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Principles and general objectives of education

Education in the Republic of Montenegro aims to:

- provide the possibility for comprehensive individual development regardless of the sex, age, social and cultural background, national and religious affiliations and physical conditions;
- meet the needs, interests, demands and ambitions of individuals for lifelong learning;
- develop the awareness, the need and the capabilities for the maintenance and the improvement of human rights, legal state, natural and social environment, and multiethnic diversity;
- develop the awareness on national affiliation to the Republic of Montenegro, its culture, tradition and history;
- enable individuals' involvement in work and activities in line with their capacities;
- facilitate the process of integration into Europe.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The legislative framework of education includes the following main laws: the **Law on Preschool Education** (2002, amended in 2007); the **Law on Primary Education** (2002, amended in 2007); the **Law on Gymnasium** (2002, amended in 2007); the **Law on Vocational Education** (2002, amended in 2007 and 2010); the **Law on Adult Education** (2002, amended in 2007); the **Law on Education of Children with Special Needs** (2004); and the **Law on Educational Inspection** (2004). In 2002 most of the existing legislation was changed and the new **Law on General Education** (amended in 2007) was issued.

In its initial version of 2002 the Law on Vocational Education provided for school-based vocational education, as well as for the parallel introduction of company-based vocational education (dual form). The latest amendments of the law (adopted in July 2010), however, take a step back and specify that vocational education could be provided either by schools alone or jointly by schools and employers, assigning the lead role in the latter case to schools. Where employers are involved, the law requires the signing of an explicit contract (agreement) to provide for the rights and obligations of all parties: the school, the company and the student. (ETF, 2010).

The new **Law on Higher Education**, adopted on 22 October 2003 and amended in 2010, organizes the higher education system in three cycles in line with the Bologna process. The University of Montenegro changed its statutes accordingly in March 2004. The **Law on National Vocational Qualifications** was adopted in 2008 and amended in 2009.

On the basis of the Constitution, primary education is compulsory and free of charge in public institutions. Article 4 of the amended Law on Primary Education stipulates that primary education is compulsory for all children aged 6 to 15.

Administration and management of the education system

The **Ministry of Education and Sports** (MOES, formerly the Ministry of Education and Science) is responsible for: the implementation of laws and other regulations; decisions on legal matters, management and professional supervision; adoption of statutes, curricula and other documents; planning and programming; the development of education as well as its financing. The work of the Ministry is supported by the following advisory and consultative bodies: the **Council for General Education** (for preschool, primary, secondary general education, and academic subjects in vocational education), the **Council for Vocational Education and Training (VET)**, and the **Council for Adult Education**. The **Council for Higher Education**, established in 2004 under the Law on Higher Education, has accreditation functions and conducts external evaluations. The leading government agency for all national scientific and research activities is the **Council for Scientific and Research Activities**, established in fall 2006.

Following recent legislative amendments (July 2010), the **National Council for Education** is being established through the merging of the Council for General Education, the Council for VET and the Council for Adult Education. (ETF, 2010).

Specialized institutions under the MOES include the Bureau for Educational Services, the Examinations Centre, the Vocational Education Centre, and the **Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids** (established in 1995 as the official publisher of textbooks in Montenegro). The **Vocational Education Centre** carries out development, advisory, research, and expert activities in the field of vocational education and adult education.

The **Bureau for Educational Services** shall: assess the quality of educational services in cooperation with institutions; work on the improvement of the educational activities; monitor the development of the education system; define educational and pedagogical standards for textbooks and handbooks; assist in the process of curriculum development; conduct research and provide advisory services; organize in-service teacher training activities, as well as the training of principals; conduct external evaluations of students' learning achievement; and monitor innovations and experiments. The Bureau is competent for quality assurance, also including the drafting of curricula for preschool, primary, general secondary education and the general section of the vocational education curriculum, and provides support to the work of the Council for General Education (now the National Council for Education).

