

PIRLS 2001 encyclopedia: A reference guide to reading education in the countries participating in IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

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PIRLS 2001 Encyclopedia

A Reference Guide to Reading Education in the Countries Participating
in IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

International Association
for the Evaluation of
Educational Achievement



International
Study Center



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Language and
Literacy



Education
System



Teachers and
Teacher Education



Reading
Curriculum
and Instruction



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Programs



Assessment

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The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) has, since its inception, had a long-term interest in research on reading and the reading performance of students in the countries around the world. Reading comprehension, as one of the lynchpins of educational success, was included in the Six-Subject Survey (1970-71) and was again the focus of research in 1990-91 (Reading Literacy Study).

With PIRLS, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, IEA is once again examining the reading performance of primary school students around the world. Conducted at the fourth grade in 35 countries around the world in 2001, the PIRLS results are scheduled for publication in the spring of 2003. The wealth of findings from research on the process of learning to read conducted over the past five decades has had a significant influence on the ways in which reading is taught around the world and has fueled debates about the research agenda in the area of reading.

The present volume, an encyclopedia that describes the ways in which reading instruction in the early grades is organized around the world, is intended to complement the achievement results from PIRLS. The encyclopedia provides a description for each participating country of the policies and practices that guide school organization and classroom reading instruction in the lower grades. It further provides, in rich detail, the policy and

organizational context in which reading takes place and as such, illustrates for the reader differences in both practice and performance among the participating countries. Therefore, we are confident that it will make an important contribution to the knowledge base that has been constructed about reading practices in the more than 30 countries that participated in the study.

IEA is fortunate to have had the talented staff of professionals at the International Study Center based in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College lead this project. In particular I would like to express my thanks to Ann Kennedy, Eugene Gonzalez, and Cheryl Flaherty. Without the leadership of the study Co-Directors, Drs. Ina Mullis and Michael Martin, this work would not have been completed and we are indebted to them for all of their efforts. José Nieto designed the volume. Mario Pita coordinated the production, with Sue Messner providing layout and production assistance.

A project of this magnitude also requires considerable financial support. I would like to acknowledge and thank our major funding partners, the US National Science Foundation, the US department of Education through the National Center for Educational Statistics, the World Bank, and those countries that contributed by way of fees.

Finally, a project such as PIRLS can be achieved only through the close cooperation of participating countries and dedication of a lot of individuals including teachers, students, policymakers, and researchers. I would like to thank in particular the National Research Coordinators from the participating countries who contributed to producing this volume and worked diligently to make PIRLS a success.

Hans Wagemaker
Executive Director, IEA

The PIRLS 2001 Encyclopedia has been prepared to provide a rich context for interpreting the results from IEA's 2001 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Since its inception almost 50 years ago, IEA (the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) has been conducting cross-national studies of educational achievement, including periodic assessments of children's reading literacy.

Conducted at the fourth grade in 35 countries around the world, PIRLS 2001 is IEA's most recent study to monitor progress in children's reading literacy. It was a carefully constructed reading assessment, consisting of an innovative test of reading literacy and a variety of questionnaires to collect a wealth of information about fourth-grade children's reading literacy performance and about their home and school experiences in learning to read.

The PIRLS 2001 Encyclopedia is a collection of essays from participating countries describing how reading instruction takes place within their education systems. Each essay provides information about the organization and structure of the country's education system. Focusing on primary/elementary schools, the essays also describe teacher education and training, reading curricula, classroom organization and instruction, and assessment practices.

Participating Countries

Thirty-five countries joined together to conduct the first PIRLS assessment in 2001.

Argentina	Kuwait
Belize	Latvia
Bulgaria	Lithuania
Canada	Republic of Macedonia
Colombia	Republic of Moldova
Cyprus	Morocco
Czech Republic	Netherlands
England	New Zealand
France	Norway
Germany	Romania
Greece	Russian Federation
Hong Kong	Scotland
Hungary	Singapore
Iceland	Slovak Republic
Islamic Republic of Iran	Slovenia
Israel	Sweden
Italy	Turkey
	United States

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study – PIRLS 2001

The PIRLS 2001 assessment framework¹ defines reading literacy as “the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers, and for enjoyment.” The framework identifies three aspects of reading literacy to be addressed: processes of comprehension, purposes for reading, and reading behaviors and habits.

