



Croatia

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Principles and general objectives of education

The Republic of Croatia is fostering a system of lifelong, formal and non-formal education, which is: (a) all-embracing (all levels and forms of education, all educational establishments, no matter who established them); (b) mixed with regard to ownership (state, private, denominational), pedagogical theories, and curricula (public and alternative); (c) compulsory up to the age of 15 years for full-time pupils, and to the age of 21 years for disabled pupils; (d) more democratic with regard to choices and availability (equal conditions of education corresponding to pupils' abilities); and (e) more compatible with education systems in the European Union.

The basic principles of the education system are:

- up-to-date scientific foundations for knowledge and skills to be acquired;
- pluralism of viewpoints, theories and arts;
- individualization and differentiation, as opposed to the former ideology of false egalitarianism and unification in education;
- specialization, elitism, selection and competition in the new education conditions of a market economy;
- free choice of educational programmes, according to the interests and abilities of pupils;
- gradual standardization of education (programmes, national classification of occupations and educational profiles, organization, forms and methods of education according to standards of the developed European countries);
- improvement of knowledge and means of communication with developed countries (more qualitative learning of foreign languages and informatic communication);
- shifting from quantity- to quality-based education.

Current educational priorities and concerns

Croatia was a constituent part of the former Yugoslavia for seventy years. In the last thirty-five years of that period, the nation lived in a collective and planned economic system, until great political changes took place in 1989. The country suffered the destructive and destabilizing consequences of the war, and the slow and difficult transition from a collective to a private economic system. The country had to care for displaced persons and refugees, reconstruct what had been destroyed, create state and



democratic institutions, democratize society as a whole, privatize property and material goods, restructure the economy, and work on joining Euro-Atlantic integrations.

As of June 1995, Croatia had suffered war damage estimated at US\$20 billion. In September 1995, the number of displaced people and refugees in the country grew to 404,066, and in the worst days of the war the country took care of more refugees than the whole of Europe together. School classes became larger, resulting in a lack of space and teaching aids and additional work for teachers. In the 1994/95 academic year, Croatia was 2,121 teachers short of the required number.

The former Ministry of Culture, Education and Sports (now the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports) started the transformation of the education system in 1991. Educational reforms were based on the following principles: (a) Croatization (which was completely neglected in former Yugoslavia); (b) connection with the Croatian educational tradition; (c) pluralism (of contents and objectives) and democracy; (d) lifelong education; (e) an all-embracing and mixed educational system; (f) development of the European and global dimension in education (education for peace, human rights, multiculturalism and the rights of ethnic minorities). As far as the economic situation permitted, considerable funds were invested in the preparation of new curricula, the education of refugees, the reconstruction and building of schools, etc. These measures resulted in an increase in the quality of education at all levels, reflected in student achievement. Access to education also improved.

Between 1990 and 1999 separate laws were passed for each subsystem, regulating the legal, financial and organizational aspects of preschool, primary and secondary education. As a result of this legislation, the financing and management of primary and secondary schools were centralized, with the (then) Ministry of Education and Sports in charge of programmes and legislative decision-making.

Legislative changes initiated in primary and secondary education in 2000 have enabled: the opening of private schools and introduction of alternative programmes such as Waldorf schools and foreign schools; the decentralization of funding to enable towns and counties to co-fund primary and secondary schools; the decentralization of management to include local self-government bodies, and parents' involvement in decision-making; the realization of the rights of national minority children to the appropriate education; greater school and teacher autonomy, and an increase of advice and guidance.

Despite these improvements, the education system is facing some major problems, which have stemmed from the war, an unprofitable transitional economy, and privatization. These obstacles have hindered all efforts to bring educational standards in Croatia to the level of more developed countries. In these conditions, the growth of both private educational establishments and private investments in education has not been possible, since financial assets of citizens and private enterprises have decreased as well.

There has also recently been a readiness to plan educational development according to European standards and design a system similar to those in developed



European countries. The Republic of Croatia faces the following challenges if it is to adopt the European approach to education: (i) promoting and working on the idea that Croatia's future lies in a society based on knowledge; (ii) constant educational innovation without imposing educational reforms from above; the education system should take into account the values and opinions of the local community, especially parents, teachers and the local authorities; (iii) a multicultural approach in social sciences and humanities; objective observation and the development of a critical mind in natural sciences, (iv) achieving educational and many other national minority rights, (v) educating teachers to respond to the rapid development of knowledge, and to promote understanding and tolerance; teachers should also foster curiosity, an open mind, a love of learning and a readiness to question statements and to admit mistakes; (vi) promoting learning throughout life; (vii) efficiently linking formal and non-formal education; (viii) implementing an increased duration of compulsory education and facilitating horizontal and vertical mobility in the education system; (ix) improving school management by increasing the competence of headteachers; (x) include the teaching of two foreign languages in compulsory education; (xi) develop curricula with a large percentage of elective subjects and those important for the local community; (xii) increased investment in educational development, and especially raising the teachers' standard of living and creating better work conditions by improving equipment and access to information technology.

