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THEMATIC REVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICIES FOR EDUCATION

CROATIA

Stability Pact for Southern Europe

Table 1

Task Force on Education

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FOREWORD

This report on education in Croatia has been prepared within the framework of the Centre for Co-operation with Non-Members (CCNM) of the OECD as part of its programme of co-operation with the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. The Secretariat, as Co-ordinator for General Education Policy and System Change of the Task Force for Education on Table 1 of the Stability Pact, has carried out a Thematic Review of Education Policy of the region with sections on Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYROM, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and a chapter on regional issues. The themes covered are teachers, curriculum, governance, and early childhood education and care. Each section provides an overview of the education system, issues and barriers to reform, and recommendations. The recommendations are designed to be of use for national policy makers and to assist Stability Pact donor countries and institutions target regional assistance. In addition, the reports can serve as the basis for more detailed analysis of individual education sectors.

The transition of the region towards a pluralistic democracy and a market economy has been marked by economic, social and political changes of extraordinary breadth and depth. The talents, skills and knowledge of the population are crucial in this process; hence the ambitious scale and urgency of the reforms being advanced for education which led the members of Table 1 of the Stability Pact to designate education as one of the four priority areas.

On the basis of background material prepared by the education authorities in the region, existing reports and information supplied in meetings in the course of site visits, this Thematic Review provides an analysis of the education system in light of the social and political context of the region and priority issues of access and equity, quality, efficiency and governance.

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The opinions expressed and arguments employed in this report are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the government of Croatia, the OECD or the governments of its Member countries.

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CROATIA

General Data

Area:	56 538 sq. km (2/3 of size of Austria).
Number of inhabitants:	4 554 000 (1999 estimate); births in 1999 (9.9 live births per 1 000); age distribution: 26.6% (0-19); there are still 50 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 30 000 refugee Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina; a decline in birth rate (-1.2 in 1998).
Ethnic composition:	Last census (1991): Croat (78.1%), Serb (12.2%), Bosniak ¹ (0.9%), Slovenian (0.5%), Hungarian (0.5%), Italian (0.4%), other ethnic groups (7.7%).
Languages:	Croatian 96%, other (incl. Serbian, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, German); more than 50 schools at primary level offer tuition language of minorities of which: Serbian (32), Italian (11), Czech (7), Hungarian (6), Slovak (1).
GDP:	Estimated at 5 100 USD per capita. GDP growth still flat over the past years.
Inflation rate (consumer prices):	4.4% (1999 estimate), remained in check over the past years.
Official unemployment:	The unemployment rate was estimated at 12.6% (1999, ILO Labour Force Survey) 20% (December 1999), women 45%. Work force participation: 67.9% overall (1999 estimate). Youth unemployment: 23% of registered unemployed were under 24 years old.

Introduction and Context

Croatia was one of the most prosperous regions of the former Yugoslavia, with a per capita output of about one-third above the average of the country. In June of 1991 Croatia declared its independence and formed a parliamentary democracy. Two thirds of that first elected Parliament were from the Croatian Democratic Community (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*) headed by Franjo Tudjman who was named President. Unfortunately, after attaining independence, the Republic of Croatia was forced to defend its new independence in a war with Serbia (1992-95). The war damage in the country produced differing patterns of economic development since 1995; for example, the tourist industry in Dalmatia has

1. 'Bosniak' has replaced Muslim as an ethnic term, to avoid confusion with the religious term Muslim (= adherent of Islam).

yet to fully recover. Eastern areas of Slavonia are depopulated and economically depressed. The heavy war debt has led to cuts in spending on health, education and social welfare. In 1999 the unemployment rate was 20%, and almost a fifth of the population were below the poverty level. The average monthly salary is now 400 USD, higher than in some other countries in the region, but buying only a minimum food basket for a family with two children.

After the death of President Tudjman, other parties successfully formed a government. Although the country faces many problems, common to the region, the Government has been successful in managing macro-stabilisation policies (which began under President Tudjman in 1993), although privatisation of large state enterprises and the bank system reform is far from complete. The new Government appointed in 1999 is committed to economic reform but has to deal with severe economic decline.

The Education System

Age at which compulsory education starts:	7 years
Age at which compulsory education ends:	15 years
Levels of education governance:	<p>Central: Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Science and Technology.</p> <p>Regional: 21 counties (<i>županije</i>). There are 5 regional units focused on quality control (inspection) and evaluation.</p> <p>Local: Schools. The decline in the birth rate, and abandonment of particular areas by the local population due to the war, were the main reasons why some schools closed down.</p>
Structure of the education system:	<p>Pre-school education: ages 2-7 years; participation rate 34.9%.</p> <p>Compulsory basic education: ages 7-15 years; the current structure is 4+4; participation rate 98%.</p> <p>Secondary education: ages 15-19, 3 and 4 years (short programmes 2 years); participation rate 63%.</p> <p>Tertiary education includes non-university education (2 to 4 years) and university education (4 to 6 years); participation rate 31.3%, of which 22.9% in university education.</p>
Examinations/transition points:	<p>No formal exams at the end of the grade 4, 94% of the students continue into grade 5, cohort size 56 231(1998/99). At the end of grade 8, there is an internal school-leaving test leading to a certificate of completion, cohort size 52 285 (1998/99). At the end of gymnasium (grade 12) there is a maturity exam (<i>Matura</i>), cohort size 11 871 (1998/99). The technical and vocational schools both end with a final exam, internally prepared and assessed, 90.8% of students pass it, cohort size 11 871 (1998/99). The receiving institution or faculty sets entrance exams for tertiary education.</p>

Description of the system

The education system in Croatia is highly centralised with many elements inherited from the Yugoslav approach in which education was considered a “science”, led by the government. During the war many school units suffered serious damage and even now do not have sufficient funds to cover maintenance costs. Educational workers’ salaries are low, as is their status; are unmotivated because they have limited possibilities to participate in defining curriculum and the conduct of classes. Tight administrative control measures by the Government through records and reports limit schools’ flexibility in defining policy based on final results and performance criteria.

In Croatia governance of the tertiary level is the responsibility of the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), while the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) is ultimately responsible for the pre-tertiary level. The MoES is responsible for drafting legislation, defining the curriculum for all schools, approving textbooks, appointing head teachers, approving the number of pupils and school budgets, and settling all payments, salaries, materials costs, and capital expenditures except those met by local authorities.

Contacts between the different departments of Government are limited; this is particularly evident between the MoES and the MoST. Although a working group has been set up, there is little or no contact on strategy or policy. The problem is that there is no mechanism for putting together the pieces so that an overall view of the system, its development and reform can be achieved. Yet a properly functioning education system must have coherence between the primary and secondary schools and higher education. In addition such issues as informal education, continuing education, post-secondary education outside formal higher education, and lifelong learning have not been seriously addressed so far.

For example, vocational education and training (VET) needs to be assessed not only by the Ministries but also by their social partners. The Chamber of Crafts now participates in programmes for apprenticeship and professional skills, but neither it, nor the Chamber of Commerce, nor the trade unions work with the Government toward the development of the Croatian economy or social policy more generally.

What is needed is a shared vision to which all parts of government subscribe, a strategy based on that vision, and a plan of action to implement it. This vision would enable the continued modernisation of the economy and the provision of adequate educational opportunities for all the population. Progress towards entrance to the European Union requires a well-articulated plan both of strategy and action.

Stages and status of education reform

In early 1995 some changes in the education system were made. A number of specific changes were already in hand, including a law on the education of minorities and a proposal to increase the length of primary education. More important from the point of view of governance was the publication of a document, “The Basis of the Education System in the Republic of Croatia”, as the basis for discussion. This was an attempt on the part of the government to raise the profile of education in the minds of the public.

There is a genuine will by the current Government to reform the education system, and some useful work has already begun. Some substantial issues yet to be addressed include: the need for a more consistent and coherent policy approach within Government; a constant drive towards a more flexible system, with clarity of responsibilities; the creation of effective and competent partnerships with capacity to help reform; and the importance of good information as a contribution to assessing the effectiveness of the system and the reforms being put in place.

Statistical data

Data on education was made available through: the Central Bureau of Statistics, the MoES, the regional offices for education and the Croatian Employment Service. The present situation indicates that some important information does not exist; while other information is not shared and/or used. Efforts have been made to use the most recent and reliable data available but the actual data should be treated with caution and used as indicative. More reliable data will be available after the next census in 2001.

Table 1. **Schools by type and population (2000)**

SCHOOL TYPE	No. of schools (excluding branch schools)	No. of students	No. of teachers	Pupil: Staff Ratio (P:SR)
ALL TYPES	3 107	790 815	75 985	10.4:1
Pre-primary	454	130 150	6 372	20.4:1
Primary 1-8	2 143	413 468	41 399*	10:1
A. Secondary general	150	49 624		
B. Secondary VET	275	146 399		
			A+B	A+B
			20 651	9.5:1
University	66	70 703	5 871	12:1
Non-university	19	26 095	1 692	15.4:1

Note: Total staff counts (teachers + administrative and supporting staff).

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb, Croatia.

Legal framework and policy objectives

The Government of Croatia views education as a crucial element in the transition to a democratic society. Its policy on education is based on several strategic principles: special attention to minorities and the respect for human rights; decentralisation of the financing and management of schools; and a need to involve both public and private resources in education. Efforts are being made to reform the system, and the commitment of the Government is an important asset. The process of the reform in Croatia involves policy development and decentralisation as well as curriculum change, teacher training and financial restructuring. Long-term development strategies are being worked upon; however, there may be considerable slippage between the Government's development strategy in the education sector and the available resources within the same time-frame.

The Constitution provides that attendance is compulsory for 8 years, up to completion of primary education. A new law was passed (Education Act on Primary Education, 1990, amended in 1996), while others are being prepared. Teaching plans and programmes were published in 1999, following a pilot period of 3 years (1995-1999). Several other laws were enacted during the last few years, *i.e.* Secondary Education Act (1992), Pre-school Education Act (1997), Law on Inspection in Education, Law on Equivalence of Foreign School Documents, Education in Languages and Scripts of National Minorities (all in 2000).