Designed from the outset to enable future assessments to monitor trends in performance over time, PIRLS 2001 measured reading literacy achievement using authentic reading materials requiring students to engage in a range of reading processes. The PIRLS 2001 reading assessment had ambitious goals for covering the domain of reading literacy, utilizing a selection of eight reading passages and items addressing two purposes for reading – reading for literary purposes and reading to acquire and use information. In accordance with

the framework, the passages contained authentic literary and informational texts drawn from children’s storybooks and informational sources. Passages and items were arranged according to a complex linking scheme into nine student booklets and the PIRLS “Reader,” an attractive, full-color, magazine-style booklet.

Submitted and reviewed by the PIRLS countries, the literary passages included realistic stories and traditional tales and the informational texts included chronological and non-chronological articles, a biographical article, and an informational leaflet. Reading literacy was assessed using both multiple-choice and constructed-response items. Constructed-response items required students to construct their answers rather than select from among possible answers.

To ensure the widest possible understanding of the nature of the PIRLS 2001 assessment, half of the assessment materials were released into the public domain after data collection, including the entire PIRLS Reader. The remaining half were kept secure and included in future PIRLS assessments so that trends in reading achievement could be measured.

To provide a context for interpreting student reading achievement, an extensive range of questionnaire information was collected from the students, their parents, teachers, and school principals. By gathering information about children’s experiences in learning to read together with reading achievement on the PIRLS test, it is possible to identify factors or combinations of factors associated with high levels of reading literacy.

Students taking the PIRLS 2001 reading assessment completed a student questionnaire asking about aspects of their home and school experiences, including reading instruction and reading for homework, self-perception and attitudes towards reading, out-of-school reading habits, computer use, home literacy resources, and basic demographic information.

The learning-to-read survey was completed by the parents or primary caregivers of each student taking the assessment. It addressed child-parent literacy interactions, home literacy resources, parents’ reading habits and attitudes, home-school connections, and basic demographic and socioeconomic indicators.

The reading teacher of each fourth-grade class participating in PIRLS 2001 completed a

questionnaire designed to gather information about classroom contexts for developing reading literacy. This questionnaire asked about characteristics of the class tested, such as size, reading level of the students, and the language ability of the students, and about instructional time, materials, and activities for teaching reading and promoting the development of students' reading literacy. Questions about classroom resources, assessment practices, and home-school connections also were included. Additionally, the questionnaire asked teachers for their views on opportunities for professional development and collaboration with other teachers, and for information about their education and training.

The principal of each participating school responded to the school questionnaire. It asked school principals about enrollment and school characteristics, such as where the school is located, resources available in the surrounding area, and indicators of the socio-economic background of the student body; characteristics of reading education in the school; instructional time; school resources, such as the availability of instructional materials and staff; home-school connections; and the school climate.

While PIRLS 2001 is the first in a cycle of assessments designed to measure trends in reading achievement, nine countries that participated in the IEA's 1991 Reading Literacy Study, including Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, New Zealand, Singapore, Slovenia, Sweden, and the United States, also measured achievement trends from 1991 to 2001 by administering the 1991 reading test and student questionnaire to a sample of students in 2001. This provides information about how their children's reading literacy today compares with that of ten years ago.

PIRLS 2001 Reports

The PIRLS International Report² describes the reading literacy achievement of fourth grade students in 35 countries, presenting results for literacy overall as well as separately for two purposes for reading – for literary experience and to acquire and use information. To provide an interpretation of the PIRLS literacy scale in terms of students' reading, PIRLS used a scale-anchoring procedure describing performance at four points on the scale, corresponding to four international benchmarks –

the Top 10%, the Upper Quarter, the Median, and the Lower Quarter benchmarks. As a way of describing student performance at a range of achievement levels, the international report provides the percentage of students in each country reaching each of these benchmarks. To provide more detail about performance on the PIRLS assessment, student achievement on example items from example passages also is presented.