There is a wide consensus among all stakeholders, including teachers, on the need for further changes that would lead to improving the quality of teaching and learning and making the education system more supportive to the ongoing social and economic reforms in the country. The priority issues as defined by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports are: (i) changing the content of teaching and supporting the shift from presentation-recitation models of instruction towards active, productive learning that is essential in knowledge society and innovation-driven economic growth; (ii) improving the knowledge, skills and working conditions of teachers so that they would be able to lead the change in their schools and classrooms; (iii) strengthening education management and school leadership by creating systematic arrangements for professional development and monitoring the educational processes and outcomes; (iv) harmonizing education system regulations and programmes with the requirements of the European Union; and (v) emphasizing the principles of lifelong learning at all levels of education, including raising the rate of adult literacy through specific interventions.

The Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010 is a strategic development document adopted by the Government on 9 June 2005. The plan is based on a comprehensive systemic educational framework and was discussed by numerous social experts, scientists and other partners. The Plan contemplates four key development priorities, namely: (i) improving the quality and effectiveness of education; (ii) stimulating the continuing professional training of teachers and other education sector employees; (iii) developing strategies for improving the management and efficiency of the education system; and (iv) promoting education for social cohesion and economic growth and development. (MSES, 2005).



Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

After independence (30 May 1990), the *Sabor* of the Republic of Croatia passed many new laws referring to education.

By the **Law on Social Care for Children of Pre-school Age** (1991) and the **Pre-school Education Act No. 10/97**, pre-school education has become an integral part of the education system and each child is entitled to receive pre-school education.

The democratic changes in 1990 imposed the need for redefining aims and objectives of primary education through the **Primary Education Act No. 59/90** (as amended in 1993, 1996 and 2003). A new system of financing was introduced (the responsibility of the State was stressed) as well as a new system of running of schools, which replaced the old socialist one. Special attention was given to pupils by a more precise defining of their rights and responsibilities (i.e. maximum work load, special educational needs, etc.) as well as to teachers (i.e. work qualifications and in-service training, introduction of state examinations, workload). By standardizing ways and conditions of work, preconditions for equal access to primary education were met as well for standardized functioning of school on the overall territory of the country.

By **Secondary Education Act No. 19/92** (as amended in 1993, 1995 and 2003), various new vocational schools (technical, trade, industrial, medical, economic, agrarian, etc.) and new grammar schools were introduced, such as general education schools preparing students for higher education; content matters regarding vocational training and practice were significantly extended; subjects and content dealing with self-managing and Marxist ideology were abolished; and the right to establish private schools and dual education schools was introduced.

According to the **Law on Institutions** (1993), the schools have become public institutions. This law stipulates the methods and procedures for their establishment, registration, and their relationship with the administrative bodies. The **Science and Higher Education Act** was approved by the Parliament on 17 July 2003 and amended in 2004.

The **Educational Inspection Act No. 50/95** (as amended in 1997) regulates the monitoring and supervision of the educational activities. Aspect related to the career of teachers are defined at the national level by the **Regulatory Act on the Promotion of Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools** of 1995.

Primary education (eight-year programme) is free of charge and compulsory. All children are required to attend school until the age of 15.



Administration and management of the education system

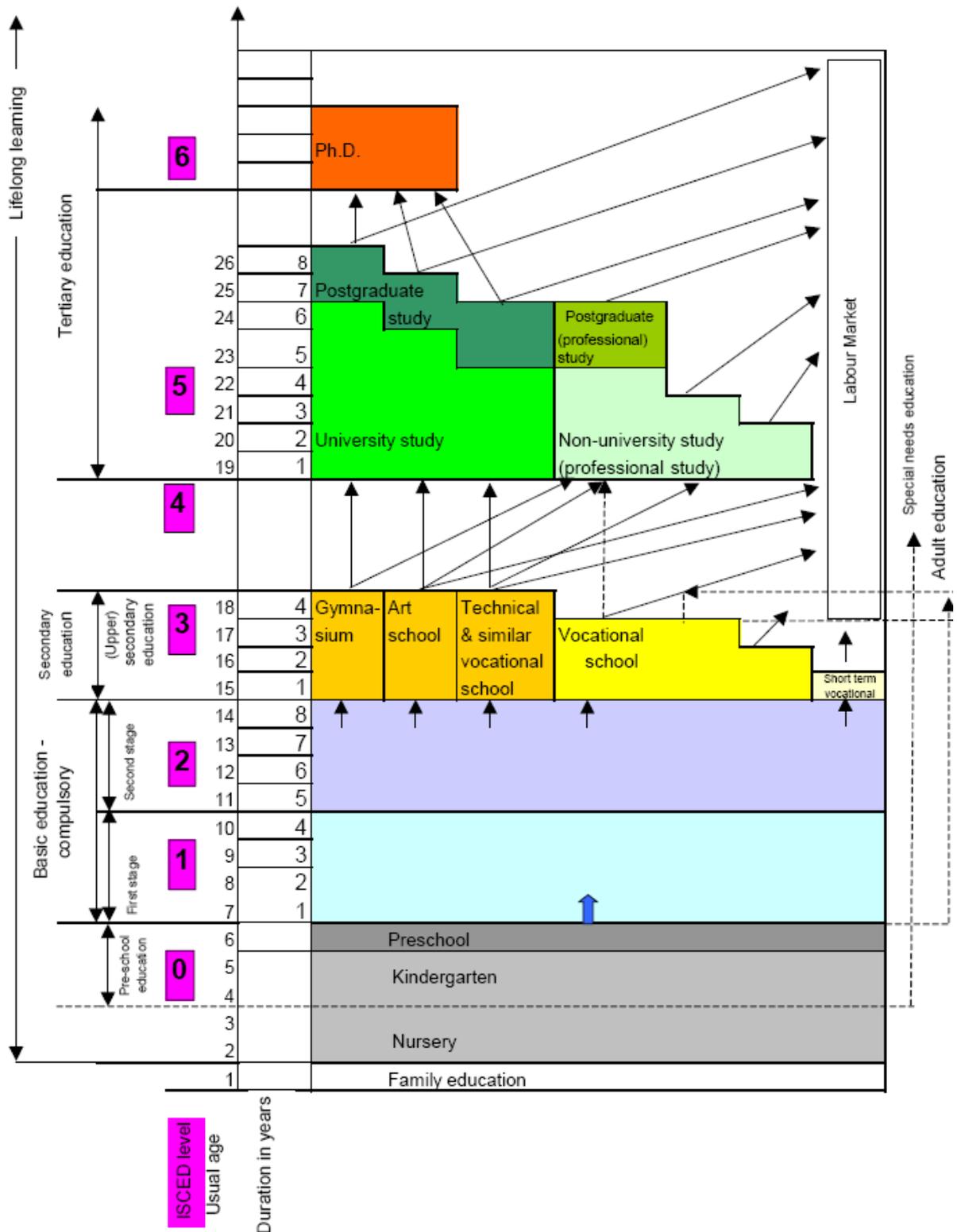
Administrative and managing functions in education (co-ordination, decision-making, supervision of professional performances, etc.) are distributed partly at the national level, partly at the regional level (counties, towns, districts) and partly to schools.