Governance and management

The MoES retains overall responsibility for the educational system, being the main policymaking body with budget responsibility and control; the tertiary level is under the auspices of the MoST. The official position is to decentralise and deregulate; however, it is clear that the path is not clearly marked and attitudes are sometimes ambivalent. The MoES has set up committees of experts to deal with a number of crucial issues in regard to educational reform and launched a campaign for popular participation in defining the reform of the school system. With the Ministry drafting legislation, as well as defining

curricula, textbooks, school budgets, criteria for the selection of school managers, settling all payments, etc. to date, the system has been (and largely remains) centralised. As long as each school has to interact directly with the Ministry for all financial or management issues, real decentralisation *cannot occur*, particularly if the main role of (school) administration in education is to ensure that detailed decisions of the Government are carried out. The modification of the Primary Education and Secondary Education Acts, which will expressly stipulate the decentralisation of financing and management, is now underway.

The Ministry of Labour is responsible for employment issues which relate to education; but these responsibilities are in essence assumed – and policy initiatives are carried out in most instances – by the Croatian Employment Service. Beginning in 2000, the Ministry of Crafts and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises has been responsible for practical training within the dual system for vocational education. The independent Employment Service (funded by employer/employee contributions) pays benefits to designs and implements training for the unemployed.

The lack of focus for the whole system means that the roles of various authorities at both the national and regional levels have not yet been fully defined; this creates substantial problems in decision making both for priorities for public funding and the operational consequences of that spending. The decision by national educational authorities to shift more responsibility to regional and local authorities is considered difficult to implement, because “they are not equipped to carry out the tasks”.

Issues and barriers in governance and management

- *There are many barriers to effective decentralisation of schools* in terms of financial autonomy, staff appointment and quality control. Consequently authority is overly centralised in some aspects (*e.g.* curriculum, textbooks), while in others it is highly decentralised (*e.g.* assessment). There is no common view on the pace and level of decentralisation, or on the roles that each party should play in the process.
- *The parties are not using detailed analyses* for policy design and decision-making. Education policies should be supported by feedback from the system as well as by timely and accurate data.
- *There is an inadequate delineation of roles and responsibilities between the levels of government.* At present the parties are not prepared and trained to take over the responsibility of autonomous school management. Municipalities are not connected in any way with the needs of schools and there are significant differences among the regions in terms of resource allocation.

Equity in Access, Attainment and Achievement

As in many countries in the region, the former communist regime in Croatia was successful in ensuring high levels of access to education, especially at secondary level, but with a curriculum that is now both outdated and overloaded. At present, education is more and more based on individual decision, and the Government has begun to introduce competition, individualism, and choice of ‘profile’ or specialisation in schools. In the present system, all education beyond secondary education, including second-chance and continuing education schemes, is largely left to the initiative of the individual.

Table 2. **Participation in education (1999-2000)**

Level of education	Number of students	%	Girls	%
Primary	413 468	58.5	200 928	48.6
Secondary	196 023	27.8	98 501	50.2
Tertiary	96 798	13.7	51 021	52.7
TOTAL	706 289	100	350 450	49.6

Source: CEPS, Ljubljana, December 2000.

The motivation of secondary school students is closely linked with their choice of study. For example, a poorly performing student might well find his/her preferred choice of educational path blocked. While the education system significantly contributes to learning achievement, it remains rigid in terms of the realisation of individual ambitions as well as rational use of public resources, given that many programmes and methods are no longer in line with new economic and social requirements, nor with the expectations of the young. A major reason for dropping-out is said to be students' unwillingness to "perform" according to prescribed norms. However, the problem of early school-leaving is much more complex, but no systematic research has yet been undertaken.

Therefore, along with care for gifted students, new education policies should also address the drop-out issue, and provide for second-chance opportunities for those who have not managed to complete a grade or who have left education. In addition, upgrading of skills for adults and retraining of young adults needs to be carefully prepared. Schools and teachers should be better equipped in terms of facilities and programmes to serve the needs of both young and adult learners.

Observance of human rights and care for minorities are very important issues, especially in the light of Croatia's recent history. The country has made important progress in this area; minorities are encouraged to study in their own language, and a new law was passed in 2000 (*Education in Languages and Scripts of National Minorities Act.*) At present there are more than 50 school units for minorities.

Table 3. **Schools by ethnic stream and population (2000)**

Minority	School Units	Number of Students	
		Primary	Secondary
Serbian	32	3 952	1 922
Italian	11	2 195	818
Czech	7	412	-
Hungarian	6	298	52
Slovak	1	15	-

Source: CEPS, Ljubljana, December 2000.

Issues and barriers in access, attainment and achievement

- *The balance between supply, needs and quality.* A basic premise of educational policy is to ensure constant adaptation of educational supply to the educational needs of individuals, as well as to ensure high-quality basic education for all and realistic possibilities of mobility within the system – both horizontally and vertically.
- *Enrolment patterns should provide for equal access to the various programmes at secondary and tertiary level.* The network of general secondary education programmes (gymnasias)

needs to be enlarged to reduce the present need for stringent selection. A more promising future for technical and vocational education lies in abandoning “outmoded” programmes, de-specialising and modernising content, developing new programmes in economically viable fields with support of social partners, and integrating learning and work.

- *The present system provides for early streaming into two main education paths, with limited transfer possibilities at a later stage.* The system needs to be restructured to make it more ‘porous’ by allowing transfer of students from one stream to another at any stage. This could be achieved through special ‘bridging programmes’ during secondary schooling for young people, or for adults with or without work experience who wish to return to the system. International experience suggests that vocational specialisation is best delayed until after secondary education.
- *There are also some regional differences in access,* especially at the tertiary level, due to migration to industrialised areas. Considerably fewer choices exist outside the bigger industrial centres, which essentially limits employment prospects of graduates. This is also linked with the issue of decentralisation of the vocational system, which is not by students and parents adjusted to the needs of the business environment and is often seen as a second choice.
- *Private provision of education.* The 1992 Law on Secondary Education, with its amendments in 1993 and 1995, allows for the establishment of private schools. However, the number of private primary and secondary schools in Croatia is minimal, and so is their influence within the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Financing

The main characteristics of Croatia’s financial system for education are: chronic under-funding; lack of equity and transparency in budgetary allocation; unbalanced structure of the education budget, both in terms of categories of expenditure and sources of funds; and lack of synergy (legislative, professional and institutional) for system change. Many issues are neither addressed by, nor reflected within, present legislation. The allocation mechanisms are rigid and based on incremental budgets relying on the allocations of previous years, without medium-term planning and strategic investment targets. Control is usually exercised at the central level and is based on inputs. There are no mechanisms in place to reallocate money from one budget line to another. Without a consistent approach across all these issues, rational financial decision-making is seriously affected, and school units will not be able produce desired outcomes.

The MoES receives almost all moneys allocated to education from public funds. The share of education of GDP went down over the last few years, but is now increasing to about 3.4% (1999 estimate) although it remains well under the European average. The share of education expenses from the state budget is below 12% and private contributions are insufficient. There is a great need to mobilise additional financial resources, as the current level is insufficient to support the reform process.

The division of financial responsibilities does not reflect a clear policy perspective for either side. In Croatia, the MoES presently covers 100% of expenses (except for pre-school, and some categories of capital investment, such as maintenance of buildings). By focusing on recurrent expenses at the central level, the government may not be able to introduce incentives for efficient service delivery. Another problem seems to be the pre-schools which are financed locally; funding is not assured in all regions, resulting in unequal access. The split of capital investments between local and central offices fragments the already constrained opportunities to focus on central or local priorities, or implement development projects

on either level. At the central level, no adequate management information system exists to assist in developing an appropriate investment strategy.

Some schools lack space, and others make inefficient use of the space they have. The conditions differ very widely from one school to another, but education facilities are often inadequate. Many schools need urgent repairs, but in the absence of systematic information (*i.e.* school-mapping) about regional differences it is difficult to initiate a national programme to address this problem. Beginning with a thorough analysis of the current status of buildings and facilities, and conducting an inventory, a list of sensible priorities could be drawn up. In the absence of a clear definition of responsibilities at each level, and without additional support from the private sector, many school units will find it difficult to survive.

Issues and barriers in financing

- *The overall financial resources are insufficient.* At present there are no incentives for private and other non-state sources of financing. There is a great need to increase and diversify the available resources. In this context, the provision of (fiscal, tax, etc.) incentives to employers to encourage broader participation in both the dual training system and the training of employed people, could unlock untapped resources.
- *The imbalance and rigidity of the budget.* About 80% of money goes for salaries, and spending is focused on recurrent expenses. Capital expenditures represent a sensitive area because they are covered from both central and local budgets. The budgetary allocation mechanisms through which the resources are assigned are rigid and outdated. No alternative or incentive based mechanisms have been attempted.
- *The infrastructure.* School infrastructure needs to be improved as the maintenance of school buildings was neglected during previous times, and many schools suffered serious damage during the war. Additional financial support in this area is needed. New ways of working in partnership with private enterprise and NGOs should be explored as a possible solution.

Curriculum

Curriculum remains a sensitive issue in Croatia. Developing and revising the national curricula is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Sports. Until now the priority was to replace the pre-1991 content, emphasising national traditions. It is now time to take a much more thorough approach, with the accent on issues like flexibility and local (school-based) curriculum development. No reform can be complete unless this is done.

In Croatia, the organisation of the curriculum around subjects and teacher-dominated learning methods is not conducive to developing the high-level technical, technological and social competencies called for in a competitive market economy. The compulsory content is extensive and overloaded (in gymnasium 15-17 subjects) while optional subjects are very weak (1 to 3 hours per week). Curriculum in technical schools consists of common core programmes, common vocational programmes and an optional part closely linked with the choice of profession. The secondary school time schedule (general teaching) oscillates between 30 and 35 hours per week. The syllabi define learning goals, the number of subjects and lessons per week, teaching media, and tests. Links with the economic environment are, with the exception of the dual training programmes for craft trades, weak; work-based training is not an integral part of all vocational curricula; and entrepreneurship is not promoted as a mainstream concept. (See Tables 4a and 4b).