The International Report includes key findings from the wide range of questionnaire data collected by PIRLS 2001 about students' home and school environments and their experiences in learning to read. These include literacy-related activities in the home, the reading curriculum and school organization for teaching reading, reading instruction and literacy materials in the classroom, school resources and environment, and students' reading habits and attitudes.

The Trends in Reading Literacy³ report describes changes in performance from 1991 to 2001 on IEA's 1991 Reading Literacy test for the nine PIRLS countries that also participated in the 1991 Reading Literacy Study.

To foster understanding of the methodology employed, the PIRLS 2001 Technical Report⁴ describes the design, development, and implementation of the study, and the techniques used to analyze and report the results. In line with IEA's mission to promote cross-national research using data from its studies, the PIRLS 2001 Database and User Guide⁵ provide educational researchers and policy analysts access to all of the PIRLS 2001 data in a convenient form, together with software to facilitate analysis and extensive documentation describing all data formats and variables. All of the PIRLS 2001 publications, including the international database, are available from the PIRLS web site (<http://pirls.bc.edu>).

Purpose and Organization of the PIRLS 2001 Encyclopedia

Although the extensive data collected by the PIRLS 2001 questionnaires encapsulated a great deal of information about reading literacy in each country and how children achieve it, there are many important factors – cultural, societal, and economic – that influence the teaching and learning of reading. Many of these are impossible to do justice to in a comparative survey. Many of these

also are structural characteristics of the country, potentially impacting on all students in the same way, and so may be readily captured by a single description. Countries that have achieved a high level of economic development, for example, have adequate resources to support students' literacy development, including homes with books, magazines, and newspapers; parents who attended university; well-equipped schools; and effective curricular and instructional materials.

Inspired by the success of a similar volume produced by IEA's Third International Mathematics and Science Study,⁶ the individuals responsible for implementing PIRLS 2001 in the participating countries, known as the National Research Coordinators, agreed at an early stage of the project to work together to produce this publication of the PIRLS 2001.

The basic organization of the PIRLS 2001 Encyclopedia is that each participating country has contributed a chapter describing the context for reading instruction in that country. Intended to complement the data collected by the study, the PIRLS 2001 Encyclopedia provides general information on the cultural, societal, and economic situation in each country, as well as a more focused perspective on the structure and organization of the education system as it pertains specifically to the promotion of reading literacy.

To develop the encyclopedia chapters, staff at the PIRLS International Study Center worked with the National Research Coordinators to prepare an outline that would be followed by each country. Working from the outline agreed upon, two countries, Iceland and New Zealand, developed model chapters that eventually were used as a reference by other countries. In addition to the outline and model chapters, each country was supplied with a collection of basic demographic data assembled for them from published sources by staff at the PIRLS International Study Center for use in writing their chapters. National Research Coordinators had the option of writing their chapters themselves or finding some other authority in their country to do so.

In terms of size, geographic location, national wealth, and literacy resources, the 35 countries participating in PIRLS cover a broad spectrum. Included are some of the wealthiest countries in the world, with extensive resources available for developing and promoting reading literacy, and

also countries with meager resources, struggling to provide not just for literacy development but also the most basic necessities for their populations.

Despite the diversity among countries in resources and traditions, it is clear from the chapters in this volume that countries share a sincere belief in the fundamental importance of reading literacy, as reflected by policy statements, curricular objectives, and allocation of instructional time in school. This is borne out by the fact that most countries allocate a substantial proportion of their resources to fostering literacy in both student and adult populations.