The **Examinations Centre** has the following functions: prepare, organize and administer the exams; provide training and advisory services, particularly in the field of external assessment of learning achievement; provide technical and administrative support to the state exam commissions; conduct research in its area of competence; ensure the participation of the country in international assessment exercises and certification systems.



Local self-government bodies in the **municipalities** have the obligation of implementing current legislation, financing the maintenance of school buildings, provide social care for pupils (transport, school meals, health care, etc.), and co-finance investments and material expenses. The local self-government bodies also have the obligation of implementing official curricula as well as standards prescribed by the law.

The management of educational establishments is ensured by school boards. The **School Board** (or the managing board in the case of preschools institutions, adult education schools, and boarding facilities) is usually composed of representatives of the Ministry, the municipality, employees, parents, students or apprentices, and social partners. A school board typically: establishes the school curriculum and supervises its implementation, approves the school statute and other documents related to organizational issues, determines the suggested number of pupils to be enrolled in the first grade, appoints teachers and professional associates, and evaluates the programme and outcomes of school activities. The **director** of a primary school organizes and coordinates the school work, supervises the educational activities of teachers and professional associates, convenes and chairs the meetings of teachers' councils, directs the work of professional bodies (teachers' council, classroom teachers' panel, and other bodies envisaged in the school statutes), and cooperates with all social partners. Teachers enjoy freedom in the organization of teaching activities, in the selection of methods and of the most appropriate ways of working with pupils, as well as in the selection of tasks they give to their students, all within the framework of the official curriculum.

The university has managing and professional bodies. The president (rector) of the university manages the university, while the apex managing body of the university is the **Senate**, consisting of the representatives of associated members and founders. The main functions of the Senate include: passing of the university statute, adopting the curricula and financial plan, studying the activities reports, approve the statutes of faculties, proposing the students' enrolment plan to the government, and making decisions on founding the university premises. The professional bodies are scientific-teaching councils which are divided by scientific fields and include representatives of relevant higher educational establishments.

Structure and organization of the education system

Pre-school education

Nurseries provide childcare services for children up to 3 years of age. Kindergartens cater to children aged 3-6. Preschool education is not compulsory.

Primary education

The compulsory primary education programme lasted eight years for children aged 7-15; it comprised two four-year cycles: grades 1-4 (classroom teachers) and grades 5-8 (subject teachers). In 2004/05 the new nine-year programme consisting of three three-year cycles started to be implemented in 20 schools, and the entry age in the first grade of primary school was lowered to age 6. Starting from 2012/13, the nine-year



school curricula will be fully implemented in all grades of primary schools. At the end of primary education, successful students are awarded the certificate of completed primary school. External assessments of pupils' achievements are conducted in the third, sixth and ninth grades. The national exam at the end of the primary school will be administered for the first time at the end of the school year 2012/13, when all students will be following the nine-year school curricula.

Secondary education

Secondary education is offered in gymnasias, combined secondary schools (offering general and vocational education), vocational schools and art schools. Gymnasias and art schools (music, art, and ballet) offer four-year programmes. Vocational schools offer students two- (lower level), three- and four-year (middle level) programmes preparing for work and further education. At the end of secondary education students sit the *matura* exam (academic or technical). The national *matura* exam was organized for the first time at the end of the school year 2009/10. On the basis of the education reform, technical high schools can offer two-year programmes at the postsecondary level to graduates from middle-level vocational education.

Higher education

Higher education is provided at the public university, which comprises faculties/academies and higher institutes, and private higher education institutions. In accordance with the new Law on Higher Education of 2003, bachelor's degree programmes (academic and applied) at the undergraduate level last three to four years (five years in the case of pharmacy; six years in the case of medicine). At the postgraduate level, one-year specialist diploma and two-year master's degree programmes are offered. Doctoral studies take at least three years to complete. The former degree system was mainly based on a 4+2 pattern; some faculties are still using a 4+1 scheme.

At the primary level (grades 1-8/9), the school year typically comprises 36 five-day teaching weeks in grades 1-7/8, and 34 teaching weeks in the final grade. At the secondary level (grades 10-13), the school year comprises 36 five-day teaching weeks in grades 10-12, and 33 weeks in the final grade.