Extracurricular activities are a constituent part of regular school system, and they are organised for all children throughout the school year, even during holidays. Their purpose is to stimulate pupils and students to engage in creative activities, and acquisition of knowledge and skills according to their individual interests and abilities. The review team supports the maintenance of the activities recognising the financial constraints faced by the Government.

Optional teaching becomes compulsory for all pupils who have opted for a content area which will be offered only if a group of at least 15 pupils “opt” for it. Optional teaching provides pupils with a certain freedom in the choice of educational inputs for their particular interests and abilities.

Optional programmes for all content areas have been published, together with teaching programmes for primary school. The schools are, in theory, free to develop programmes to suit their pupils’ interests and school resources, but they have to submit these for approval by the Institute for Educational Development. There are no quantitative indicators for the number of optional programmes in primary schools. (According to some “off-the-record” information to the team, they are diminishing.)

Supplemental teaching must be arranged within each school for students who need additional help. It is organised for a limited period to make sure students receive the help they need and can be organised for all content areas. A special type of additional teaching is intended for the children of Croatian origin (citizens) resident abroad who plan to continue schooling in their homeland. It helps to fill in the gaps between two education systems or to speed up learning the mother tongue. Additional teaching for gifted children provides incentives and extra input according to their interests, abilities and preferences. Recently there has been additional teaching only for those pupils preparing for competitions (*e.g.* “Olympiads”), rather than for all gifted children – or indeed for children of a wide range of abilities. This creates an equity problem within the system, especially where resources are scarce.

At present in Croatia the curriculum is strongly subject-oriented, with an accent on the cognitive capacity of students. The central authority (Ministry in co-operation with national expert bodies) is responsible for: the process of curriculum design on different administrative levels; the collection and dissemination of curriculum-related information; understanding the needs of societal development, and reflecting these in the education system; defining basic and new skills (particularly language learning, computer-use, communication skills, problem solving capacity, teamwork, project orientation etc.).

The process of curriculum design takes no account of either the issue of decentralisation or the relationship between central and local decision making. The legislative, regulatory and financial framework does not leave room for qualified local actors being involved in the design or flexible adaptation of curricula to new social needs and labour market requirements. The university and teacher training institutions, the teachers associations, NGOs, the social partners – including the very active Chambers of Craft and Commerce – are now seen as outsiders rather than legitimate stakeholders in the system who should play a role in curriculum design and articulation.

Table 4a. Primary school time schedule

SUBJECTS	# OF HOURS/ WEEK (YEAR MINIMUM) PER GRADES							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Compulsory teaching								
Croatian language	6 (210)	6 (210)	6 (210)	6 (210)	5 (175)	5 (175)	4 (140)	4 (140)
Visual Arts	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	4 (140)	3-4 (105-140)	3-4 (105-140)	3-4 (105-140)	3-4 (105-140)
Music	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)
Foreign language	-	-	-	2 (70)	3 (105)	3 (105)	3 (105)	3 (105)
Mathematics	5 (175)	5 (175)	5 (175)	5 (175)	4 (140)	4 (140)	4 (140)	4 (140)
Nature ¹⁾	-	-	-	-	1.5 (53)	2 (70)	-	-
Biology	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 (70)	2 (70)
Chemistry	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 (70)	2 (70)
Physics	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 (70)	2 (70)
Nature and society	2 (70)	2 (70)	3 (105)	3 (105)	-	-	-	-
History	-	-	-	-	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)
Geography ¹⁾	-	-	-	-	1.5 (53)	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)
Technical education	-	-	-	-	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)
Physical training and health education	3 (105)	3 (105)	3 (105)	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)
<i>Total: Regular teaching</i>	18 (630)	18 (630)	19 (665)	20 (700)	22 (770)	23 (805)	26 (910)	26 (910)

1) Teaching of nature and geography in grade 5 is interchangeable: one/two hours a week.

Source: Ministry of Education and Sports, Institute for Educational Development, Croatian Education System, Interim Report, Zagreb, June 2000.

Table 4b. Optional subjects and special programmes

SUBJECTS	# OF HOURS/ WEEK (YEAR MINIMUM) PER GRADES							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Religion	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)
Other optional subjects ¹⁾	-	-	-	2 (70)	1-2 (35-70)	1-2 (35-70)	1-2 (35-70)	1-2 (35-70)
<i>Total: optional subjects</i>	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	4 (140)	3-4 (105-140)	3-4 (105-140)	3-4 (105-140)	3-4 (105-140)
Early learning of foreign languages ²⁾	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	-	-	-	-	-
Latin ³⁾	-	-	-	-	3 (105)	3 (105)	3 (105)	3 (105)
Greek ³⁾	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 (105)	3 (105)
<i>Total: Special programmes</i>	2 (70)	2 (70)	2 (70)	-	3 (105)	3 (105)	3 (105)	3 (105)
Additional teaching and extra classes	1+1 (35+35)	1+1 (35+35)	1+1 (35+35)	1+1 (35+35)	1+1 (35+35)	1+1 (35+35)	1+1 (35+35)	1+1 (35+35)
Extracurricular activities	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)
Classroom teacher hours	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)	1 (35)

Notes: 1) In grade 4 there is a possibility of choice between religion and second foreign language.

2) Early learning of foreign language is carried out by schools, which are properly staffed. Local government units provide financing.

3) Latin and Greek syllabi are introduced by schools properly staffed and upon pupils' choice.

Source: Ministry of Education and Sports, Institute for Educational Development, Croatian Education System, Interim Report, Zagreb, June 2000.

The new curriculum will need to emphasise interdisciplinary and new basic skills needed for an open society and market economy. A national model could include the following principles: for example, interdisciplinary or cross-curricular courses of study. It should be competence-oriented, rather than based on the learning of facts and figures, and it should address the fundamental ethical and moral values with regard to democracy and human rights. It should pay attention to other issues such as: the definition of subjects/disciplines or occupational areas to be taught at the national level; national standards for the relative space needed for different subjects/disciplines or specialisations; national standards for knowledge in a basic repertoire of subjects/disciplines or for skills/competences in broadly-profiled [clusters of] occupations. Once a general framework has been adopted, an optimal level for decentralisation and more detailed structure of the curriculum can follow.

The OECD team recognises that changes in the curriculum are not easy to make. A balance between the traditional approaches and innovations is desirable but hard to achieve. There are some regional programmes that could serve as examples, for instance, in Romania a National Curriculum Framework has recently been put in place. It meets the criteria of decentralisation as well as of flexibility, and is school-oriented. This example and others should be considered as natural steps to be made toward systemic reform.

Issues and barriers in curriculum

- *Lack of flexibility and local capability for curriculum development.* In the absence of authorised structures other than those of the Ministry (e.g. professional associations), as well as adequate labour market information mechanisms, adjustments of lesson plans to local conditions tend to reflect the human and material resources available (or not available) at each school.
- *Weak links among curriculum development, textbooks and assessment.* Little or no relationship exists between the development of curriculum and that of textbooks and assessment. Many exams continue to assess fact-based learning rather than competences/skills or, in the case of vocational education, abilities to act in certain work situations.
- *Subject-bound orientation of the curriculum,* with focus on factual knowledge and passive learning rather than the development of competences through individual learning. There is also (too) early and (too) narrow specialisation in vocational education. The perception remains that personality develops only in a learning environment removed from utilitarian considerations, and that only the school is a recognised place of learning.

Textbooks

At present this issue is on the Government agenda. A new Bill has been approved at its first parliamentary reading. The MoES is now in the process of adapting it to the comments made by the *Sabor* (Parliament).

However, a textbook function must be made operational within the Ministry, and cannot be isolated from curriculum development. Again, Croatia may want to learn from the experience of other countries in the region. Reform in this field should be co-ordinated with the overall reform. As publishing a textbook requires financial resources, the Ministry will need to allocate additional resources; and decisions imply a strong social component. The sustainability of a programme in this area is an issue not to be ignored.

Until 1995 the only provider of textbooks was the state owned publishing company and it is still by far the largest in Croatia (Školska Knjiga). It also supplies dictionaries and many titles in different languages, especially for Bosnia-Herzegovina. New textbooks are developed according to the curriculum approved by the MoES. The publishing house selects the author and provides a concept for Ministry approval. The finished product is then submitted for 3 expert opinions before being released. The publishing house visited by the OECD team is making efforts to find young authors with teaching experience and tests portions of new books in selected schools for teacher and student feedback. In addition it provides teacher manuals in some subjects, but admits that these and student manuals need to be enlarged to cover all subject areas. Some print runs are very small (as low as 200 for some subjects and minority languages) and are, therefore, not profitable for smaller companies. Školska Knjiga works closely with the Institute for Globalisation and Intercultural Learning, a research organisation with foreign expertise that is creating programmes for the region in line with European curriculum development.

The average price range of textbooks is from 20 to 40 HRK, but can be as expensive as 100 HRK. The average cost for parents for school books can vary from 200 to 600 HRK (24 to 48 USD) per student per year which is a large amount for some families to pay.

Important steps are being taken in the field of school libraries and advanced education technologies. In the short term, economies of scale could be an incentive for publishers to print extra textbooks and to place the surplus in school libraries, lowering the costs of textbook replacement, usually a very expensive process. The Ministry will have to decide if it can afford to provide free textbooks to all students. It will also have to pay attention to changes in the system (*i.e.* extending the length of compulsory education) and mobilise additional resources to support this process.

Teacher Policy

As is the case in other countries of the region, neither teacher salaries nor their status is to be envied. Motivation for change tends to be low; but teaching staff represent the principal asset of any education system, and the main route by which reforms are brought into each school. The low social prestige of the profession, manifested by the low salaries, is compounded by the low status accorded to their training. The teacher training colleges visited by the OECD team were even more poorly equipped than the average secondary school, with under-resourced libraries and computer facilities. Teacher education is seen more as a vocational qualification than a higher education specialisation. Therefore, younger people are less interested in entering the profession and there is a risk that Croatia will soon face the problem of an ageing teaching staff.