Since counties and districts in Croatia are relatively small administrative units, economically and demographically too small for some important decisions concerning the development of education, the network of schools, funding and curricula, these functions are in the competence of the national level. Until recent years, the Ministry of Education and Sports was responsible for pre-primary, primary and secondary education, while the Ministry of Science and Technology was responsible for higher education. In 2003 they have been merged into one, the **Ministry of Science, Education and Sports**. The Higher Education Act of 2003 provides for the creation of the **National Council for Higher Education**, an advisory and independent body responsible for the development and quality of the higher education system.

Administrative functions at the regional level include coordination and development of schools in towns, districts and regions, proposals for new schools to be established and decision-making on additional programmes and their funding (pupils grants, school equipment, building, etc.).

Structure and organization of the education system

Croatia: structure of the education system



(Ministry of Education and Sports, 2000)



Pre-school education

Children may start attending pre-school establishments (nursery schools) as early as at the age of 1. Kindergartens cater to children between 3 and 6 years of age. The last year of pre-school education is considered as a preparatory year before admission to primary school. Pre-school education is not compulsory.

Primary education

Primary education is compulsory for children aged 6(7) years. Primary school education lasts eight years divided into two four-year cycles: lower primary, with classroom teachers; and upper primary, with subject teachers.

Secondary education

Full-time students enrol in the first form of the secondary school by the age of 15-17 years (exceptionally 18 years, if the School Board allows). Secondary education for full-time students lasts: four years in comprehensive secondary schools (gymnasia) and arts schools, which prepare students for further education; four years in technical secondary schools, also giving access to tertiary-level education; and three years in vocational schools (crafts and industrial schools), mainly preparing for work.

Upon completion of secondary education, students can continue their studies at the tertiary level in universities, polytechnics and postsecondary vocational colleges. Most higher education institutions offer four-year programmes at the undergraduate level (three-year courses in the case of vocational colleges). With the implementation of the Bologna Process, university programmes will be structured into two levels: three- to four-year bachelor's degree programmes, and one- to two-year master's degree programmes for bachelor's degree holders. At the postgraduate level, doctoral degree programmes take three years to complete; universities can also offer postgraduate specialist courses in certain fields, lasting one to two years.

The academic year in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August. It includes on average 175 teaching days and it is organized into two terms. Pupils have three holidays periods: from Roman Catholic Christmas to Orthodox Christmas (inclusively); from Roman Catholic Easter to Orthodox Easter; and from the middle of June until the beginning of September. Pupils of other denominations have the right to take days off on their religious holidays.

The academic year starts in October and ends on 30 September of the following calendar year. It includes 150 teaching days and it is divided into two semesters.



The financing of education

State schools are financed by the central educational administration, and partly by the regional administration. The central administrative level (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports) provides finances from the national budget for: teachers' salaries and salaries of other state school staff; expenses related to school activities and needs; the main part of the programmes for building and equipping schools. Regional and local administration participates in building and equipping of schools with smaller amounts of finance (20% to 50%, depending on the development of the region or the city).

Private schools are financed by those who established them, out of the fees the trainees pay and some other sources. Private schools that follow the standards of State schools (i.e. private schools with public rights) are subsidized by central authorities.

According to national estimates, The total budget of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports represented 4.1% of the GDP in 2004. If the expenditures of other ministries and those at the local level are added, public education expenditures represented 4.3% of the GDP. (MSES, 2005).