While consensus on the importance of literacy may not be surprising in a volume devoted to reading education, definitely noteworthy is the degree of uniformity in how the PIRLS countries define reading literacy. All stress the importance of moving beyond students' ability to extract literal meaning from text to involve a range of processes of comprehension, including making inferences from the text, interpreting ideas and information, and evaluating textual elements, content, and language. The PIRLS assessment framework, therefore, with its emphasis on purposes for reading and processes for comprehension, is a good match for the reading curriculum in the PIRLS countries, ensuring that the PIRLS assessment, rooted as it is in the framework, provides a measure of reading literacy achievement that is closely targeted on the literacy goals of participating countries.

Management and Organization

PIRLS 2001 was directed by Ina V.S. Mullis and Michael O. Martin of the International Study Center at Boston College in the United States. The PIRLS International Study Center (ISC) was responsible for all aspects of the design, development, and implementation of the study, working closely with the PIRLS advisory committees, national representatives from participating countries, and partner organizations responsible for particular aspects of the study. These included the IEA Secretariat, which provided guidance in all aspects of the study and was responsible for verification of all translations produced by participating countries; Statistics Canada, which was responsible for school and student sampling activities; the National Foundation for Educational

Research in England and Wales, which had major responsibility for developing the reading assessment; the IEA Data Processing Center, responsible for processing and verifying the data from the 35 countries; and Educational Testing Service, which provided software and support for scaling the achievement data.

The Project Management Team, comprising the study directors and senior representatives from the partner organizations, met regularly to review the study's progress, procedures, and schedule. The PIRLS Reading Development Group, comprised of reading experts from a range of countries, contributed invaluable expertise to the development of the reading framework and assessment, while the Questionnaire Development Group, made up of national representatives from six PIRLS countries, helped write the questionnaires and review successive drafts.

Ina V.S. Mullis
Michael O. Martin
Co-Directors, PIRLS 2001

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Language and Literacy



Spanish is Argentina's official language and is spoken by the overwhelming majority of Argentines. A number of Native American languages also are spoken.

In 1995, the public library system had a total of 2,700 service points.¹ Argentina's leading library is the National Library in Buenos Aires. The Library of Congress also has important legislation services and is open 24 hours a day for the general public. The National Teacher's Library is the host of federal networks for information on education and helps sustain school library programs throughout the country. Some 181 daily newspapers are published in Argentina; the principal ones are published in Buenos Aires and circulated throughout the country.² The daily newspaper circulation was 123 per 1,000 inhabitants in 1999.³

Education System



Governance and Organization

Argentina's education system encompasses 24 jurisdictions, each responsible for education services. During the last decade, important changes took place in order to decentralize educational management. As part of transferring educational services to the provinces, functions were redefined for both the National Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology and the Federal Council of Culture and Education (in which the 24 jurisdictions take part).

Institutional autonomy is increasing, yet the work of the provincial and national teams is complementary.

The following activities are performed by the central government through the national Ministry: defining goals and schools' course syllabi, assigning budgets for programs and their management, setting procedures for projects, establishing institutional and methodological structures for schools and their relationship with provincial governments, monitoring compliance with rules, and visiting schools.

To provide evidence of the "joint responsibility" and to guarantee its implementation, the decentralization process was supported by significant national budget resources (more than 1.6 million from 1993 to 1998).⁴ In 2000, Argentina's total public expenditure on education amounted to 4.7 percent of its total GDP (13.8 percent of the total public expenditure).⁵

Structure of the Education System

During the last decade, both the seven-year primary (compulsory) and five-year secondary school structures were changed. As shown in Exhibit 1, compulsory education now starts with the last year of the pre-primary level, at five years of age. It continues with a nine-year General Basic Education (GBE) – from 6 to 14 years of age, divided into three cycles of three years each. The new organizational structure ends with a three-year Polimodal Education from 15 to 17 years of age (non-compulsory). Exhibits 2 and 3 present student enrollments from 1994, before the change, and from 2000.^{6,7}

Pre-primary education in Argentina, known as the Initial Level, is not compulsory, except for the last year of the level, at 5 years of age. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology determines the educational and development role for this level. In 2000, 54 percent of 3- to 5-year-olds were enrolled in the pre-primary level.⁸

Country Profile: Argentina

Geographic Location and Size

Located in southern South America, Argentina is bounded on the north by Bolivia and Paraguay; on the east by Brazil, Uruguay, and the Atlantic Ocean; and on the west by Chile. The second largest South American country, Argentina's area is 2,780,400 square kilometers or 2,808,602 square kilometers including the Falkland Islands, or Islas Malvinas, other sparsely settled southern Atlantic islands, and part of Antarctica.