For the moment, the system of education of Croatia has an adequate supply of teachers and there are no shortages of teaching staff. Most teachers have sufficient qualifications, and the unqualified staff does not exceed 4-5%; however, a shortage of qualified staff in primary schools exists, however in teaching of German (22.11%) and English (16.39%), music (12.20%) and visual arts (10.74%). In secondary schools there is a similar shortage of teachers of German and English as well as teachers of classical languages, Latin and Greek. The staff: teacher ratios range from 10:1 in VET to 15:1 in primary education. The teachers' qualification structure in vocational schools is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5. Teachers in Vocational Education, first half-term 2000/01

Total number of working years	N° OF TEACHERS		BY QUALIFICATIONS					Working hours	
	TOTAL	%	University degree	Non-university study	Post-secondary vocational education	Secondary education	3-year vocational	Full time	Short time
0-5	1 581	23.43	1 062	192	8	317	2	747	834
6-10	986	14.61	741	118	4	121	2	796	190
11-15	1 245	18.45	889	212	28	104	12	705	540
16-20	818	12.12	607	105	32	61	13	734	84
21-25	848	12.56	550	147	51	73	27	781	67
26-30	663	9.82	334	170	69	58	32	616	47
31-35	391	5.79	196	94	55	38	8	368	23
36-40	179	2.65	93	44	18	17	7	172	7
41 and over	38	0.56	11	18	6	3	0	38	0
TOTAL	6 749	100.00	4 483	1 100	271	792	103	4 957	1 792
%	100.00		66.42	16.30	4.02	11.74	1.53	73.45	26.55
INCLUDING									
Vocational education teachers with university degree									
0-5	1 012	22.43	1 011			1		475	537
6-10	739	16.38	730	9				603	136
11-15	895	19.84	882	13				533	362
16-20	616	13.65	607	9				553	63
21-25	563	12.48	544	19				510	53
26-30	359	7.96	333	25		1		328	31
31-35	212	4.70	194	18				196	16
36-40	102	2.26	93	8	1			100	2
41 and over	14	0.31	11	3				14	0
TOTAL	4 512	100.00	4 405	104	1	2	0	3 312	1 200
%	100.00		97.63	2.30	0.02	0.04	0.00	73.40	26.60
Vocational education teachers with non-university degree									
0-5	538	29.10	51	192	7	286	2	251	287
6-10	195	10.55	10	109	3	72	1	143	52
11-15	307	16.60	7	197	25	75	3	132	175
16-20	156	8.44		96	20	38	2	135	21
21-25	211	11.41	6	128	37	37	3	201	10
26-30	233	12.60	1	141	52	31	8	218	15
31-35	134	7.25	2	74	40	17	1	129	5
36-40	55	2.97		35	11	8	1	52	3
41 and over	20	1.08		14	5	1		20	0
TOTAL	1 849	100.00	77	986	200	565	21	1 281	568
%	100.00		4.16	53.33	10.82	30.56	1.14	69.28	30.72

Table 5. Teachers in Vocational Education, first half-term 2000/01 (cont.)

Total number of working years	N° OF TEACHERS		BY QUALIFICATIONS					Working hours	
	TOTAL	%	University degree	Non-university study	Post-secondary vocational education	Secondary education	3-year vocational	Full time	Short time
Teacher assistants for vocational practical teaching									
0-5	31	7.99			1	30		21	10
6-10	52	13.40	1		1	49	1	50	2
11-15	43	11.08		2	3	29	9	40	3
16-20	46	11.86			12	23	11	46	0
21-25	74	19.07			14	36	24	70	4
26-30	71	18.30		4	17	26	24	70	1
31-35	45	11.60		2	15	21	7	43	2
36-40	22	5.67		1	6	9	6	20	2
41 and over	4	1.03		1	1	2		4	0
TOTAL	388	100.00	1	10	70	225	82	364	24
%	100.00		0.26	2.58	18.04.	57.99	21.13	93.81	6.19

Source: Directorate for finance, MoES.

In Croatia, pre-service training is carried out in pedagogical institutes or universities, and students are trained to become teachers of one or two subjects. The pre-service training of teachers is the responsibility of the MoST and higher education institutions. Teachers of primary schools are trained at teachers' colleges, teacher training colleges and teachers' high schools. Teachers of secondary schools are mostly graduates of universities where they receive no special training for the teaching profession; they acquire basic skills through the system of additional training, which is delivered in pedagogical faculties, teacher-training schools and higher teacher-training schools. The MoST sets enrolment quotas and conditions for the teaching profession, yet their dialogue with the main employer – the MoES, which also has a responsibility to set training standards – seems very limited and as a consequence the needs of the labour market are not fully taken into account.

The in-service training of teachers in general subjects is carried out at higher education institutions for specific subjects, and parallel with that, the educational competence is gained. Training is also gained during the probation period that lasts one year and is the school's responsibility (classroom experience under supervision). By the State (Tenure) Examination, within the responsibility of the Bureau for Advancement of Education, the knowledge of teaching methods is tested.

Vocational teachers are classified into three levels – teachers for theoretical subjects (university grade), teachers for practical classes (two-year college or secondary education), and assistants in practical teaching /assistant teachers (secondary education).

Achieving of competence in educational work and teaching methods is carried out through supplemental training (pedagogy, didactics and teaching methods) at pedagogic faculties or teacher training schools.

In-service training is carried out at faculties, higher education institutions and secondary vocational schools, is compulsory by law for all members of educational staff and is provided either at the educational institution level or at the MoES level. In the latter case this is a responsibility of the Institute

for Educational Development of the Ministry and is generally delivered through short and one-off professional meetings. Mainly, the Institute develops programmes for Educational Development. In 1999 more than 35 000 teachers were trained in about 38 subjects, including: entrepreneurial education, informatics (information science) and foreign languages. Attempts by NGOs and donor agencies to provide a more consistent and prolonged in-service training programme for particular categories of teachers are seen as individual training efforts and their results are *not* recognised as formal qualifications. In addition some specialists, such as head teachers, have only limited opportunities for training courses – they do not receive any other specialised training.

Promotion of teachers and educational staff policy has been studied recently by the Croatian authorities. The level of teacher salaries is not a purely economic issue; it has to do with issues like system efficiency, the nature of the work in education and with social and cultural patterns. A special legislative Act set appraisal criteria, taking into account good results of working with students, extracurricular work and professional training. Yet financial incentives for promotion are very small or non-existent; there are only two levels of promotion, and assessment criteria are vaguely defined. The compensation of the teaching profession needs to be merit-based. Present appraisal criteria do not require any formal qualifications or specialised training, though promoted teachers are expected to play new roles in the community, such as mentorship, professional training and pedagogical monitoring.

Issues and barriers in teacher policy

- *Lack of possibilities for the practical conduct of vocational classes.* At present there is little opportunity for a future or practising teacher to learn new methods of teaching or experience interactive learning. Unless college professors themselves possess interactive teaching skills and practice up-to-date teaching methodology, the training of future teachers will not be successful.
- *Un-reformed and outdated pre-service training.* New teaching skills must become available to all future teachers as part of their academic curriculum, but most importantly through much increased, better managed and thoroughly monitored school practice. At present, no attempt is made to compensate for the deficiencies of pre-service training or to significantly improve it.
- *Lack of a holistic vocational pedagogy system at university level.* Teachers and trainers are not exposed to in-company practices and lack the necessary understanding of work processes and new technologies in a quickly changing environment; this results in ‘over-academisation’ of vocational education, removed from the much-changed world of work in Croatia.
- *Low teacher prestige and remuneration.* The average salary is about USD 500 per month but, as the cost of living in Croatia is quite high, this amount represents limited purchasing power.
- *No clearly defined career path for teachers,* and a promotion system that is not linked to any particular training or qualification system facilitating promotion. Performance incentives are absent. As promotion means extra responsibility, it should also imply financial incentives. In the absence of those, teachers will not seek promotion or the upgrading of their skills.

Standards and Quality Assurance

The nature of “an educational standard” and the institution entitled to set standards remains a subject of debate in Croatia. This area will receive special attention from Parliament (the *Sabor*) in the near

future. Standards will ensure equal rights in education, and the same level of resources allocated to each student enrolled at a certain level. Thus, “standards” refer mainly to inputs (equipment, textbooks, facilities etc.) but not (yet) to educational processes and learning outcomes.

Evaluation of educational quality, as a system function, exists in Croatia at both central and regional levels. There are 7 Directorates within The MoES and 5 other regional departments located in Osijek, Rijeka, Split, Varaždin and Zadar. As in other centralised administrations, the accent is put on quality control through inspection. A well-ordered system sets up its control function at the central level and achieves it through an independent body. It also ensures a balance between control and advice, encouraging personal initiatives rather than imposing sanctions.

Examinations are based on teaching (curriculum and teaching procedures) and are set and conducted within the school units. Except for the dual training system, all assessment is school-based; there is no national examination even at the end of primary education. Pupils of the first four grades can pass to the higher grade even with one failing grade. At the end of academic year 1998/99 almost 96% of them achieved passing grades (43% excellent and 33% very good); 3.3% succeeded at make-up exams while 0.6% failed. According to official data, about 98% (by other sources 94%²) of elementary school leavers are continuing on to secondary level. Distribution of students over general or vocational streams at the end of the 8-year primary school curriculum is based on student performance, with its assessment left to the largely arbitrary requirements of receiving schools. Access to gymnasium is regulated through a *numerus clausus*. Candidates who fail in the selection procedure have to choose among the less popular (vocational) programmes.