The educational process

In February 2002, the Government appointed the National Council for Curricula. The task of this Council consisted in establishing commissions responsible for the development of the new curricula for preschool, primary, secondary, vocational and adult education.

The Ministry of Education and Science approved the curricula taking into account the proposals of three advisory councils, i.e. the Council for General Education (preschool, primary, secondary general education, and academic subjects in vocational education), the Council for Vocational Education, and the Council for the Adult Education.



The guidelines for curriculum revision prepared by the Council stress the fact that the educational process should develop the students' intellectual and psycho-physical abilities and skills of particular relevance for work and everyday life. These skills can be categorized in eight broad areas: communication, numeracy, information, research and problem solving, personal abilities, cooperation, learning and working, psycho-physical skills and abilities. All are important for the full development of the students' potential and their full participation in social life. They cannot be developed separately, and the curriculum design and implementation should enable students to understand that they are useful and relevant for everyday life. Some of the skills should be developed through joint activities and others through independent work.

The new curricula have been modernized and non-relevant factual knowledge has been reduced. The curricula set teaching-learning objectives, i.e. skills and competences that students should acquire, and are based on a learner-centered approach. The new curricula can also be considered as "open", in the sense that 75-78% of the available number of yearly lessons for certain subjects is covered by the curriculum, while the rest (equivalent to four working weeks) is to be defined by the school on the basis of interests and needs of pupils, teachers, parents and the local community.

The implementation of revised curricula for general secondary education started from the first form in all schools offering general secondary education in the school year 2006/07.

As mentioned, the Bureau for Educational Services is competent for quality assurance, including the drafting of curricula for preschool, primary, general secondary education and the general section of the vocational education curriculum, and provides support to the work of the Council for General Education (now the National Council for Education). The Centre for Vocational Education Centre is competent for the area of vocational and adult education, which includes drafting the curricula and in the provision of support to the work of the Council for Vocational Education and of the Council for Adult Education (now integrated into the National Council for Education).

Pre-primary education

As mentioned, preschool education is not compulsory. Nurseries provide childcare services for children up to 3 years of age, while kindergartens cater to children aged 3-6. Other forms of preschool education provision include among others early years' schools, play schools and workshops. The main objectives of preschool education are to:

- establish the most appropriate conditions to support children development and learning;
- develop the child's ability to understand and accept him/herself and the others, respect differences, participate in a group, and express emotions;
- promote among children curiosity, spirit of exploration, imagination and intuition, as well as the development of cognitive skills;
- foster the appreciation of artistic expressions;



- develop language skills for innovative and creative uses of the language in reading and writing;
- promote children's physical development, motor skills and healthy habits;
- help children to develop a positive attitudes towards the nature and environmental protection;
- prepare children for school.

Preschool education is provided according to the curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education, which defines: the objectives and tasks of educational process, the number of children per group, and types, scope and forms of educational activities. The curriculum can be implemented on a full-day basis (6 to 10 hours) or on a half-day basis (four to six hours). Short programmes (three to four hours per day) are also offered. For children with special education needs who can be included in regular groups, individual programmes are provided in addition to the common ones.

In preschool education institutions children are organized in groups on the basis of their age; the size of the group should be 12 children in the case of children up to 2 years of age, 14 children for groups including 2- to 4-year-olds, 20 for 3- and 4-year-olds, 24 for 4- and 5-year-olds, and 25 for 5- to 6-year-olds. The size of the groups may be reduced if children with special educational needs are included.

Until 2003 the training of preschool teachers (working with children aged 3 until their entry in primary school) taking place at the university lasted two years. With the implementation of the Bologna process, the duration of the programme is now three years. In addition to teachers, preschool institutions can employ associate preschool teachers (working with children aged 3-6 and involved in family-based work with children), special teacher pedagogues (for educational work with children in a development group), nurses and assistant nurses (for preventive health care protection).

