

Education System of the Czech Republic

Basic facts about the country

Population:	10,2 million
Area:	78 864 km ²
Density of population:	130 inhabitants per km ²
GDP per capita (PPS):	13 300 EUR (2001)
Structure of employment:	agriculture 4,7 % (2001) industry 40,6 % (2001) services 54,6 % (2001)
Unemployment rate:	8,7 % (June 2002)
Public expenditure on education:	4,5 % (2001)
Participation in education (2001):	

Age	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
%	100	99,8	92,6	72	47,8	28,1	20,3	18,8	15,6	10,8	7,1	5

Pre-school education

Nursery school (*mateřská škola*) is part of the education system. The basic age group is from 3 to 6. Although attendance is not compulsory, it includes 86 % of the age group. The majority of schools are free but parents can be asked to pay a maximum of 30 % of the running costs.

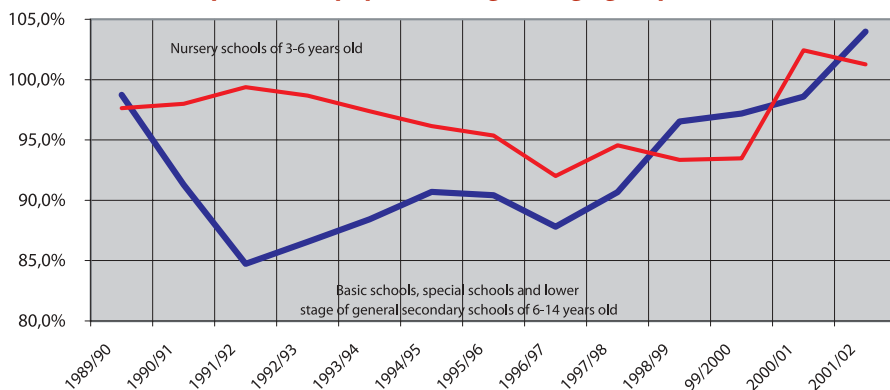
Compulsory education

School attendance has been compulsory since 1774. It lasts for a period of 9 years, usually from the ages of 6 to 15, mostly at the basic school (*základní škola*). Catchment areas are defined, but the choice of school is free. Pupils can leave a basic school at the end of the 5th year for an eight year gymnázium or at the end of the 7th year for a six year gymnázium after passing the entrance examination set by the school.

The school year begins on 1st September and ends on 31st August of the following year. Lessons of 45 minutes are spread over 5 days a week. There are 22-25 lessons in a week in the first stage (year 1-5), 27-30 lessons in the second stage (year 6-9). The teacher-pupil ratio was 1:15.2 in 2001/2002, the average class size was 21.7 pupils. The coeducational classes are made up of pupils of the same age. At the first stage, all subjects are taught by the same teacher, while at the second stage teachers usually specialise in two subjects.

The national teaching standards authority sets the objectives and the basic curriculum. To achieve them, various educational programmes can be employed when approved. There are three national programmes. Each establishment is free to use teaching methods and textbooks (from a list approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports). Pupils are assessed (by teachers) on the basis of written and oral performance (and homework) and classified on a scale of 1 to 5. Continuous assessment is summarised in a report at the end of each semester. Verbal assessment is authorised at the first stage of basic school. This kind of assessment is used by 8 % of teachers. Meetings with parents are organised to discuss the progress made by their children. Pupils demonstrating learning difficulties have to repeat the year. The drop out rate is 0.78 %.

Proportion of pupils of the given age group in %



Source: Institute for Information on Education, Czech Statistical Office

An overlap of 100% is caused by postponement of compulsory school attendance, attendance of nursery schools by children younger than 3 years and repetition of grades in basic schools.

Secondary education

There are three main types of secondary schools in the Czech Republic: general secondary school (*gymnázium*), secondary technical school (*střední odborná škola – SOŠ*) and secondary vocational school (*střední odborné učiliště – SOU*). A prerequisite for acceptance is successful completion of a compulsory education and successful meeting of the entrance requirements. The headmaster decides to accept some applicants without an entrance exam and to set the content of the exam.