Success of students in gymnasium and 4-year technical schools is far better (28% excellent and 42% very good) than in other vocational schools. Gymnasium ends with internally prepared and assessed maturity exams (Matura); 4-year technical schools as well as 3-year vocational schools end with an internally prepared and assessed final exam. As for pass rates, 96.1% of students enrolled in gymnasias or 4-year programmes passed the Matura or final exam in the academic year 1998/99, while in 3-year programmes 90.8% of students passed the final exam. The final exam after the 4-year programme can lead to employment in a particular profession with further opportunities of specialisation and professional training, or to continuation in tertiary education, primarily in the same profession. Final exams after the 3-year programme (apprenticeship exam in dual system programmes) is primarily directed at getting employment with opportunities of further professional upgrading and specialisation. It is estimated that only 75% of vocational school students complete secondary education. In addition, of the cohort graduating from gymnasium, about one-third do not continue on to university due to the highly competitive entrance procedures.

There are no national standards or external evaluations or exams, and the results are not used to provide feedback or to adjust curricula or other educational policies. There are few qualified experts to develop tests and to monitor the assessment process. The assessment function is exercised at the local level as an internal responsibility of school units, and not at the central level as it is in many other countries. The assessment function does not adequately reflect all relevant educational inputs (curriculum, textbooks, teacher training, etc.).

Issues and barriers in quality assurance

- *Absence of a coherent quality control function at the central level.* Not only is there no MoES directorate specifically dedicated to the monitoring of quality based on agreed standards, but explicit, standards-based links between the MoES and local inspectorates, and between

2. National Observatory Croatia – *Education and Training Country Report* (Draft), p. 5.

inspectories and local authorities and schools, are missing. The learning assessment system is under-developed, and does not allow the MoES to make valid comparisons between performances of students from one class to another, or among schools or regions, or over time.

- *No semi-independent, national body to oversee quality.* There is no technically competent, professional body to assume responsibility for valid and reliable assessment of learning outcomes across Croatia; evaluation of the quality of student learning is now left to schools, without any attempt to link their performance to national standards or draw conclusions about trends over time.
- *Lack of trained professional specialists in quality monitoring and assessment.* There is an urgent need to set coherent policy objectives and day-to-day operational regulations that form a framework for quality evaluation at all levels of education – central, school, teacher, and student.
- *Weak links between vocational education and practical, real-life work competences and skills.* Assessment in VET does not – with the exception of the dual system – focus on testing students’ ability to act in real-life work situations (competence). There are no designated bodies (independent of the training provider) that have the authority to set the relevant examinations in VET.

Early Childhood Education and Care

In Croatia, out-of-family pre-school education is part of the education system. It provides health protection, nutrition and social care and welfare for children from six months of age until the start of school. However, participation is low at less than 30% of the total pre-school population.

The first institution to accommodate pre-school children was set up in 1872. During the former communist regime there were some initiatives that tried to involve as many actors as possible but the efforts were strictly related to propaganda. One of the first toy-lending services in the region (1976) was *Knjižnica Medveščak*, opened in Zagreb. Although in recent years there has been an increase in the number of pre-school institutions through public and private initiatives (including religious), along with a decrease in the number of children younger than three years old participating in full-day pre-school programmes and an increase in the number of children participating in half-day programmes, the principle of including all pre-school children in suitable programmes has not been fully addressed. Every child should be entitled to organised out-of-family pre-school care and education.

The legal framework for pre-school education was created in 1997 by the Law on Pre-school Upbringing and Education (*Zakon o predškolskom odgoju i naobrazbi*). An early start was made in 1991 by the adoption of the following documents: “Guidelines for Pre-school Children Upbringing and Education Programmes” and “The Proposal for the Concept of Pre-school Education Development”. In Croatia, education and care of children covers several social sectors: education, health and nutrition, and social care and welfare. Several institutions are especially organised and equipped to perform this task. Among them are elementary schools, nursery schools, religious communities, and cultural institutions or trade associations. By law, pre-school education is provided for children from six months of age until the beginning of primary school.

The costs of a child’s kindergarten attendance are partly covered by local authorities (founders) and partly by parents, depending on family income. However, local government funding is not assured in all regions, which means that in many cases educational services are unequally allocated. The cost of nursery schools has grown while many pre-school programmes that have been free for a long time ceased to be such, and thus have become inaccessible to children from low-income families. Short programmes

conducted in different institutions are very often free of charge, which makes them accessible to all children. One of the problems is that large urban areas offer a much wider variety of pre-school programmes than small towns and villages. In big cities there are long waiting lists due to lack of space, while in the smaller communities, along with a lack of understanding about the care of children, economic difficulties do not allow any extension of the kindergarten network.

There are different kinds of pre-school programmes currently operating in Croatia: fundamental primary programmes, alternative programmes, pre-school preparation for primary school, and part-time programmes. The conditions for poorer parents to have their children participate in out-of-family education still do not exist in practice; this is of particular concern to the team, because it is exactly *those* children who are also most at risk of poor nutrition, poor health care, and poor housing.

The fundamental pre-school programmes are conducted in nursery schools especially designed for working parents so that children from as young as 6 months until school age are included. These are Monday to Friday programmes, usually a full day with two basic organisational formats – infant nursery (for children from 6 months to age 3) and nursery school (from 3 years to school starting age). The goals and tasks are directed to the stimulation and development of the child's whole actual and potential capacities; it is a comprehensive approach.

The alternative pre-school programmes differ from the fundamental or traditional Croatian programmes in that they were developed in other countries and were introduced into the Croatian system as complex and closed models. The most prevalent of these are the Waldorf Kindergartens and the Montessori Nursery Schools. The importance of these programmes is mainly that they are examples of private initiatives, and provide choice of conceptually different programmes and meet some of the special needs of pre-school children and their families.

Pre-school preparation for the school programme (the year before primary school entrance) has been in place since the 1970s (when it was called "little school"). Such programmes provide 150 hours of tuition per year and have clearly defined goals, tasks, content and organisational conditions for work. However, this programme has not achieved its main goal – to include all children in the year before they start school in an organised, out-of-family programme. In the Law on Pre-school Upbringing the Education this programme (*i.e.* the out-of-family programme) was renamed "Pre-school" and raised to the level of public need, which in turn requires that the government provide the conditions for its implementation. Pursuant to the proposal for discussion "The Basis for Education System Organisation in the Republic of Croatia" prepared by the MoES – Council of Education (June 2000) – by the year 2010, "one year of pre-school upbringing would be compulsory for all children aged 5 to 6 years".

Part-time programmes are those designed for pre-school children that are carried out continually every day or a few times a week for an hour or two (*i.e.* lasting shorter daily than full day pre-school programme or conducted a few times a week). Such part-time programmes have different goals and content. They are implemented in nursery schools but beyond the full-day or half day nursery school programme. In nursery schools these programmes are in the afternoon and are available to children who are not the users of the primary programme. In other institutions such as libraries, community centres, and sport centres, these programmes are open to all children whether or not they are enrolled in the primary programme. In recent years, private initiative has started programmes in foreign languages, dancing, etc. There are also a number of part-time programmes (such as play-workshops) for refugee children.

In recent years a number of educational programmes have been supplemented with sport, music, foreign languages, art, etc. These programmes have a great impact on developing each child's individuality and supporting family needs. One of the strong points of the system is that the programmes are part of the Government strategy in this area. They are made accountable and permanently evaluated by programme managers through annual reports. The policy documents have enabled qualitative changes with respect to

democratisation and pluralism. Programmes like: *Montessori Method*, *Head Start Programme*, *Reggio Emilia Programme* etc. were introduced in different regions as pilot programmes and are now extended. There are mainly two approaches: one related to an extension of a specific subject area (*i.e.* sport, music, foreign language), the other one through structured activities (workshops) for groups of children.

Ethnic communities and national minorities have specially organised kindergartens or groups. The most numerous are those of the Italian national minority (28 groups) in Istria County (connected to the Italian primary schools), the Czech minority in Bjelovar-Bilogora County (6 groups) in Daruvar and Končanica. The Hungarian minority has one kindergarten group in Zagreb, one in Bilje and one in Osijek. The German national minority has a kindergarten in Osijek. There are two groups organised in Čakovec for the children of the Roma ethnic community, while the Roma Union in Zagreb serves groups of children from the ages of 2 to 15. The humanitarian association “*Djeca prva*” organises play groups for 100 children of the Roma ethnic group of pre-school and early school age, integrated with the children of other nationalities and with mothers participating in the programme. Furthermore, after the reintegration of the Croatian part of the Danube region, six kindergarten groups were organised for children of the Serb minority in Vukovar, Borovo Naselje, Trpinja and Beli Manastir.

The current legal climate, along with the long tradition of pre-school education, a great number of academically educated experts involved in the creation and implementation of pre-school programmes provide solid grounds for raising the quality and scope of early childhood development and care in Croatia. Pre-school professionals are highly motivated, and cases of good practice are shared through exchange of expertise during seminars; these have served to fill the gaps in the resources of the Institute for Educational Development to provide more in-service training and include more participants in the field. The abandonment of the traditional didactic and school oriented pre-school education and introduction of a child-centred approach are positive developments.

Several kindergartens manage multiple facilities which can substantially lower costs. One such establishment visited by the team consisted of 3 schools under the same director. These schools each had their own teaching and support staff, but shared a pedagogical specialist, psychologist and special needs specialist. In addition, the main school’s kitchen provided all the meals. This system appears to be efficient and is one that would merit further study as an option for other countries of the region.

Issues and barriers in early childhood education and care

- *Lack of standards and textbooks; shortage of material resources and insufficient support from the Ministry or local authorities.* Many programmes continue to work only as a result of the commitment of programme managers.
- *Insufficient access.* The cost of nursery schools has risen; many pre-school programmes which used to be free of charge are no longer so, and thus many children from low-income families cannot participate.
- *A need for greater public awareness.* Programmes which would increase society’s awareness of the importance of early childhood development do not exist in Croatia. Actions for strengthening that awareness might, via the media or various events, mobilise the groups whose primary personal or professional interest is not in early development but who could contribute to the quality of early childhood care (students, politicians, journalists, lawyers, artists, tax payers and others).