The educational process

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports prescribes the curricula and syllabi in all fields of education, which may be considered a centralized decision-making process. However, the process of drawing up curricula is only centralized in form. The prescribed curricula and syllabi provide only a framework and are requisite only to that extent, as their implementation is completely decentralized.

The elements of the curricular structure are defined by the Ministry, but schools and other educational institutions, especially in vocational training, may propose new subjects to replace existing ones, or propose the introduction of new programmes, which the educational authorities usually accept and approve. Teachers and other experts are statutorily required to draw up their own programmes and choose textbooks and other teaching aids. However, neither the school nor the teacher can influence the amount of time allotted to any particular subject and expressed in a specified number of hours. Educational institutions are opening up to parents and the local community, turning them into active partners in decision-making and developmental planning, especially in nurturing the community's tradition and culture. Professional teachers unions are becoming more influential at the national and local levels, and changing and modifying work methods and approach. The number of parents' associations is growing too, and they are using their influence to channel desired changes.

Certain schools have adopted a flexible curriculum through which pupils can satisfy a broad diversity of needs. The range of activities pupils choose is wide and increasingly focuses on learning through projects and participation in school, national and international competitions, and international projects that entail computer use, or voluntary community service. Subjects covered might include ecology, education for human rights, tolerance, education against addiction, and sports activities. More and



more, schools are ready for change and are independently deciding to introduce additional programmes to interest their pupils, or to turn the school into a centre of community life as an alternative to the challenges of globalization and loss of confidence in society.

Practical work in nursery, primary and secondary schools, and pupils' hostels, have led to active and innovative elective, extracurricular and open-door programmes. They reflect the needs of life and work in a specific community, and are the result of the joint effort of pupils, teachers and parents, with the support of the local community. Various pupils' and adults' societies have developed in response to the needs of children.

However, these independent school activities greatly exceed the official monitoring potentials of the Ministry of Education and Sports. The high level of autonomy in teaching methods guaranteed by law has resulted in a lack of educational standards, which has made it impossible to formulate agreed-on supervision criteria.

Despite the flexibility of the national curriculum, certain guidelines must be followed. In all primary and secondary schools compulsory language subjects include Croatian and at least one foreign language. In some pre-school institutions and in some primary schools (lower level, Grades I-IV), a foreign language has been introduced on an experimental basis as an optional subject. Primary schools (Grades IV-VIII), technical and other vocational schools offer at least one foreign language; gymnasias offer two foreign languages, and some vocational schools (hotel/tourism schools) offer three foreign languages.

Furthermore, the primary school curriculum has been revised to comply with the demands of a free and democratic society. The new curriculum rejects ideology and adheres to the principles of pluralism and modernization, taking into account both the achievements of the developed world and Croatian school tradition. The secondary school programme was also changed. Schools got crafts workshops and new syllabi were prepared for more than fifty crafts; religious instruction became an elective subject in primary and secondary schools; and information technology began to be introduced in schools. Furthermore, several new school types were introduced. They include gymnasias, technical schools, four-year secondary vocational schools, trade-schools offering three-year courses, and artistic schools.

Specifically Croatian cultural content (neglected in the former Yugoslavia) has been reintroduced into the curriculum. National-group subjects have been re-defined (Croatian, history, geography) and religion was introduced as an optional subject in 1990/91 (various denominations). Croatian schools also educate children for living together. Themes and contents of this kind are taught during class community hours, through special projects in preschool institutions and primary and secondary schools, as part of the regular curriculum, and during everyday interaction within schools and between schools and the local community. This approach to education hinges on a non-authoritarian teacher-pupil relationship where guidance predominates over lecturing or passing down knowledge. Developing the child's autonomy and self-assessment is of special importance. More recently children are being taught to live together through pupils' projects grounded on immediate experience and activity, an integral approach to learning based on solving problems, dealing with interesting and



relevant material connected with real life, pupil creativity, autonomy and inner motivation. Learning through dialogue, encouraging thinking and social values, and teaching by exploration and role-playing are used in the teaching process and extra-curricular activities.

Projects are also being developed and implemented for quality education. Emphasis is laid upon the importance of developing good relations between all the participants in the educational process, such as pupils, teachers, school administration and parents. When these relations improve the school atmosphere becomes motivating, pupils' achievement increases, there is better cooperation and greater satisfaction among both teachers and parents. Quality work is replacing routine work.

Pre-primary education

The preschool curriculum focuses on encouraging personality development by boosting a positive and realistic self-image in the child, and encourage children to notice and accept differences and internalize basic moral values.

Pre-school education has three important curricular components: health-protective, educational and cognitive. The cognitive element is based on the acquisition of basic notions and categories of perception and experience of objects and situations in the nearest natural and cultural environment and it comprises: communication forms and content; cognitive content; and specific forms of games and exercises (language learning, music, playing, sports) which vary from one pre-school institution to another.

The children/teacher ratio in 2000/01 was 13.2:1.

Since 1990 the percentage of children in preschool education has been growing. Preschool institutions are managed and funded through local self-government, and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports draws up their programmes. They are wide open to market conditions and their programmes already have the features of a curriculum, incorporating the most up-to-date educational approach. This segment has no problems in making use of foreign alternative experiences (Waldorf, Montessori etc.), which meets with the approval of users and the support of the educational authorities.