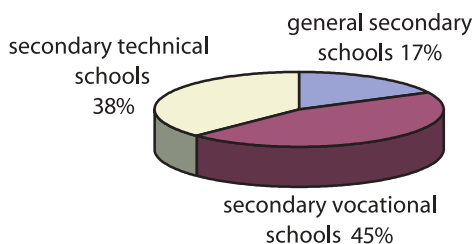
Gymnázium (ISCED 3A) provides a general, academic education. Its main aim is to prepare students for university studies. The duration is 4 years after 9 years of basic school, although there are also other types of gymnázium (see above). At the end of their time at the gymnázium students take a final exam (*maturita*). 17.4 % of young people entering all types of secondary schools at the age of 15 enrol in a gymnázium. Besides that 7.95 % of the population group is enrolled in the gymnázium at a lower age. There are 346 schools of this type (nearly 1/5 of them are private ones).

A secondary technical school (ISCED 3A, B) usually provides a complete secondary vocational education which takes 4 years and concludes with a final exam (*maturita*) and sometimes also lower-level secondary vocational education (2- or 3-year courses). The school prepares students for technical work in one of about 260 branches. About 40 % of teaching time is devoted to general education and 60 % to vocational technical education. Practical lessons are taught in laboratories and workshops at schools. 37.5 % of youth enters this type of upper secondary school and this proportion is increasing. The number of these schools is 804 (about 1/4 of them are private ones).

Secondary vocational school (ISCED 3B) offers apprenticeship training mostly in 3-year (and sometimes 2-year or 1-year) courses ending in a final exam and apprenticeship certificate. Practical training represents about one half of teaching time and it aims at the acquisition of manual skills. The number of branches amounts to about 280. Approx. 45 % of young people enter this type of secondary school and this proportion is decreasing. There are also 4-year courses organised by secondary vocational schools. They end in a *maturita* exam. The courses lead to highly skilled worker qualifications or serve as an extension study to those who continue their study after their successful apprentice training. There are 565 secondary vocational schools, of which approx. 1/6 are private ones.

The curricula of all secondary schools must meet the requirements of the appropriate educational standards approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Proportion of youth entering secondary schools 2000-2001 (ISCED 3)



Source: Czech Statistical Office

Tertiary education

A higher professional school (*vyšší odborná škola*), ISCED 5B, provides the necessary qualifications for demanding technical activities which do not require a university degree. The programmes last a minimum of two years and a maximum of three and a half years. The graduate receives the title DiS. (specialist with a diploma). There are 164 of these schools (1/3 are private schools) teaching in approx. 200 branches. Students pay a fee for tuition.

Higher education institutions can be either university or non-university types, both defined as *vysoká škola*. The type of institution is declared in its statute, and must comply with the verdict of the Accreditation Commission. They offer education at three tertiary levels: bachelor study programmes (usually 3 years, ISCED 5B) and master study programmes (usually 5 years, ISCED 5 A) are available for applicants who have passed the maturita exam and have met the other admission criteria incl. entrance exam. The third level of higher education, doctoral study programmes (usually 3 years, ISCED 6), is open to graduates of the master study programmes. Traditional university-type institutions may offer all types of study programmes while non-university institutions are characterised by providing mainly bachelor study programmes. Most university-type institutions are divided into faculties.

Today, there are 39 higher education establishments in the Czech Republic, state and private. Approx. one third of all admitted applicants study the shorter bachelor study programmes and two thirds the longer master study programmes. The demand for higher education is high, only one half of applicants is admitted.