Vocational Education and Training

Vocational education is organised in 3- and 4-year educational programmes. There are also special programmes for under-qualified workers or for students with special needs. A characteristic of the vocational education and training system in Croatia is the existence of a “dual system” of schooling with work placement. The main structure is as follows:

4-year qualification (**A** programmes); 3-year secondary qualification can be for professions in industry and trade (**B** programmes), and in crafts (**C** or **VOB** programmes); 1 to 2 year-qualification (**D** programmes). In addition, there are programmes for children with special needs, handicapped and disabled children (**TES** programmes). All programmes consist of a common general core, a common vocational core (for related specialisations or qualifications), and an optional part closely linked with the choice of specialisation. In some educational areas students can choose optional programmes even within a specific profession.

Four-year vocational programmes provide the opportunity for students to continue education at 2-year and 4-year colleges, while others have to attend an additional year before they can continue their education. Four-year technical programmes are the most popular, and more than 41% of secondary school pupils enrol in these. Industrial and craftsmanship schools are attended by 32.7% of the pupils.

The “dual system” – a 3-year educational programme – was introduced on an experimental basis in 1996 and now exists for 55 trades within the crafts sector. Within the dual system, crafts businesses provide the practical parts of training, while the schools are in charge of general education and vocational theory subjects. The attractiveness of this education path amongst students did not, however, live up to expectations. Employers currently offer more places than there are students willing to fill them.

Vocational schools serve (almost all of the listed) 438 specialisations in 31 vocational areas, from agriculture to services. The curriculum was first published between 1991-1994 and revised 1996-1998; however, a large part of the published programmes is based on programmes written earlier (between 1991 and 1994). It consists of core programmes, common vocational core programmes and an optional part. In the meantime, together with the development of technology, some significant changes in the structure of trade in the Republic of Croatia have taken place. Therefore, there is no longer a need for the majority of the listed specialisations. As in the entire vocational system, the concept of “core competences” is still presented in a subject-by-subject approach, without steering curriculum design towards the development of less subject-specific skills, competences and attitudes. In the absence of appropriate information from the labour market, there is a need to re-think the length and breadth of occupational preparation and the opportunities for students to move from one stream to another or to combine specialisations.

Knowledge and skills acquired in vocational education programmes need a broad theoretical and practical foundation which provides a flexible, adaptable education so that young people can qualify for jobs offered by today’s labour market. Youth unemployment (15-25 years of age) is already high (45.5% of those registered unemployed in 1999 fell into the 15-29 age bracket). This rate is expected to rise further if VET is not changed and job prospects deteriorate further. More promising in terms of higher employability of graduates are the broader-based ‘technician’ occupations provided through the 4-year technical education programmes, as well as the dual training programme where vocational theory and practice form part of an integrated curriculum.

Due to its poor image, it has been difficult, over many years, to recruit teachers and trainers into the VET system; this has resulted in poor selection of teachers. Currently, however, the situation is extremely good due to the surplus of personnel in the economy and the pressure for their employment in schools.

There are four different types of teachers in vocational schools; and the differences are significant. Teachers of *general* educational subjects are educated in the universities and highly specialised (as a rule, 4 years of study in one or two subjects). There are more women than men, and they usually teach only one subject. They have, parallel to their subject, read pedagogy at the university. *Vocational subject theory* teachers compose a middle group: they have a technical education. *e.g.* as graduate engineers (B. Eng.), and have, as a rule, in the first year after their recruitment at a school, taken additional in-service training courses in pedagogy, psychology, didactics and teaching methods from the university. *Practical* subject teachers are engineers, while *assistant teachers in practical teaching* have completed secondary vocational education and are obliged to pass the examination in psychology, pedagogy, didactics and teaching methods in vocational classes for supplementary education. A large group of instructors/supervisors in companies have no pedagogical qualifications at all. However, training for practice trainers within the dual training system, especially in connection with the newly introduced curricula, is provided to the fullest extent possible by the Chamber of Crafts.

The rapid restructuring of the Croatian economy, with the decline of large state enterprises following privatisation and the after-effects of the war, have had substantial adverse effects on links between industry and vocational schools. Vocational schools have not adjusted quickly enough to the changes and to the needs of small and medium sized businesses. There must now be a determined attempt to restructure the vocational schools, concentrating on quality (and possibly reducing the number), with a decentralised and far less specialised approach to curriculum, and securing full involvement of industry and commerce in localities.

Issues and barriers in VET

- *Poor relationships at the interface between VET and the economy.* Social partners have little influence on educational policy making; yet vocational schools – more than general schools – must relate closely with their local environment if young school leavers are to find employment.
- *Lack of structure in teacher training.* For teachers and trainers in both the initial and continuing VET systems, both pre- and in-service training are un-coordinated and inconsistent. Trainee teachers are not exposed to in-company practices and lack the necessary understanding of work processes and new technologies. The poor qualifications of both teachers and practical training instructors in school workshops and companies (with the exception of some trainers in the dual system) are a serious barrier to the development of a revitalised Croatian VET system.
- *Social partnerships deserve more attention.* The absence of (local) stakeholders from both the development and delivery of vocational education and training must be overcome. Today, links to local enterprises or institutions are, except for the dual system programmes, based on rather informal arrangements. In addition, poor economic conditions, as well as the lack of financial or development support from the MoES, have put constraints on the further expansion of the dual training system.

Table 6. Vocational educational fields and number of programmes at the beginning of the academic year 1998/99

Educational field	Number of programmes						Total
	A	B	C	VOB	D	TES	
Mechanical engineering	11	15	16	16	1	10	69
Shipbuilding engineering	1	4	-	3	8	-	16
Metallurgy	1	4	3	3	2	-	13
Electrotechnics & Electrical engineering	10	4	4	4	2	1	25
Geology, mining, oil	4	4	-	-	4	-	12
Economy and trade	4	1	-	1	-	5	11
Catering and tourism	2	4	-	2	4	4	16
Agriculture	3	6	-	-	1	5	15
Food processing	1	7	4	4	-	4	20
Veterinary	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Forestry	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Wood processing	1	-	8	3	1	7	14
Civil engineering, surveying, construction materials	6	14	5	4	7	3	39
Road transport	1	2	-	-	-	-	3
Domestic transport	1	1	-	-	1	-	2
Marine, river and port	5	2	-	-	3	-	10
Postal communications	1	1	-	-	-	1	3
Air transport	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Rail transport	7	7	-	-	-	-	14
Chemical technology	2	4	3	-	2	-	11
Graphics	6	5	12	-	-	7	30
Textile	5	7	3	5	1	7	28
Leather processing	2	-	3	1	2	9	17
Health	7	-	-	-	1	-	8
Personal services	-	-	3	4	-	-	7
Other services	-	-	7	6	3	5	21
Optics and glass processing	1	-	2	2	1	-	6
Internal affairs and protection	3	1	-	-	4	-	8
Total	88	93	73	58	48	68	428

Source: "Where, how, why secondary vocational school?" Ministry of Education and Sports, Zagreb, 1998.

- *Lack of social esteem for the value of VET education.* Attendance at and completion of vocational education can be perceived as resulting in second-rate and lower qualifications. Students are channelled early into this type of education, but many parents and students see it as a “second choice” for those who “fail” to enter general secondary education. Nor is the system well matched with the demands of Croatia’s new labour market: youth unemployment is very high, and many youngsters are unable to find work in their (often out-dated) specialised field.

Higher Education

This sector of the system is the responsibility of the MoST. At the national level, important policy matters are also discussed at the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) that comprises representatives of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the MoST and other state institutions. There appears to be little or no contact on strategy between the two ministries. At the institutional level, a working group already functions but the effects on the system have yet to be seen. HEIs are nominally autonomous since the control function belongs to the MoST. Staff is appointed by the MoST, and the financial resources for each university faculty come directly from the MoST. Therefore, true institutional autonomy is a questionable issue, and modern management practices are lacking. As a result, a university encounters many constraints in pursuing its own policy. (In Croatia, the Higher Education system suffers from centralised management, although in some other countries HE was the pioneer in decentralisation.)

It is generally accepted that the Higher Education Act of 1994 did not provide a balanced framework for reforms in the system. Many aspects are hardly mentioned in the policy documents (*e.g.* continuing education, post-secondary education, lifelong learning). New legislation proposed by the MoST is currently under consideration. The new document envisions serious changes in a number of important areas, such as the autonomy of HEIs, the introduction of an improved quality assurance system, more effective internal management, new procedures for the development of academic programmes and curricula, introduction of financing linked to performance criteria, and other features. The draft Law provides for a much-reduced role of the state in the management of HEIs as well as in academic matters. The legislation underlines also a strong role of market forces in the funding of HEIs and their overall operation. The management of the HEIs, as well as academia in general, are opposed to a number of the provisions in the proposed legislation.

The funding mechanisms in the higher education system are quite centralised and ineffective. The faculties of universities are financed directly from the MoST. The central university management does not possess the financial leverage to influence the activities of faculties. Moreover, the funding mechanisms tend to be bureaucratic because the budget is not provided as a lump sum, and separate applications to the Ministry are made for financing individual activities. In the proposed new legislation, the funding mechanisms are much simplified and involve transfers of lump sums to the central university management.

The higher education system of Croatia comprises 4 universities and 16 polytechnics (colleges). The University of Zagreb is the biggest in the country with 32 faculties and over 60 000 students. However, the concept of ‘higher professional schools’ (*visoke strucne škole*), introduced as a parallel system to the universities in 1998, is not clearly understood by parents and students and should be analysed more carefully in the forthcoming years as an alternative tertiary education option. There is a considerable degree of “federalism” in Croatian universities with far reaching independence in financing and academic matters of the faculties, which are independent legal subjects. The Higher Education Act of 1994 introduced also the Master’s degree in university studies.

The establishment of non-university higher education studies in 1998, and three levels of degrees into university studies, have been very positive developments. The flexibility of the system to respond to

the needs of people and also to market demands has been much improved. At present, there are no private universities in Croatia though the current legislation provides for the establishment of non-state universities and colleges. In recent years the National Council for Higher Education turned down several proposals, but four private colleges have been founded. Under the proposed new legislation, a more liberal procedure for establishing private HEIs is envisaged.