According to recent information (2006) made available on the website of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, there are 503 preschools in the country, including: 290 established by units of local self-government, 49 private kindergartens established by religious communities or parishes, 100 private kindergartens established by physical and legal persons, 28 preschool programmes conducted in elementary schools, 28 preschool programmes, and eight shorter programmes conducted in the libraries. All children attend a preschool programme in the year prior to starting school, either regular kindergarten or preschool programmes. The total of 92,280 children of preschool age is covered by regular ten-hour programmes. The preschool programme caters to 16,270 children; shorter programmes ("little school") cover 145,800 children of preschool age in the preschool education system. Preschool education programmes for children of six months of age up to 3 years are offered in

nurseries, while children from 4 years of age until school age are enrolled in kindergarten programmes. The children/teacher ratio was 1:12 in 2003.

Primary education

At the primary school level, the basic elements of the programme are: linguistic (the culture of writing and speaking); scientific and math-based; humanistic; technical; ethical and aesthetic; health-based and physical. Each of these elements is incorporated into the curricula of one or more subjects (disciplines) and into extra-curricular activities of the pupils at school (artistic, technical, sports, etc.).

At the lower stage of primary education (Grades I-IV), there are classroom teachers; in the upper stage (Grades V-VIII), the teaching is subject-based.

Optional subjects, supplementary and additional contents of teaching are established by the school, according to the interests and needs of pupils and according to material and personnel resources. A school can determine the contents of optional subjects, which must be approved by the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Primary education: weekly lesson timetable (1997)

| Subject | Number of weekly periods in each grade | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | First cycle | | | | Second cycle | | | |
| | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII |
| <u>Compulsory subjects:</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Croatian language | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Fine arts | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Music | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Foreign language | – | – | – | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Mathematics | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Nature | – | – | – | – | 1.5 | 2 | – | – |
| Biology | – | – | – | – | – | – | 2 | 2 |
| Chemistry | – | – | – | – | – | – | 2 | 2 |
| Physics | – | – | – | – | – | – | 2 | 2 |
| Nature and society | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | – | – | – | – |
| History | – | – | – | – | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Geography | – | – | – | – | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Technical culture | – | – | – | – | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Physical education | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Sub-total | 18 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 22 | 25 | 26 | 26 |
| Optional subjects | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Out-of-school activities | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Supplementary/additional lessons | 1+1 | 1+1 | 1+1 | 1+1 | 1+1 | 1+1 | 1+1 | 1+1 |
| Total weekly periods (max.) | 22 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 27 | 30 | 30 | 30 |

Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.



The curriculum is the same for all primary schools. An increasing need has been felt for an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to science that would include ecology, health and environmental education, self-protection and prevention of addictions, and a completely new human rights programme.

History, which caused a lot of disputes and contention between experts in the last decade, is now entering a calmer period. A satisfactory balance has been achieved between national and world history, the chronological approach to history has been accepted and alternative textbooks allowed. Religious instruction was introduced in schools as an elective subject after the change of the political system and democratization. In addition to Roman Catholic religious instruction, which most pupils attend, other confessions are gradually introducing instruction. The population has needed time to reach a balanced attitude to this issue.

The evaluation system (examinations and testing) at different levels of the education system has been defined both theoretically (didactic/methodological plan) and legally (normative plan). Pupils' knowledge and skills can be tested in different ways. The most common forms are written and oral examinations, essay writing, task-performing, experimental work, tests, permanent assessment of pupils' progress in periods devoted to revision, synthesis, etc. of the acquired contents.

Primary schools generally apply permanent (daily) assessment and encouragement of pupils' progress. Primary school pupils have pupil's books, where their basic personal data, grades for acquired and proved knowledge and skills in each subject and other important facts about achievement are written. Pupils attending higher forms of primary schools are awarded certificates after each school year. The private schools following the State curricula can also use these certificate forms.

In most primary schools teaching takes place in two shifts (73.3%), and in 6.9% schools it takes place in three shifts. This indicates a serious need for structural changes in the educational system and calls for greater investment in the construction of school buildings. Compulsory education covers all children of the appropriate age. However, in the last decade the population increase has been declining, and so has the number of pupils, up to as much as 10% in one generation (from form 1 to 8).

The drop-out rate in primary schools is very low: 3% over eight years. The objective of the primary school is to teach the children and help them master the minimum of the curriculum standards, which they usually achieve. Around 1% of pupils repeat the same grade. Upon completion of primary education, 98% of children continue their education at secondary school. The average pupil/teacher ratio in 2003 was 1:18.

Secondary education

Secondary education has two basic objectives: to equip students with lower and secondary vocational qualifications, and to provide a high level of general education as a basis for continued education.

Secondary education is becoming increasingly required although it is not compulsory. There is a variety of programmes because their function is to prepare

students to enter the work force or to continue a full-time education. Secondary education takes place in four-year general-education schools (grammar schools, art schools); four-year vocational schools (technical and other professional schools); three-year vocational schools: schools for apprentices with a single or dual programme; and schools for low-qualification occupations.