Administration

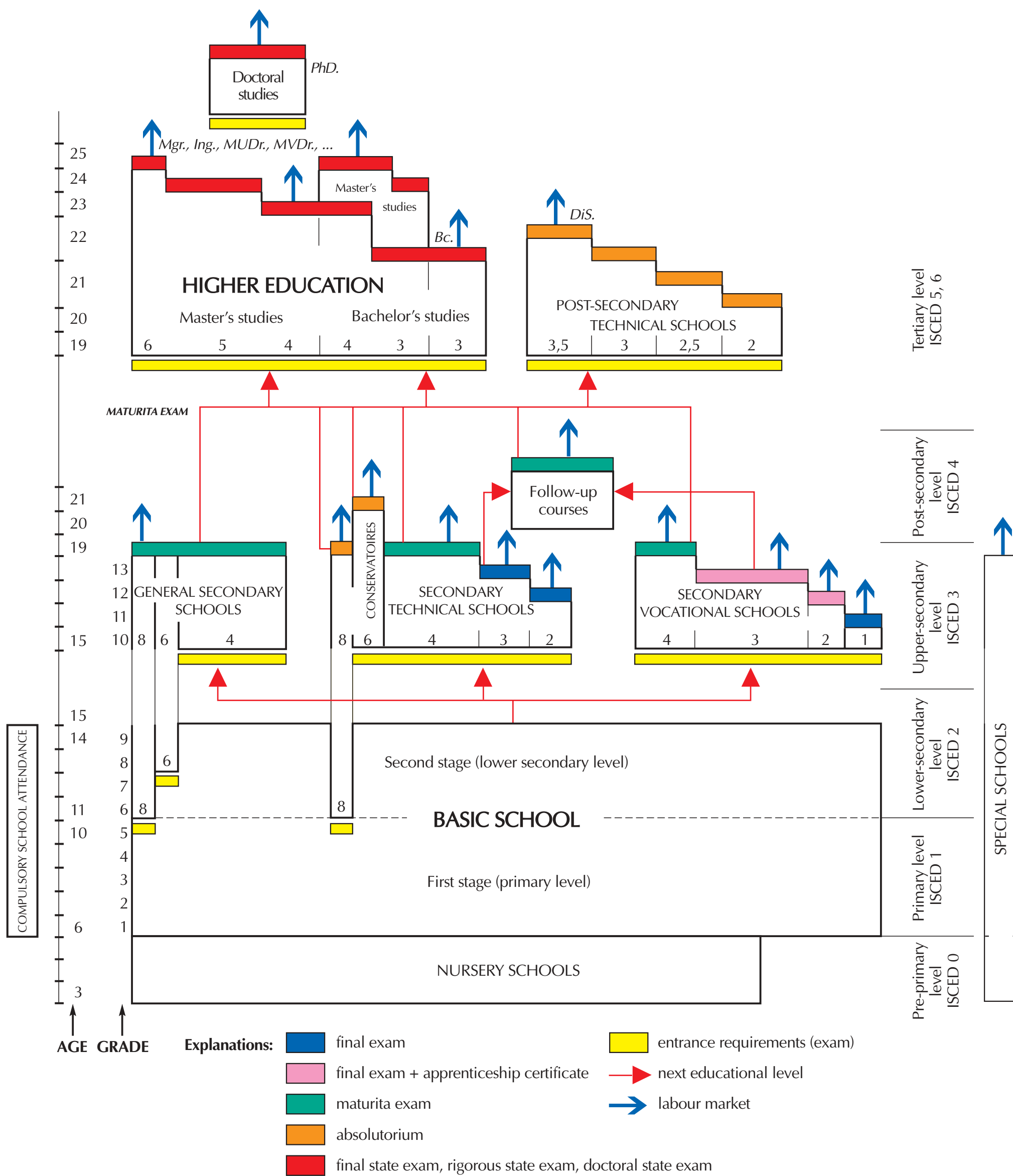
The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is the central body in the field of education. It develops strategic documents and drafts the proposals of laws and other regulations concerning education in the country. The nursery, primary, secondary and higher vocational schools are administered by the department of education within self-governing regional bodies in 14 regions of the Czech Republic. The municipalities are also involved in the administration of the nursery and basic schools.

The Czech School Inspectorate is the central controlling body. It is responsible for monitoring education results, the quality of management, the efficient use of funds and ensuring compliance with binding regulations at all levels except for universities.

Financing

Schools are usually funded by the state through the budget of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and budgets of regional authorities and municipalities. The funding is based mostly on the per capita method. The financial means for staff costs, textbooks and teaching aids are allocated by the Ministry to regional authorities. The operational costs and investment of nursery, primary, secondary and higher vocational schools are covered by the regional or local authorities. Universities are funded by the Ministry. Public expenditure on education reached 4.5 % of GDP in 2001.

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