The number of academic staff in Croatian HEIs is 7 563 (5 871 in universities and 1 692 in other HEIs). The student/teacher ratio in universities is 12:1 and in state colleges 16:1. The respective ratio in private colleges is 7.2:1. Under legislative provisions, academic staff are appointed on 5-year contracts. Following an evaluation procedure and re-election in faculties, the contracts can be renewed. The renewal of contracts is based on assessment of teaching and research activities. In spite of these provisions, no lecturer has to date been relieved of his position on the basis of the evaluation results. Because of the economic pressures in recent years, many academics have accepted additional lecturing work, mostly in other HEIs. With so many lecturing duties, the time left for concentrated research activities is quite limited and funding of research activities of academic staff in HEIs is also very limited. The MoST awards grants on a competitive basis, but in financial term these grants are so small that the researchers are not very interested in applying. Therefore it is inevitable that the quality of both teaching and research has suffered.

The educational content of academic programmes in Croatian HEIs has been thoroughly updated during the past decade. The changes have been most comprehensive in the social sciences and humanities. Diversification of higher education is an important feature of the reforms in the sector, and college-level education has been introduced as well as the three-degree levels in universities. New curricula have been developed for the non-university higher education sector, as well as for most university studies. Some universities have also introduced college-level studies. With these developments, the issues of quality assurance for the different levels of education have become a priority.

During the 1990s the proportion of secondary school leavers who continued on to tertiary education increased by more than 35%. Still, about one-third of general secondary school leavers do not continue on to higher education. Candidates have to fulfil general requirements *and* to pass an entrance examination, organised by the higher education institutions or faculties themselves. The procedure is highly selective, but even so almost one-third (31.3%) of the relevant age cohort enrolled in university or non-university programmes in the academic year 1999/2000. The majority of these (73%) study at one of the four state universities. Admission to HEIs is based on the results of entrance examinations plus, with less weight, the secondary school diploma. The introduction of a national Matura examination to replace the entrance examinations is currently being discussed. However, a coherent policy on the issue has not yet been adopted and HEIs are, in general, opposed to admission based solely on the results of national examinations. This is partly because they fear their autonomy in selection will be curtailed – but also partly because there is now a flourishing (and lucrative) private tutoring system preparing secondary school students for university entrance examinations.

There are two categories of students in Croatian HEIs: students whose expenses are covered by the state, and students who pay tuition fees. The typical fees range from USD 250 to USD 1 000 per academic year for different fields of studies. Currently about 40% of students pay for their studies. The income from tuition fees forms a substantial part of the budgets of HEIs. (Approximately 50% of the annual budget of the University of Zagreb comes from this source.)

Issues and barriers in higher education

- *The co-ordination between MoES and MoST, formally separated several years ago, is not always at an adequate level. A number of outstanding issues would benefit from coherent*

policies at the national level, for example joint development of new curricula, pre-service and in-service teacher training, admission to higher education, and other issues.

- *The internal management structure of HEIs*, with highly independent faculties, is a serious barrier to the development of clear positions of the whole sector with regard to important developments of the system: new legislation, changes in the funding mechanisms, etc.
- *The issue of centralisation is important in two other areas*. One is higher education where, although the institutions are nominally autonomous, control lies very much with the MoST. It appoints staff and provides finance to individual faculties rather than to the university itself. It is, therefore, difficult for the university (as a whole, rather than as a conglomeration of independent faculties) to pursue coherent institutional policies. The proposed legislation may alleviate these problems, especially the funding issue, as well as providing for an improved quality assurance system.
- *Under the current centralised system of financing, university management does not have powers to implement coherent institutional policies*. In effect, the central university management – the Rector and the Academic Senate – has little influence on the overall development of the university as a healthy and thriving institution. There are many examples of overlap of departments in different faculties. The current organisational structure also imposes barriers to interdisciplinary studies.
- *There is an over-emphasis on the introduction of “market” mechanisms in the higher education system*. Market needs and demands should, certainly, influence the number of students in different fields, the level of education obtained, and the skills and competences acquired. However, the overall funding of HEIs should depend on criteria such as quality of education, achievements in research, diversity of educational services offered, and other factors, rather than trying to respond to an ever-fluctuating “market” of popular or less popular disciplines at any given time.

Recommendations

Recommendations: Policy and management

The Government should define *a strategic vision* of education, based on a consistent approach to the reform which can allow the definition of further policy objectives. Opportunity costs of alternative policies and actions are needed.

- *At the central level, the players (ministries) should prioritise their reform actions*. The most urgent needs are: to set up a national assessment institution at the pre-tertiary level; to restructure (secondary) vocational education; and to clearly define the institutional autonomy at the tertiary level. Overall, there is an urgent need to strengthen the central government’s role in setting policies and priorities, while reducing its involvement in “managing” detailed processes and regulations at lower levels.
- *The issue of decentralisation should be addressed as an instrument used to achieve certain goals*. Some functions of the system should remain or set up at the central level (i.e. quality control and setting of standards of knowledge or competencies) while many others need to be steadily transferred to the local level (e.g. school management and curriculum development).

There is a need to increase the authority of local government and school directors in management of service delivery.

- *Both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology should use detailed data analyses to design its policy and for operational decisions. Policy and decision-making that are not based on real data and feedback from the system may be detrimental. Information systems need to be put in place within the education system and beyond, which will allow effective planning and delivery of desired objectives.*
- *The country will need to call for external assistance, as there are many areas in which local resources are insufficient or missing. There should be stronger coherence between the various projects and programmes already developed, and those that will receive external assistance in the future.*
- *There should be a consistent approach across all government departments to reform in the education system, covering not only schools but also higher education, post-secondary education, continuing education and lifelong learning.*
- *The Government should produce a document building on work already in hand setting out the vision of the future of education in Croatia and how it relates to the future of the economy and society, and, following that, an “action list” of next steps in the short and medium term. This document should follow extensive consultation and public discussion of the kind that took place about reform of the school system.*
- *There should be a clear definition in legislation of the respective responsibilities of the Government and localities in the context of decentralisation, and of the social partners and other stakeholders at the different levels. There must be clear agreement about this allocation of responsibilities at all levels. It could be useful to conduct a review of the roles and responsibilities of central, regional and local authorities for policy development, provision and financing of education.*
- *The proposed legislation on higher education should strengthen the autonomy of both the institutions and the universities, as distinct from the faculties, through amendment of the financing and control mechanisms. It should put in place effective monitoring and quality control systems and measures to guarantee accountability.*
- *The capacity-building requirements of the various partners should be identified, and ways found to improve the ability of those at the centre and in the regions to undertake their responsibilities. This is an area where international expertise and donor funding could be effectively deployed.*

Recommendations: Curriculum, standards and assessment

- *The principles behind centralised curriculum design should be the production of a framework and subsidiaries. The centre should be responsible for the process of curriculum design on different administrative levels; for the collection and dissemination of curriculum-related information; for understanding the needs of societal development, and translating those that are retained into educational policies. At present, the most important basic and new skills could include: languages, computer-use, communication skills, problem solving capacity, teamwork and project orientation.*

- *An Advisory Group should be established to set the framework for the core curriculum, and new examinations linked to curriculum standards. This Group should also agree upon the objectives for a core curriculum that promotes skills and facilitates active learning. Textbooks and instructional materials should be revised and adapted to reflect the requirements and standards of the core curriculum. Teacher training policies and practices should also be adjusted, to reflect the core curriculum and assessment standards, and school units should have more authority to adapt the core curriculum and teaching programmes to local needs.*
- *Assessment standards (in terms of standards-linked learning outcomes) are urgently needed. The quality control function should be transferred where it belongs: i.e. at the central level. A national Quality Monitoring and Assessment Board should be established to be responsible for evaluation of student, teacher, school and regional performances. Its aim would be to define policy in the field of evaluation, to set standards and to organise regular monitoring and assessment activities. It would also develop the general framework for the introduction of standard examinations at the end of compulsory and secondary education, in collaboration with the universities.*

Recommendations: Financing

- *New proposals for a per-capita funding formula should be developed. A new budgetary allocation mechanism based on number of students (weighted as necessary for special characteristics of a school or institution) and allocated through block grants should be piloted at the regional level.*
- *A new framework for diversifying financing sources should be set up, including incentives for private participation in funding education. This could include user fees in tertiary education and training, with scholarships schemes for poorer students.*
- *The current geographical allocation of public education spending should be addressed through formulae that will compensate for inequities. The new allocation models will have to increase available resources and allocate public funds more efficiently as well as more equitably.*

Recommendations: Teachers

- *An institutional framework is needed for teacher training. The MoES will need to set up regional centres for professional development. The process should be decentralised, and enlarged by participation of semi-independent or non-governmental training providers. One of the options could be to organise distance in-service training for teachers. Other areas should be addressed through training programmes, some of them very important for school principals (e.g. education management, school administration, financing).*
- *The existing pre-service teacher training system should be restructured to avoid differences in the status of class and subject teachers, and to enhance the acquisition of modern teaching skills. Teaching skills training should be made available to all future teachers, irrespective of the educational institution from which they graduate. Most importantly, there should be adequate facilities for school and classroom practice: sufficient time, well trained mentors, and proper guidance and feedback. The reform architects may wish to look at neighbouring countries that have recently restructured their teacher training systems.*

- *A consistent in-service teacher training system should be put in place.* It should be based on a thorough needs analysis, and, in addition to resources available under the previous system, extra funding should be allocated. We recommend that funding go to the schools themselves; that schools be encouraged to arrange for whole-school, school-based training rather than sending staff to seminars; and that – instead of one single provider – schools should be able to choose from a number of providers, if necessary based on a list of high quality “approved” providers compiled by the MoES. The state should set goals and targets for training, and define objectives for key cohorts of trainees. These goals can be defined in a dialogue between the policy-making state organisations, relevant NGOs, and the broader professional community. Providers can then compete to develop courses relevant to the goals and objectives set.
- *Training head teachers is exceedingly important for the success of the reform.* The scope of competencies they require is changing dramatically as the system decentralises. Once relevant in-service training becomes available, merit-based selection of new head teachers would become a reality. In order to achieve site-based changes, school managers should be trained together with their teams, and school-based project implementation should be seen as an integral part and an ultimate success indicator of the training scheme.
- *Professionalism and prestige of the teaching profession must be improved* in order to attract a new generation of qualified teachers. A differentiated scale of salaries with clearly defined grades should be introduced, to provide career incentives and accountability in the system. Appraisal criteria should be defined in a dialogue between teachers and their employers, and should be performance-based, fair, easy to interpret, and aimed at the improvement of student learning (not merely the improvement of teaching techniques). The qualifications required to move up the scale should become available through the new in-service training system, which will become competence-based, rather than knowledge-based.