Population and Health Statistics

According to the 2001 census, Argentina had a population of 36,027,041, giving the country an overall population density of 13 persons per square kilometer.⁹ Eighty-nine percent of the people live in urban areas.¹⁰ More than one-third of the population lives in or around Buenos Aires, the capital and largest city.¹¹ The country's infant mortality rate in 2001 was 18 per 1,000 live births.¹² While the male life expectancy at birth in 2001 was 70 years, the female life expectancy was 77 years.¹³

Political System

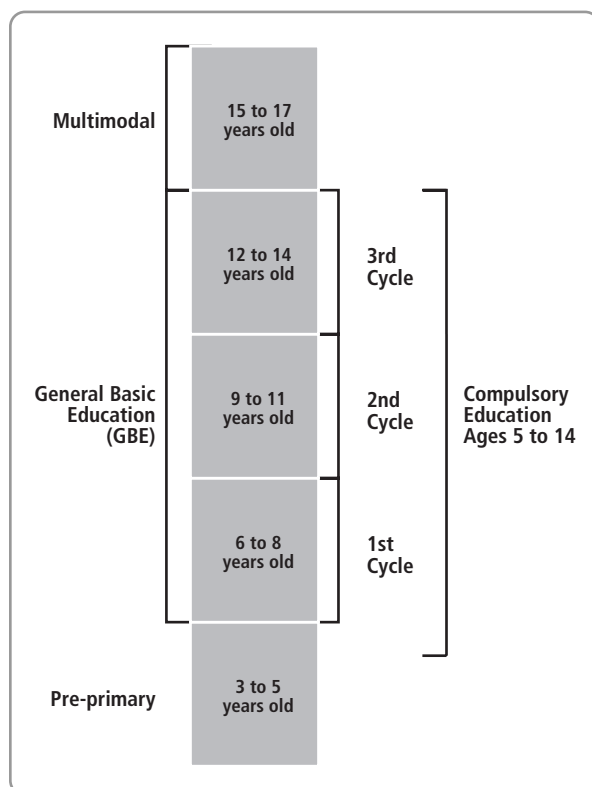
According to the constitution of 1853, Argentina is a federal republic headed by a president, who is assisted by a council of ministers. Legislative powers are vested in a national congress consisting of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. Several parts of Argentina's constitution were revised in 1994. Under the constitution, the provinces of Argentina elect their own governors and legislatures. Argentina comprises 23 provinces; the self-governing Distrito Federal (Federal District); the Argentine-claimed sector of Antarctica; and several South Atlantic islands.



Economy and Employment

The Argentine economy has comparative advantages internationally due to the country's bountiful natural resources. Historically, the fertility of its extensive land and its moderate climate have been favorable for developing agriculture and raising cattle. By the early 20th century, the country was one of the world's largest agricultural producers and remains prominent in that area today. Oil, gas, minerals, forests, and fish are important natural resources. During the 20th century, the use of these abundant natural resources enabled the country to develop a series of industrial centers, which are in the main cities and provinces: Buenos Aires City, Buenos Aires Province, Córdoba, Santa Fe, and Mendoza. The most relevant sectors include agro-industry and food, wine, and other alcoholic products, textile, construction, agricultural machinery, automobiles, medicine, special steel, chemical and petrochemical commodities, and steel and non-ferrous metals. These industries market products internally and also export them.