The results of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2005 showed that only 29% of children aged 36-59 months were attending some form of organized early childhood education programme in 2005. The attendance was three times higher in urban than in rural areas. The highest proportions of children attending such programmes were found in the South (44%) and the lowest in the North (15%). Overall, 64% of children in the first grade of primary school attended preschool in the previous year. The proportion among boys was higher (68%) than for girls (59%). (Statistical Office, SMRA & UNICEF, 2007).

According to national data, in 2008/09 there were 21 public pre-primary schools. In the same year, the total enrolment at preschool level was 12,089 children. The number of teaching staff was 1,009 (mainly female teachers) and the number of non-teaching staff was 469. The Statistical Office reports that in 2009 there were 90 preschool education institutions with a total enrolment of 12,728 children (of whom 6,001 were girls). The total number of staff was 1,332 (of whom 1,268 were women), including 744 educators, 173 medical staff, 45 administrative staff, and 370 other staff.

Primary education

In order to prepare the pupils for adult life and further education on the basis of scientific, technical, and cultural achievements, the general aims of primary education are to enable pupils to acquire the basic elements of general education and to develop their personalities, critical thinking, creativity, curiosity and interest for learning, as well as to promote: love for work and homeland along with appreciation for other cultures; democratic attitudes, tolerance and cooperation; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Primary school curricula are approved by the Ministry of Education. The curriculum includes compulsory and optional subjects, their schedule in the different grades, the weekly and annual number of lessons, and the contents of each subject, including aims and objectives as well as orientations on how to attain them. School boards, in consultation with the municipalities, make decisions on which optional subjects and foreign languages (both compulsory and optional) will be taught in schools.

The weekly lesson timetable of the eight-year primary education programme implemented in 1998 is shown in the table below.

Primary education, eight-year programme: weekly lesson timetable (1998)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Mother tongue and literature	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4
Serbian as non-mother tongue	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)
Albanian as non-mother tongue	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)
Foreign language I	–	–	–	2	3	3	2	2
Foreign language II	–	–	–	–	3	3	3	3
Art education	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Music	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1
Nature and society	2	3	3	–	–	–	–	–
Society	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–
History	–	–	–	–	1	2	2	2
Geography	–	–	–	–	1	2	2	2
Nature	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–
Biology	–	–	–	–	2	2	2	2
Chemistry	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2
Physics	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	2
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
Technical education	–	–	–	1	2	2	2	2
Physical education	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	18	19	20	24	28	28	29	29
	(20)	(21)	(22)	(26)	(30)	(30)	(31)	(31)

Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.



On the basis of amended Law on Primary Education, primary education now lasts nine years, divided into three three-year cycles, i.e. grades 1-3 (classroom teaching), grades 4-6 (classroom and subject teaching), and grades 7-9 (subject teaching). The entry age is 6. Starting from 2012/13, the nine-year school curricula will be fully implemented in all grades of primary schools. At the end of primary education, successful students are awarded the certificate of completed primary school. The national exam at the end of the primary school will be administered for the first time at the end of the school year 2012/13, when all students will be following the nine-year school curricula.

The weekly lesson timetable of the new nine-year programme (as defined in 2004/05) is shown in the table below:

Montenegro. New nine-year primary (basic) education programme: weekly lesson timetable (2005)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade								
	First cycle			Second cycle			Third cycle		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Compulsory subjects:</i>									
Mother tongue and literature	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4
Official language (if different from mother tongue)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)
Mathematics	4	4	4	5	5	5	4.5	4	3.5
Foreign language	–	–	–	2	3	4	4	3	3
Visual arts	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Music	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1
Nature and social studies	3	3	3	–	–	–	–	–	–
Social studies	–	–	–	2	2	–	–	–	–
Civic education	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	–
History	–	–	–	–	–	1.5	1.5	2	2
Geography	–	–	–	–	–	1.5	1.5	1.5	2
Nature and technology	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–
Nature	–	–	–	–	2	1	–	–	–
Biology (with ecology)	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–
Biology	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2
Chemistry	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2
Physics	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	2	2
Technology and informatics	–	–	–	–	1	1.5	1.5	–	–
Physical education	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Compulsory elective subjects	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	5	5
<i>Compulsory activities:</i>									
Supervised learning	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Grade teacher classes	–	–	–	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total weekly periods	20	20	20	23.5	25.5	26	30.5	30	30
Number of days for extracurricular activities	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

Source: MOES and Bureau of Educational Services, 2004. Each period lasts 45 minutes.