The various types of secondary schools have different curricula. Gymnasia (four-year studies) have a set national curricular standards, the objective of which is to provide enough knowledge and skills for enrolment in any type of higher education establishment. The curricular common core for all four types of gymnasia (general, language, science and mathematics, classical) is the same. The differences lie primarily in the scope and depth of subject contents and in the number of teaching periods of some subjects.

The grammar school is a traditional institution whose curriculum and time schedule are set down by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. Grammar schools fall into several types, which is reflected in the number of hours a week devoted to particular subject groups. The general-education grammar school emphasizes social sciences, the mathematical grammar school science and mathematics, the language grammar school modern foreign languages, and the classical grammar school classical languages, Latin and Greek.

Secondary education (gymnasium): weekly lesson timetable (1997)

| Subject | Number of weekly periods in each form | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | General | | | | Maths & Natural sciences | | | |
| | I | II | III | IV | I | II | III | IV |
| <u>Compulsory subjects:</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Croatian language | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Foreign language I | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Foreign language II | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Latin | 2 | 2 | – | – | 2 | 2 | – | – |
| Music | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | – | – |
| Fine arts | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | – | – |
| Psychology | – | 1 | 1 | – | – | – | 1 | – |
| Logic | – | – | 1 | – | – | – | 1 | – |
| Philosophy | – | – | – | 2 | – | – | – | 2 |
| Sociology | – | – | 2 | – | – | – | 2 | – |
| History | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Geography | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Mathematics | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Physics | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Chemistry | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Biology | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Informatics | 2 | – | – | – | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Politics and economy | – | – | – | 1 | – | – | – | 1 |
| Physical education | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Ethics/Religion | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| <u>Optional subjects</u> | – | 2 | 2 | 2 | – | – | – | – |
| Total weekly periods | 32 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 34 | 33 |

(Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes).



In technical and four-year vocational schools, common core subjects, science and mathematics-based subjects, computer science and technical contents for some secondary school categories cover about 50% of the curriculum, while 50% of the teaching disciplines belong to more specific vocations and vary depending on the type of school. In three-year trade, industrial and similar schools, common core subjects make up 30 to 40% of the curricula, while the part devoted to skills and crafts takes from 60 to 70% of the curriculum and is different in the various craft schools. There are about 340 different curricula.

Secondary school students receive certificates upon completion of each school year. The form and the contents of the certifications given by State schools are established at the national level and include pupils' personal data, the type of programme they completed, the scores the pupils were given in each subject and their general passing mark. Students of secondary schools who take matura or final exams get an additional certificate on the matter.

Secondary education ends in passing a school-leaving matriculation or final exam. Grammar-school pupils pass matriculation exams, secondary vocational school pupils pass final exams. After passing the matriculation exam pupils have gained a secondary education; after passing the final exam they have gained secondary vocational qualification.

In secondary schools, where principles of selection according to the students' abilities and learning results predominate, the drop-out rate is about 15%. Around 5% of students repeat the same form again. Upon completion of secondary school, 44% of students continue their education at higher education institutions (88% of all students who completed gymnasia, technical or similar four-year schools).

In 2000/01, the student/teacher ratio was 1:11.2. Secondary education is not compulsory but almost 98% of pupils continue full-time education upon completion of primary school.

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

There are no national programmes for assessing and monitoring pupils' and students' learning achievement. However, data concerning primary schools at the end of 1999/2000 show the following:

- In class tuition (Grades 1-4), 55% of pupils were marked excellent, 33% very good, 12% good, 0.6% got a pass mark, and 0.3% repeated the grade. The grading system allowed 0.4% of pupils to proceed to a higher grade with one fail mark.
- In subject tuition (Grades 5-8), 32% of pupils were marked very good, 34% excellent, 25% good, 1.7% passed, and 6.7% repeated the grade. Therefore, 4% of pupils failed in primary school. Furthermore, 93.4% of pupils completed primary school in the regular time, and 6.6% did not.



- Among secondary schools, the most successful were grammar schools with 0.7% of repeaters; followed by four-year vocational schools with 1.9% of repeaters, and three-year vocation schools with 3.7% of repeaters.

Higher education

As mentioned, students who have completed secondary education and have a secondary school qualification or skills certificate can continue their studies at the tertiary level in universities, polytechnics and postsecondary vocational colleges. Most higher education institutions offer four-year programmes at the undergraduate level (three-year courses in the case of vocational colleges).

With the implementation of the Bologna Process, university programmes will be structured into two levels: three- to four-year bachelor's degree programmes, and one- to two-year master's degree programmes for bachelor's degree holders. At the postgraduate level, doctoral degree programmes take three years to complete; universities can also offer postgraduate specialist courses in certain fields, lasting one to two years. (Pavin, 2006).

The enrolment decision is made by the university, while the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports determines the number of full-time students whose studies will be subsidized by the Ministry. When the decision on enrolment is made, the university announces a public competition. Students who applied will be chosen according to the results of entrance exams.

If they pass the respective entrance exam given by the faculty, students who graduated from gymnasia, technical and other four-year vocational schools can enter the university. Students who have completed a three-year vocational course can, under special conditions, enter higher education, if they pass a special entrance examination.

According to recent information (2006) made available on the website of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the higher education network consists of six universities, ten public and two private polytechnics, four public and 14 private postsecondary vocational colleges (or higher professional schools).