Exhibit 1: Structure of the Argentinian Education System



The second level of the education system, the nine-year General Basic Education (GBE), is one of the innovations introduced by the Federal Law of Education. The GBE level has been divided into three cycles of three years each, taking into account multiple organizational, socioeducational, psychological, and pedagogical issues. Generally, the GBE is between six and fourteen years of age, though it is not restrictive. It is organized to enable basic learning across subjects up to the end of the level, before students consider any specialization. In 1996, the enrollment rate for the GBE level was 113 percent (this exceeds 100 percent because some pupils are younger or older than the country's standard range for primary school age).¹⁴

Polimodal begins at the end of compulsory schooling, when the pupil is 15 years of age. It lasts three years and constitutes the first level after compulsory education. It can be linked with the Technical Professional Stage (TPS), offering training in more specific fields and granting the diploma of technician in the chosen specialty. The Common Basic Contents (CBC) was designed to help all students acquire a series of basic competencies and the Oriented Basic Contents was designed to help students conceptualize different

fields of knowledge as well as contribute to social and productive activities.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The school year begins in early March and ends in late November, in line with the Federal and provincial governments' guarantee of 180 days of instruction.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Provinces are responsible for hiring the Initial Level, GBE, and Multimodal teachers. Teachers may be employed either part time or full time. Female teachers comprise about 61 percent of all primary school teachers.¹⁵ About sixty percent of the teaching force at the primary level holds a tertiary-level qualification.¹⁶ This relatively low ratio of tertiary training partly results from the extension of compulsory education from seven to ten years. With the subsequent increase in enrollments at the higher levels of education, the most highly qualified teachers were diverted from the lower levels of education.

Exhibit 2: 1994 Enrollment in Public and Private Education – Excluding Adult and Special Education

Educational Level	Total	Enrolled Population	
		% Public Education	% Private Education
Total	5,977,819	77.1	22.9
Pre-primary	998,629	68.4	31.6
Primary	4,979,190	78.9	21.1

Exhibit 3: 2000 Enrollment in Public and Private Education – Excluding Adult and Special Education

Educational Level	Total	Enrolled Population	
		% Public Education	% Private Education
Total	7,717,761	77.2	22.8
Pre-primary	1,246,597	71.8	28.2
GBE 1 and 2	4,633,068	79.3	20.7
Primary ^a	141,352	85.3	14.7
GBE 3	1,696,744	74.9	25.1

a. Students remaining in the old primary structure of 7 years. Some provinces have not completed the process of reforms yet.

Teacher Education

Systemic education of teachers for basic education started in 1870 with the creation of Normal Schools. Prior to 1969, teacher preparation was part of secondary education. Following a world trend, it has been a tertiary course since then. Interestingly, the course for secondary school teacher education started in the beginning of this century in tertiary non-university institutes. Simultaneously, universities started offering such courses.

In addition, the provinces founded Institutions for Secondary Schools Teachers' Formation at the tertiary level, both public and private. Since the mid-1980s these institutions have strived to achieve greater heterogeneity and complexity with respect to diversity of dependency, diplomas, and curricular planning.

Within this context and the regulatory frame of the Federal Law of Education, teachers' development is centered on the following:

- Evaluation of the training program's adequacy, regarding higher quality, coverage, and relevance to requirements of the 10 years of compulsory education and the implementation of the new system's structure
- Stipulation of a framework articulating the federal policies of continual development for teachers
- Updating of professional education through the Common Basic Contents published in 1995
- Creation of the Federal Network of Continual Teachers' Training.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

National reading policy states that all students will be able to read (and write) independently by the end of grade 3. This is acknowledged in a document termed Common Basic Contents (1995), which was embraced nationwide. Beyond that, general consensus (based in former policy documents) tends to expect that children can "sound out" texts much earlier (by the end of first grade).

Reading Curriculum and Standards

On paper, the definition of reading ability is a comprehensive one: "The possibility to take part in reading communities, through social practices which encompass reading situations, and to use texts for various purposes including comprehension". Nevertheless, the real curriculum throughout the country is very heterogeneous and often narrows the meaning of reading ability to basic reading.