Note: One and a half lesson per week means that one class has two lessons and the other one has only one lesson per week. Depending on available resources, schools can offer compulsory elective subjects in the following learning areas: languages, social studies and humanities, sciences, mathematics, technology, arts, and physical education. Optional subjects may include the teaching of foreign languages starting from grade 1. There are also ten days per year for culture, sports, and outdoors activities. In the third cycle, schools should offer at least five compulsory elective subjects, including one foreign language (English, Russian, French, Italian and German).

The general section of the curriculum is defined by the Ministry of Education, following the proposal made by the Council for General Education, while the special section of the curriculum is defined by the Council for General Education itself. The curriculum specifies: compulsory subjects, compulsory elective subjects, optional subjects, extracurricular activities, and grade teacher classes. In addition to the compulsory section of the curriculum, schools are required to organise remedial

instruction throughout a school year for pupils lagging behind in specific subjects, as well as additional instruction for pupils who achieve particularly good results and show additional interest to expand their knowledge in specific areas. If a school has sufficient capacities, it is required to organise an extended programme that includes: extended day, morning care, and free activities. Furthermore, schools can also organize optional instruction and a variety of extracurricular activities (sports, cultural, artistic, etc.).

The general section of the curriculum includes: the name (title) of the curriculum; subject plans (subjects and their scope and schedule, number of lessons for individual subjects and the total number of lessons for all forms of teaching); educational objectives and tasks; enrolment conditions; duration of the programme; criteria regulating students' progression. The special section of the curriculum includes: subject curricula (contents and subject aims, standards of knowledge, teaching aids, preliminary list of textbooks, and linkages between subjects); examination catalogues; compulsory forms of assessment and marking of students' achievements; conditions for progression and completion of curriculum; criteria for adapting the curriculum to students with special educational needs and adult learners; profile of qualifications of teachers and professional associates; and forms of implementing the curriculum.

Teaching is conducted in the official language (Montenegrin). In communities with a majority of Albanian population, teaching is conducted in Albanian or bilingually (Albanian and Montenegrin).

Children with special educational needs can attend mainstream schools (the Inclusive Education Strategy was adopted in 2008); according to the MOES, in 2008/09 a total of 3,416 students were included in regular institutions at the pre-primary, primary and secondary level. In the same year, some 80 children were in special classes established in pre-primary and primary schools. In addition, there are ten special education schools at the primary level and three at the secondary level; in 2008/09, the total enrolment in these institutions was 254 and 183 students respectively.

As a rule, pupils in grades 1-5 should not repeat the grade. Pupils in grades 7-9 that have one to three insufficient marks at the end of the school year shall sit a remedial examination. The assessment of students' achievement in a specific subject is expressed descriptively (grades 1-3), numerically with explanation (grades 4-6), and only numerically in the last cycle of the nine-year programme (grades 7-9). An external assessment of students' achievements is also conducted in the third, sixth and ninth grades. The subjects assessed are mother tongue and mathematics at the end of the first cycle (grade 3); mother tongue, mathematics and first foreign language at the end of the second cycle (grade 6); while the national exam at the end of the third cycle (grade 9) will test knowledge based on key parts of the curriculum and students' achievement in mother tongue, mathematics and one subject selected by the student.

