations, organizations for leisure activities, professional, environmental--
protection, and social-welfare organizations, organizations targeting the ageing and the retired population, housewives, and migrant workers, among others. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The extremely uneven distribution of adult education institutions is a prominent countrywide characteristic. On the average, there is one adult education institution per 15,876 inhabitants. They are most easily accessible in the region around the capital, Ljubljana, where on the average there are three times as many institutions per 10,000 inhabitants than in the whole country.

A special government programme called Programme 5000 aimed at education of the unemployed was launched in 1998/99. Every year the programme is prepared jointly by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Sport. Because the basic aim of this project is to raise the level of education of the unemployed and to reduce the structural occupational discrepancies concerning qualifications in the labour market, individual programmes have been designed in such a way as to offer the opportunity for unemployed individuals to obtain formal qualifications at any level, ranging from basic to higher education. In 1999, over 23,000 unemployed persons participated in Programme 5000 and other education and training programmes for the unemployed, including programmes such as assistance in career planning and job seeking, personal development, and in-service training. (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Examples of more recent forms of non-formal education are some projects developed by the Slovenian Adult Education Centre, which have been successfully implemented. They offer adults a variety of programmes in the field of general education (computer, foreign language, personal development, communication courses, etc.). The Learning Exchange is another form of educational provision, offering a variety of knowledge, skills, and competencies.

Finally, a few alternative non-formal education programmes for special target groups have also been developed in the last few years. These include: Project Learning for Young Adults, a programme for young adults who dropped out of the school system; Training for Success in Life, a literacy programme for various target groups; and various programmes developed by the Third Age University, mainly taking care of animating and educating the elderly.

**Teaching staff**

Teachers in public pre-school institutions and schools must be properly qualified. They must complete a higher education programme in the appropriate discipline. Teacher qualifications are regulated by the Organisation and Financing of Education Act of 1996, according to which pre-school teachers and school teachers as well as pre-school and school support staff must complete a higher education study programme of an appropriate profile (first degree), be proficient in the Slovenian language, and pass the State Teacher Certification Examination. After graduation and before sitting the certification examination and entering professional life, prospective teachers receive practical training in a pre-school institution or school. The teaching
practice period includes support and supervision from a mentor, some form of compulsory training and formal evaluation of teaching skills.

In the mid-1980s, a debate on the upgrading of teacher education programmes was launched and since 1986/87 teachers for all schools (primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary levels) have been trained in four-year university programmes. At the same time, the first cohort of pre-school teachers enrolled in two-year tertiary programmes while in 1996 the first cohort enrolled in the new three-year, professionally-oriented higher education programmes. At the beginning of the 1990s, academies were transformed into faculties of education, while in 2003 a third one was established within the new University of Primorska in Koper. (Zgaga, 2006).

Vocational college lecturers (tertiary level) must at least have a higher education diploma in the appropriate field of study, a non-degree (credential) teacher training programme, three years of relevant work experience, and outstanding achievements in their field of education. School counsellors must complete a 4-year university programme in psychology, pedagogy, social pedagogy, special education or social work. In certain cases, they must also complete a non-degree (credential) teacher training programme. In 2002/03 a total of 37,940 people were employed as professional staff in education institutions in Slovenia. Over two-thirds of them were women (68.7%); only institutions that provide continuing education as well as higher educational institutions employ more men than women. The training of higher education faculty members is self-regulated by higher education institutions. The law only stipulates the general conditions for awarding titles to teaching and research staff. (Ministry of Education, 2003; Zgaga, 2006).

Pre-school and school teachers, as well as support professional staff (counsellors, librarians, etc.) can be promoted if certain requirements are fulfilled, i.e. a certain period of employment, teaching performance, additional qualifications acquired through in-service training programmes and various extra-professional activities (for example being a mentor to prospective teachers during their teaching practice). With such a promotion, the candidate is awarded the title of mentor, adviser or consulter. The promotion significantly and positively affects the teacher’s salary.

Teacher education programmes (in various subjects or areas) leading to a university degree usually include the study of the subject discipline, educational sciences and pedagogical training. In the four-year teacher education programmes educational sciences and pedagogical training last a minimum of one semester. The duration of practice in schools ranges from a minimum of two weeks (single-subject programmes) to four weeks (double-subject programmes). According to the Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Teacher Education Programmes (1998), higher education institutions can adapt the content and extent of educational sciences and pedagogical training to those students who already possess pedagogical experience (in principle part-time students, acting teachers).
Educational research and information

Apart from researchers at faculties, the Educational Research Institute undertakes research work in the field of education. The Institute plays an active role in several important international research studies. In recent years, the Ministry of Education initiated and co-financed a number of research projects concerning the curriculum, all based on annual tenders.

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Web resources


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