In 2005/06 the total enrolment in public higher education institutions was 126,322 students. (Pavin, 2006).

Special education

Two basic groups require special education: disabled children with special needs, and gifted children. Primary and secondary level programmes of instruction for children with special needs were introduced in 1997, although many children with special needs have been integrated in ordinary schools. Great attention has been paid to the secondary education of students with special needs, as they are encouraged to complete suitable programmes that will enable their later employment. Education of students with developmental difficulties is organized through individualized approach in secondary school in regular or special classes and educational groups, while



students with more significant developmental difficulties are educated in special institutions.

Gifted children receive special attention in regular teaching, optional and additional lessons, and extra-curricular activities. Pupils can show their creative potentials and knowledge in various competitions and meetings. Every year a significant number of pupils participate at International Olympics (in mathematics, physics, chemistry, computer science). In addition, the law enables school acceleration (skipping grades) and early enrolment in primary schools.

Education and rehabilitation of children and young people with special educational needs (children with developmental problems, disabled children, etc.) are regulated by a series of acts, regulations and recommendations which determine the organization and curricula in appropriate institutes (ordinary and special kindergartens, schools, centres, etc.). Since the education of children with special needs has various and numerous tasks and objectives, the provision of specialized teachers is very important. Education and rehabilitation of special needs children is performed by educators of various profiles, including teachers and therapists.

Curricula and methods may encompass: a complete educational integration; work in special institutes; providing care, protection and rehabilitation with elements of education, etc. All staff receive in-service training throughout the school year (seminars, consultative meetings, workshops, visiting other educational centres, professional exchanges, training in special educational centres and governmental bodies).

In 2006/07 there were 21 special education schools at the primary level, including three schools founded by the counties, 16 schools founded by the towns and municipalities, and two schools founded by other legal persons.

Private education

The legal bases for the establishment of private schools are determined by regulations set by the Constitution, laws on schools and special by-laws. Private schools follow either their own curricula (approved by Ministry of Education and Sports) or the official curricula. Private schools may apply for and be given a status of private-public school, if they meet all the necessary requirements (space, staff, curricula, etc.), which means that their working methods are similar to those applied in State schools.

Croatian or foreign organizations or individuals may found private primary and secondary schools. There are sixty private nurseries and kindergartens, as well as five private primary schools, attended by 440 pupils in 32 classes with 94 employees. One of them is a Waldorf school. There are also fifteen private secondary schools attended by about 700 pupils in 40 classes; eight private vocational secondary schools; and thirty-eight secondary schools of different types providing training in various skills and occupations.



Until 2000, private schools were predominantly funded by parents and partly by the local community and by various sponsors. However, the State budget for 2001 included grant-aids for private primary and secondary schools.

Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

Curricula at different levels of education have different textbooks. Primary school curricula (Grades I-VIII) are completely backed with textbooks. Some subjects have alternative (additional) textbooks, used in such a way that half of the pupils use one and the other half another textbook (Croatian—Grades I and III; mathematics—Grades III-IV; history—Grade VII; and geography—Grade VIII). Apart from textbooks, there are other didactic materials supporting almost every subject—workbooks, handbooks, teaching leaflets, etc.

During 1993-1996 pupils from poor families (35% of all the primary school population) received their textbooks for free. In 1996/97 all primary school pupils received their textbooks free of charge (440,000 pupils).

Textbooks follow the changes introduced into curricula. In 1996/97, for example, all history textbooks for Grade V were replaced by new ones.

Curricula for gymnasias are also backed with appropriate textbooks. New Croatian and history textbooks have been prepared. Problems exist with classical languages textbooks. Technical and vocational schools have textbook problems in vocational subjects. In 1996/97, new textbooks were prepared for schools of economics, mechanics, traffic, textile and woodwork orientation, but this is still insufficient.

In addition to textbooks, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports finances the introduction of information technologies in education, supplying schools with computer equipment, for example through the project '1,000 Computers a Year'. In 1995, this project provided 1,400 computers, of which primary schools received 600 and secondary schools 800, thus enabling these schools to open their computer classes.

All textbooks for primary and secondary schools are being produced in Croatia, except some textbooks for foreign languages and certain vocations. Textbooks, handbooks and other publication samples from the developed countries are only partially available to teachers. They should be systematically provided and possibly adapted to local conditions. In elementary and secondary schools compulsory textbooks approved by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport are being used. Each April a catalogue of textbooks approved for the following year is published. Compulsory textbooks can be supplemented by optional textbooks and other teaching-learning resources, decided upon by the teacher with the consent of the students' parents and the other teachers.

Classrooms are differently equipped and range from up-to-date classrooms to those completely destroyed in war. An average school classroom is not spacious



enough (during the war, the number of pupils per class increased almost 20%) and it is not yet well-equipped.

Adult and non-formal education

Adult education and learning throughout life are becoming imperatives of economic and social development as people face new demands and challenges, which can only be met through permanent upgrading. The following types of adult education are provided: school and on-the-job training, re-training, upgrading, and general training. About 700 persons completed these forms of education in 1998/99. Forty-five primary schools organized courses of basic adult education in 1999/2000, which were completed by 1,356 participants. About 370 organizations provided secondary adult education. Non-formal education for mastering skills in some new techniques and technologies is performed in enterprises, open and public universities and, partially, in State and private schools.