The results of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2005 showed that of children who are of primary school entry age (children that are to turn 7 in the observed calendar year), 94% were attending the first grade of primary school in 2005. No significant differences were found by region and urban-rural areas. A



positive correlation was observed with mother's education and socio-economic status. Data showed that 97% of children entering grade 1 will eventually reach grade 5; at the time of the survey, 91% of the children of primary completion age (14 years) were attending the last grade of primary education. Almost all of children (98%) that successfully completed the last grade of primary school, at the time of the survey, were attending the first form of secondary school. This indicator is higher for girls (94%), compared to boys (87%). No significant difference by other background characteristics was detected. (Statistical Office, SMRA & UNICEF, 2007).

According to national data, in 2008/09 there were 162 primary schools and 281 satellite primary school units. The total enrolment was 74,220 students. The total number of staff was 6,759, including 4,855 teachers and 1,904 non-teaching staff. In the same year there were 15 primary music schools, three of which operating within secondary music schools. These 12 primary music schools employed 142 teachers and the total enrolment was 3,338 students.

Secondary education

As mentioned, secondary education is offered in gymnasia, combined secondary schools (offering general and vocational education), vocational schools and art schools. Gymnasia and art schools (music, art, and ballet) offer four-year programmes. Vocational schools offer students two- (lower level), three- and four-year (middle level) programmes preparing for work and further education. At the end of secondary education students sit the *matura* exam (academic or technical). The national *matura* exam was organized for the first time at the end of the school year 2009/10. On the basis of the education reform, technical high schools can also offer two-year programmes at the postsecondary level to graduates from middle-level vocational education.

At the secondary level students are expected to: acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, capabilities and habits based on the scientific, technical, and cultural achievements, for continuing their education or enter the world of work; and develop critical thinking, communication skills, a responsible approach to work and life, a positive attitude towards living in a pluralistic and democratic society, democratic attitudes, tolerance, cooperation, and respect for human rights.

The weekly lesson timetable of the gymnasium (as defined in 2005/06) is presented in the table below:

Montenegro. General secondary education (gymnasium): weekly lesson timetable (2006)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each form			
	1	2	3	4
<i>Compulsory subjects:</i>				
Mother tongue and literature	4	4	4	4
Official language (if different from mother tongue)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Mathematics	4	4	4	4
First foreign language	3	3	3	3
Second foreign language	2	2	2	3
History	2	2	2	2
Music	1	–	–	–
Fine arts	–	1	–	–
Latin language	–	–	2	–
Geography	2	2	–	–
Biology	2	2	2	–
Chemistry	2	2	2	–
Physics	2	2	2	–
Psychology	–	2	–	–
Sociology	–	–	–	2
Philosophy	–	–	–	2
Computer studies	2	–	–	–
Physical education	2	2	2	2
Compulsory elective subjects	3	3	6	8
<i>Compulsory elective contents:</i>				
Compulsory elective contents	2	2	2	1
Total weekly periods	33	33	33	31

Source: MOES, 2009. Each period lasts 45 minutes.

Note: From the approved list of compulsory elective subjects, schools implementing gymnasium curricula are expected to offer students, in accordance with their interests and the capabilities of the school, five electives in the first and second forms, eight electives in the third form, and ten electives in the fourth form. Schools are also expected to organize compulsory elective contents which are not included in the integral part of classes schedule and which are not assessed and can be organised in and out of the school. Elective contents can include: cultural and artistic activities, sport activities, research work, voluntary social work, education for tolerance, peace and human development, religion and ethics, and other contents related to a particular learning area and subject.

As in the case of primary education, the general part of the secondary education curriculum is defined by the Ministry of Education, following the proposal made by the Council for General Education, while a special section of the curriculum is defined by the Council for General Education itself. The curriculum includes compulsory subjects, elective subjects or groups of subjects, and compulsory elective contents. Students take the following exams at their graduation examination: mother tongue and literature; mathematics or foreign language; and two elective subjects.

Following the adoption of the Law on Gymnasium (2002), the concept of gymnasium education was introduced in 2006/07. The gymnasium offers general



education: there are no specialized courses, and elective subjects are offered in study plans from the first year, which allows students to choose subjects suited to their own interests. The study plan defines the number of hours for general education subjects, which are compulsory over the four-year programme, as well as the number of hours for elective subjects and compulsory elective contents. Gymnasium education ends with the graduation exam (*matura*). Graduates can continue their education at the higher education level.