"Formal" reading instruction starts at age 6 (first grade of the Basic General Education). However, it has recently been introduced one year earlier as part of beginning compulsory education at age 5. Reading and writing take place at this early stage as a collaborative enterprise between teacher and students, and instructional practice depends upon children's previous experience.

Official national documents state that, by the end of third grade, children will be able to "recognize, through their appearance, different kinds of texts that are commonly used by the community and will be able to identify their typical ways of reading". They will also be able to "read, aloud and independently, narrative, informative, poetic, and instructional texts, and be able to explain their meaning, provided the texts have basic vocabulary, few subordinate clauses, and mainly explicit information". This broad statement, founded on the idea that reading and writing are social practices rather than "techniques," tends to be overlooked in favor of coding and decoding activities, at least in the first years. As has been said, instructional practices are varied, but usually phonic instruction is stressed in the first and second years of schooling.

The Argentinian curriculum does not dissociate reading from writing. Language as a subject incorporates both reading and writing instruction. This instruction comprises oral language, written language (reading and writing), language awareness, literary discourse, procedures involved in comprehension and production of texts, and attitudes toward uses of language.

Materials for Reading Education

Materials used for teaching reading include textbooks and graded readers, the latter being the most widely employed. Generally, technology for reading instruction is not available in schools. Unfortunately, most classes (and even schools) do not have a bookshelf or reading corner for frequent use by students.

The only book available for each student is the graded reader or the textbook of his own.

Instructional Time

Most public schools allow 20 hours a week for the whole curriculum. There are private schools and a few public ones, however, that provide almost twice as much instructional time. In the first years of schooling (first, second, and third grade), most public schools require a minimum of 4 hours per week for Spanish instruction (the subject is called Language). In fact, teachers tend to allocate almost 7 hours per week. In fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, Spanish instruction involves 4 hours a week, whereas in seventh, eighth, and ninth grades, Spanish instruction occurs for slightly more than 3 hours a week.

There is no specific policy regarding time for reading instruction per se, although the emphasis on reading is relatively greater in the earlier grades. Hence, in first, second, and third grade, most of the class time is spent in reading and writing instruction (phonics, reading aloud, copying from the blackboard, and writing sentences and short texts).

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Class size and classroom organization vary considerably from place to place across the country. Class size ranges from 15 to 40 students (an average of 25), with one teacher. Students frequently are seated facing the blackboard and teacher-student communication predominates over student-student interactions. Schools do not have reading specialists, except for a few private schools. No second language is taught in most public schools, in contrast to private ones. Nevertheless, a few children whose mother tongue is not Spanish but an aboriginal language receive bilingual education.

Reading Disabilities

There are no institutionalized procedures for detecting reading disabilities. Teachers monitor reading performance by listening to students read aloud. In the first three grades, reading disability is defined in terms of coding and decoding, that is to say, poor comprehenders are not regarded as poor readers.

When teachers consider a student has some reading disability (a matter of poor grapheme-phoneme correspondence or failing to read aloud

fluently), they tend to encourage parents (usually, the mother) to give the child some extra practice in reading. Teachers also tend to stress phonics and oral reading instruction with the child. They seldom emphasize reading for understanding or reading for pleasure.

Some first year teachers test their students at the beginning of the course to have some information regarding students reading level, but this is not a common practice.

Literacy Programs



There are no national reading literacy programs except some occasional and not far-reaching ones. Small and discontinuous international programs (some of which may have a reading component) are held to promote reading within reduced and indigent populations.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Reading progress and reading achievement are assessed by teachers through teacher-made tests and teacher observations. These include oral reading and written answers to questions about what has been read.

National or Regional Examinations

Since 1993, a reading comprehension test for third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth graders has been administered to nationally representative samples of students. No stakes are attached to the results.

Standardized Tests

Commercial standardized tests are not used regularly.

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Language and Literacy



Due to the diversity of the population, many Belizeans speak more than one language. English or Creole is spoken by more than half of the population, especially by those living in the Belize district.¹ English, however, is the official language and the medium of instruction in schools. Spanish also is widely spoken, particularly in the northern and western districts. A number of other languages such as Garufuna, Maya, and German also are spoken.