Secondary education programmes for adults cover secondary vocational education, semi-skilled training, retraining, training, and skill improvement.

Teaching staff

Teachers are trained in higher education institutions. Educators in pre-school establishments follow a two-year (four semesters) programme. Primary school teachers (classroom teachers, Grades I-IV) also followed a two-year course until 1992, when a four-year programme was introduced. Primary school subject teachers (Grades V-VIII) and secondary school teachers follow a four-year course; they study not only the subject matters they have chosen, but receive additional training in pedagogy, psychology and methodology. Secondary vocational school teachers must hold a higher education degree (usually, B.Sc.).

Starting from 2005/06 and in view of the implementation of the Bologna Process, pre-service programmes for pre-primary teachers are being transformed into three-year programmes leading to the award of a BA degree. The new curriculum emphasizes children-centered approaches and project work. Pre-service programmes for classroom teachers are to become programmes lasting five years, or four years plus an additional year of study. There is emphasis on the research component and partnerships between universities and schools for teaching practice are envisaged. The five-year programme consists of a total of 3,522 hours of study, including 252 hours (or 7%) of teaching practice in schools; 30% of time is devoted to academic disciplines, 23% to subject methodology, 18% to educational sciences, and 22% to optional courses. Pre-service programmes for subject teachers are being replaced by a 3+2 scheme, i.e. three-year courses at the undergraduate and two-year courses at the graduate level. (Pavin, 2006).

Upon completion of a four-year secondary school, students who want to enter the teaching profession have to sit an entrance exam organized by higher education institutions. The examination consists of two tests: one aimed at testing artistic (music and art) and motor abilities of candidates, and the other testing their general knowledge.



Prospective teachers, who have completed their studies and possess the required qualifications, must spend one year practicing in school supervised by a teacher-mentor; at the end of the one-year period, if the evaluation is positive they become certified teachers. Teachers are trained in nine teachers' colleges (of which seven within universities) and in some 14 teachers' faculties. In 2004, there were 4,038 students enrolled in colleges and 15,647 students enrolled in faculties. In 2002/03, there were 82,120 teachers in the country (all pre-tertiary levels, including special education schools). (Pavin, 2006).

Primary and secondary schools are gradually being equipped with computers, and every year a certain number of schools are provided with either informatics classrooms (sixteen computers) or smaller sets. In primary school, work with computers gives the pupils the basic computer literacy. In secondary school, the work connected to computers depends on the professional profile of pupils. Teachers are trained in various seminars organized by the Ministry of Education and professional organizations for computer science education. Some teachers take part in research projects led by faculties or other scientific institutions, while many of them occasionally participate in applied research organized by the Ministry.

In-service training of teachers is organized by the Ministry of Education, very often together with faculties and various professional organizations. The most common forms of in-service training are seminars and consultative meetings. In seminars, teachers are usually informed about innovations in school and about teaching methods that are to be introduced. Consultative meetings are organized in order to discuss some problems stemming from teaching practice and to find solutions for them. Seminars and consultative meetings are usually organized at the beginning of each school year, to enable the professionals from the Ministry of Education and certain faculties to inform the teachers about their duties and curricular innovations, new textbooks, teaching technology, etc. for the following school year. Seminars are usually held in each county's centres, but more important consultative meetings usually gather to a common location all teachers teaching certain subjects. In-service training is compulsory and offers possibilities for professional promotion to a higher level. Headmasters are also receiving in-service training in special seminars and meetings organized for them. Teachers in-service training is reinforced with professional newspapers and magazines and national radio and specialized television programmes.

Teachers are appointed after a public competition, which is stipulated by law. If more teachers apply, the advantage is given to the outstanding ones. While serving at school, a teacher can be promoted to two higher levels (mentors, advisers) which is reflected in workload and salary.

Most schools have a double-shift system; a few of them work in single or triple-shifts. Teachers are obliged to work in shifts if necessary. If it is possible and the organization of the school allows that, they often work only one shift. Teachers use educational technology available at their schools. Unfortunately, many schools are equipped with out-of-date technology. The teacher's workload is forty hours a week; he/she has to teach 18-24 hours in primary and 20-28 hours in secondary schools. Apart from teaching periods, duties include: preparation of classes, correcting homework, evaluation, supervising studies and recreation, optional subject teaching,



additional work with pupils with difficulties, teaching of gifted students, administration and working with parents.

Because of low salaries and poor working conditions, young people are not interested in the teaching profession. The lack of interest results in the lack of teachers. Teachers usually take up additional jobs in order to earn some extra money (teachers in the country deal with agriculture, while those in urban areas take paid activities like tuition, selling or dealing with crafts at home). Salaries are not attractive, ranging from a minimum of €550 (beginning of the career) to a maximum of €720 (teacher-counsellor). (Pavin, 2006).

Educational research and information

In some schools, institutes and teachers' training faculties, several research activities have been undertaken in order to improve the quality and organization of the educational process. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports plans and financially supports organized research on the most important elements of educational schemes and didactic methods.

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Web resources

Ministry of Science, Education and Sports: <http://www.mzos.hr/index.htm> [In Croatian and English. Last checked: October 2007.]

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