Middle-level vocational schools (three- or four-year programmes) and lower-level vocational schools (two-year programme) prepare students for vocational occupations at different levels of complexity. At the end of four-year programmes, students sit a professional exam (a practical exam in the case of three-year programmes). Students completing two-year programmes and passing additional and qualifying exams may enrol at the appropriate level in a vocational school offering three-year programmes. (MOES, 2001). In 2008/09, about 70% of students entering secondary education enrolled in a vocational education and training (VET) programme.

VET programmes cover 14 sectors. Each of these sectors has its own qualification structure/framework, showing links between qualifications and their levels within a specific sector, horizontally as well as vertically. Overall, 53 occupational profiles of four years' duration (equivalent to 4,512 hours of training), 28 occupational profiles of three years' duration (equivalent to 3,360 hours of training) and two occupational profiles of two years' duration (equivalent to 2,208 hours of training) are currently offered. Compulsory general education subjects normally include: mother tongue and literature, mathematics, foreign language, computer studies, physical education, and subjects from nature and social studies (depending on the area of work).

The results of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2005 showed that among children of secondary school age, 84% were attending secondary school in 2005, 2% were attending primary school, while the rest were out of school. Secondary school attendance is influenced by household wealth. Only 69% of children from the poorest households compared to 97% of the children from the richest household are attending secondary school. (Statistical Office, SMRA & UNICEF, 2007).

According to national data, in 2008/09 there were 49 secondary schools including 12 gymnasias (of which two in the private sector), 26 vocational schools and 11 combined secondary schools (offering both general and vocational education). The total enrolment was 31,133 students, of whom 21,495 in vocational education schools. The total number of staff was 3,020, including 2,297 teachers and 723 non-teaching staff.

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

In 2000/01, a UNICEF-sponsored research conducted in five schools with a sample 421 students in grade 8 evaluated learning achievements in five school subjects: Serbian language, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. Overall, the basic and general literacy level of the students in all areas was found under the expected level. In the case of physics, two thirds of the students achieved positive results. In the



mathematics and Serbian language only half of the students achieved positive results, in chemistry only one third, and in biology the results were significantly lower.

Montenegro participated in the 2006 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), along with 17 countries in the CEE/CIS region (Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States). It ranked 48th out of 57 countries that participated in PISA 2006. In mathematics Montenegro scored second to last in the region, after Kyrgyzstan, with a score that was nearly 100 points behind the regional average on a scale from 0-500. In reading and science, Montenegro scored third to last after Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan, again with a score almost 100 points below the regional average. (UNICEF, 2008).

Teaching staff

Before the implementation of the Bologna process, preschool teachers were trained at the tertiary level (two-year programme); primary school classroom teachers (grades 1-4) were graduates of a four-year programme at teacher training colleges; and primary school subject teachers (grades 5-8) and secondary school teachers must have completed a four-year diploma programme at a relevant faculty. High school degree holders can be employed as instructors and craft teachers in vocational secondary schools.

After 2003, the university issued guidelines for new curricula and the organization of studies in line with the Bologna recommendations and rules. The duration of studies now follows a 3+1 pattern, while the faculty of natural sciences and mathematics as well as the academies offer four-year programmes. The duration of the newly established undergraduate programmes leading to the award of a bachelor's degree is three years. Most of the programmes follow a 3+1+1 pattern, representing an adaptation of the former four-year programmes.

In the new nine-year elementary (basic) school, implemented since 2004/05, classroom teachers work with grades 1-5 pupils except for foreign languages (subject teachers). Grade 4-8 primary school teachers and secondary school teachers must have a university degree. (Vujačić, 2006).