Recommendations: Early childhood education

- *Greater attention must be paid to early childhood development,* because the number of families with both parents working and the number of single-parent families is rising. Kindergarten capacity should be increased urgently, so that more children can not only participate in some type of pre-school programme, but also have more choice in the kind of programme (*i.e.* duration, time, place and purpose) that suits them and their families best. In this respect, incentives (*e.g.* tax benefits) need to be found to stimulate private investment in both public and private pre-school education.
- *The success of any early development programme depends on the active involvement of parents.* It is, therefore, important to ensure the development of partnerships between kindergartens, families and the local community. The competence and confidence of parents need to be strengthened, in order to raise the quality of early childhood development through joint programmes for children and parents. These programmes should aim to strengthen the parents’ sensitivity to the characteristics of early childhood and increase their active participation in their child’s development.
- *As pre-school education is not compulsory,* and children will therefore attend for differing periods of time (from one to four years), it is impossible for them to achieve the same results. Pre-school programmes should therefore be individualised as much as possible. In order to create a network of pre-school programmes attempting to satisfy the developmental needs of

children, the co-operation of state and social institutions, government and non-governmental organisations, public and private institutions, and the family, is necessary.

- *Family centres can serve to meet this need.* These should not be “market-based”, but should depend on social and community needs and priorities. Trained volunteers could help. Family centres could play a major role in integrating the numerous programmes designed for children and their parents, as well as detect, recognise and satisfy local needs for childcare and stimulate early childhood development.
- *Local communities need to be mobilised to promote the quality of early childhood education.* Social awareness of the importance of early childhood development needs to be strengthened, along with knowledge about the decisive role adults play in the child’s development. Such awareness could be accomplished through the co-operation of the media and the publication of leaflets and posters.
- *Procedures need to be developed to monitor individual abilities* (such as the verbal, cognitive and emotional status) of children against their chronological age, especially during the proposed compulsory (by the year 2010) year of pre-school for all 5-6 year olds. Careful monitoring of “school-readiness” should help children adapt more smoothly to the first grade of primary school. It will also help identify, as early as possible, learning difficulties or social or behavioural problems that could hamper a child’s school success.

Recommendations: Vocational education

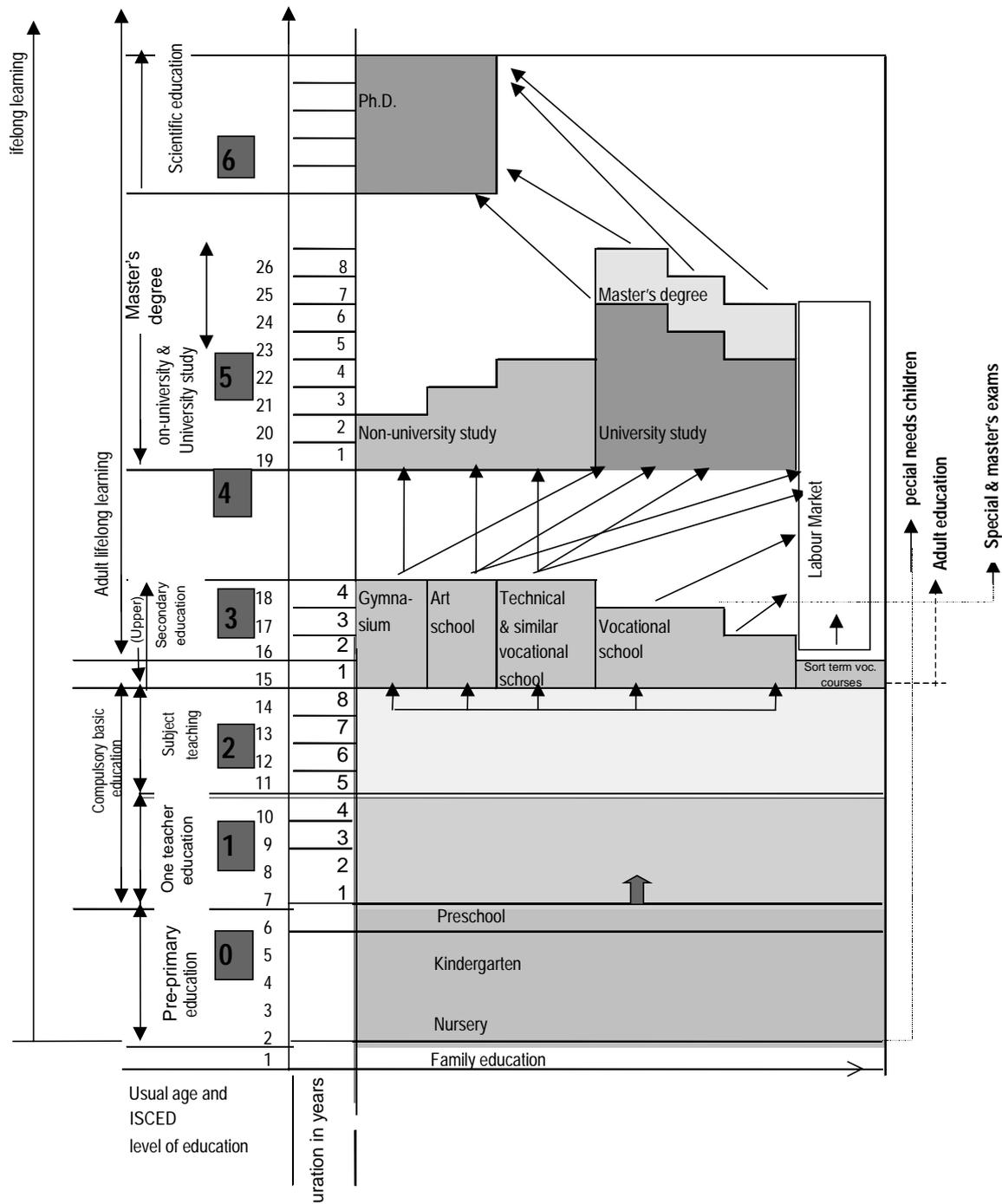
- *The creation of effective and competent partnerships at all levels* will be particularly important to help vocational education and training reform. Structured labour market information will contribute to assessing the effectiveness of the current system, and help vocational education planners to respond.
- *Modern production concepts and types of work organisation require broadly skilled and highly competent people* who are able to take initiative, act in a self-guided way and continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills. The modern approach to vocational education and training implies a broad and comprehensive occupational preparation, where – besides technical and technological skills – emphasis is put on the development of key social and methodological competences.
- *Three perspectives may guide the overhaul of the national system of vocational qualifications, curricula, assessment and certification in Croatia, which include lifelong learning, integration of work and learning, and entrepreneurship.*
- *Curriculum reform needs a number of adequately resourced central support institutions in Croatia.* These include structures for organising social dialogue, analysing skill requirements of the labour market, reviewing and registering qualification standards, approving curricula, setting and administering examinations, and providing various kinds of training.
- *With a view to both capitalising on existing experience and increasing ownership,* teachers need to be systematically involved in the design of reforms and related action plans. Large-scale awareness-raising and guided learning processes (mentoring) of local actors will be needed to develop sustainable national solutions and implement them effectively.

- *An overhaul of the pre-service teachers' and trainers' training systems* based on the creation of a holistic vocational pedagogy system at university level. Likewise, the necessary in-service training infrastructure (facilities, programmes and staff) in VET has to be built up and cascading training efforts be undertaken to trigger off and underpin the reform process.
- *Special emphasis in the training of teachers and trainers in VET* has to be laid on, among others, work process knowledge and technical/technological skills, practical techniques of curriculum development in response to labour market change, state-of-the-art presentation skills, techniques of supporting the learner, the design and use of new learning aids and equipment, as well as coaching/mentoring during daily teaching practice (for teacher mentors).
- *School managers need technical training in financial planning and management*, democratic leadership, concepts to promote pedagogical innovation and monitor quality at school, regional networking, as well as project design, selection, contracting, monitoring and evaluation.

Recommendations: Higher education

- *The autonomy of HEIs needs to be strengthened* through changes in legislation. The state, however, should preserve its capacity to oversee the efficiency of public spending in the system, the quality of education and research, and to hold the HEIs publicly accountable for the quality of services they provide.
- *The envisaged changes in funding mechanisms for HEIs should be supported*. International experience shows that the transfer of lump sums to the central university management, rather than to faculties, contributes to more efficient operations. Balanced internal funding procedures should be developed to account for the autonomy of individual faculties, and – overall – for efficient spending.
- *A national agency for evaluation and accreditation has been adopted* in many countries as an effective way to hold HEIs publicly accountable for their activities, especially for the quality of teaching and research. Internal quality assessment and assurance systems within HEIs can be stipulated in the new legislation, and in the statutes of HEIs.
- *The proposals for broad introduction of 'market mechanisms' in the higher education system* may be counter-productive at present. Introducing tuition fees for all students may have negative effects on important issues, such as equity of access to higher education; balanced funding of different fields of studies to reflect longer-term needs of the country, as well as on the overall harmonic development of the HEIs themselves.
- *A student loan system, envisaged in the proposed higher education legislation*, should be introduced gradually with intermediate assessment of results. The student stipends remain essential for socially and economically disadvantaged families, and might be preserved for some categories of students.

Figure 1. Education System in Croatia



Source: Ministry for Education and Sports.

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