Most university faculties have prepared or are in process of preparing new curricula. Generally speaking, the pre-service teacher education curriculum consists of academic, pedagogic subjects and didactics. Academic subjects count for 90% of overall courses in most faculties. Usually subject teachers have two semesters of pedagogy and two semesters of didactics. The course on didactics also comprises a few hours of practical training at local schools.

A special requirement for prospective teachers prior to formal employment is probationary work, regulated by the Guidebook adopted by the Ministry of Education in 2003. The probationary period lasts six months and is monitored by the Commission for execution and evaluation of probationary work. The teacher-trainee has to comply with the prescribed programme of educational work in the institution under the direct supervision of an authorized teacher (mentor, who has at least the same degree of school qualifications as the teacher-trainee) and after completing the

teaching practice period, he/she takes the professional exam in order to become certified teacher. Teaching practice for teachers with postsecondary and higher education professional qualifications lasts one year. of the Republic of Montenegro 67/03). Professional exam includes:

The majority of teachers in preschools and schools have been trained using outdated methods focusing on teacher-centred approaches and fact-oriented knowledge. The practical training of teachers at all levels of education follows the 'model of imitation' of experienced teachers. They have not received training on evaluation and self-evaluation strategies. Teachers who graduated from non-teacher training faculties do not have any kind of pedagogical training before they start teaching. (Vujačić, 2006).

In accordance with the General Law on Education (2002) teachers have both the right and obligation to continuous professional development. In-service training has several different forms that may be defined as individual, formal or informal. The individual form of professional development represents all activities that a teacher undertakes according to his/her interests and can involve further reading, use of the media and the Internet, and attending specialized courses. Formal professional development can be achieved through further education. Informal professional development can be achieved through the programmes of professional development. Formal professional development programmes are prepared and offered by the Bureau of Educational Services and the Centre for Vocational Education.

The implementation of a model of school-based continuous teacher professional development started in 2008/09 at 75 primary schools, with an envisaged expansion to cover the rest of primary schools, then preschool institutions and gymnasia. Every two years the educational institution prepares the plan for school-based continuous teacher professional development, which should reflect the needs and priorities of the school, teachers and students. The main goal is to improve teachers' work, and through that to improve student learning. Teacher professional development activities frequently envisaged in the plans include: seminars organized by the school or the Bureau for Educational Services, meetings (round tables, debates, panel discussions, interest groups, demonstration classes, action-research initiatives, and professional development days. Every teacher also needs to have an individual professional development plan covering a one-year period, which is also a component of the developmental part of his/her professional portfolio. At the end of the two-year period of the implementation of activities foreseen by the plan, the school establishes a commission for the self-assessment of the teacher professional development plan. A report is then submitted to the Bureau for Educational Services, Department for Continuous Professional Development. All accredited teacher professional development programmes are included in the Catalogue of programmes for teacher professional development, published once a year by the Bureau for Educational Services on the basis of public competition and established standards for the accreditation of programmes.

An integral component of the teacher professional development system is the evaluation of teachers' performance. The process is interactive, participatory and formative i.e. the results of the evaluation will be the basis for the improvement of work. The evaluation is carried out every two years. The Bureau for Educational



Services made available a handbook for schools which contains a detailed explanation of the process and provides all the necessary instruments.

The Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro, a non-governmental and non-profit organization established in November 2000, has been training teachers in the *Step-by-Step* methodology in partnership with relevant public authorities and other local NGOs. (Vujačić, 2006).

According to legislation, the working week of educational staff consists of 40 hours. Educational personnel in nurseries should have 30 weekly hours of direct work with children (25 hours in preschools).

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Web resources

Bureau of Educational Services: <http://www.zavodzaskolstvo.gov.me/> [In Montenegrin and English. Last checked: November 2011.]

Centre for Vocational Education: <http://www.cso.gov.me/> [In Montenegrin and English. Last checked: November 2011.]

Examinations Centre: <http://www.iccg.co.me/> [In Montenegrin; some information in English. Last checked: November 2011.]

Ministry of Education and Sports: <http://www.mpin.gov.me/> [In Montenegrin and English. Last checked: November 2011.]

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