Education System



Governance and Organization

A legacy of the colonial period, the education system has emerged as a church-state partnership. The Education Ordinance of 1962 legally granted government more control over the system, however, the churches retain administrative responsibility for denominational schools.

At the macro level, the Minister of Education is ultimately responsible for the management of the system. The Minister makes policy decisions with the support of the National Council for Education whose membership is representative of groups concerned with education. The education officers are the representatives of the Ministry at the district level; their main function is to coordinate and supervise the efforts of the schools in their districts. Innovation during the last decade includes a move towards a more decentralized system of education. This means that district teams now have the autonomy to make more decisions at that level.

Responsibility for managing and maintaining the schools is shared between the church and the state. The state is responsible for the development and implementation of educational policies. The government also is responsible for teacher's salaries and contributes to recurrent budget and all capital expenditures. Through the Education Development Center, the government develops and distributes an integrated national curriculum. The state administers national examinations at grades five, eight, and at the end of high school. Training and certification of teachers is the responsibility of the ministry as well.

The churches are responsible for the overall management of their schools. This includes appointing principals, hiring and firing of teachers, and subsidizing the government's allocation of funds for recurrent and capital expenditures to the schools within their respective management.

Structure of the Education System

Belize's education system consists of five levels: preschool, primary school, secondary, junior college, and higher education. Preschool is not compulsory and caters to students age three to five. Grades 1 through 8 are considered the primary level and are compulsory; the compulsory school law states that students between the ages of 5 and 14 must be in school. Secondary schooling is four years. Junior college represents the first two years of post-secondary education. With the establishment of the University, more students now have access to a first degree. A limited number of students graduating from junior colleges still travel abroad to pursue higher education.

In 1999, there were 98 preschools, of which 57 were private institutions.² There were 249

Country Profile: Belize

Geographical Location and Size

Belize, originally known as British Honduras, is the only English-speaking country located on the Caribbean coast of Central America. It is bounded on the north by Mexico and on the south and west by Guatemala. The area of the country is 22,965 square kilometers, extending 280 kilometers in length, and measuring, at its widest point, 109 kilometers from east to west.

The country is divided into six districts – Corozal, Orange Walk, Stann Creek, Toledo, Cayo, and Belize. Belize City is the chief commercial hub. Belize has one major airport and two major seaports that connect Belize to the rest of the world. Belmopan is the capital and the core of government operations.

The climate is subtropical, with two seasons: the dry season and the wet season. The dry season is from March to June, with temperatures reaching as high as 38° Celsius or 100° Fahrenheit, inland. The wet season, caused mainly by tropical storms and hurricanes, extends from June to November. Due to the mountains, the southern region receives more rainfall than the rest of the country. The lower amount of rainfall in the northern region of the country is good for the sugar cane industry. Similarly, the high rainfall in the south is good for the banana, cocoa, and citrus industries.



Population and Health Statistics

The Mayas were the first inhabitants of Belize, followed by the English, who brought African slaves forcefully to work in the logwood and mahogany industries. Over the last hundred years, other groups such as the Mestizos, Garinagu, Mennonites, Hindus, Chinese, and more recently, people from El Salvador and Honduras have immigrated to Belize.

Belize District has 24 percent of the total population of 247,000.⁴ It is a young population due to the high birth rate and low death rate. Today an estimated 45 percent of the population is under 15 years.⁵ Immigration due to economic, political, and social conditions is also a contributing factor to population growth. Life expectancy is 72 years and the percentage of people 70 years and older is steadily increasing.⁶ The overall population density is 11 persons per square kilometer.⁷ The population density is higher in urban areas. For example, there are 17 people per square kilometer in the Belize District as compared to Toledo with a population density of 3.9 people per square kilometer.⁸

A large population of young people dictates that more of the country's resources must be spent on services such as education and health care. Although much has been done to improve access to better health care across the country, there is a dire need for more facilities, equipment, and supplies, especially in remote villages like those in the Toledo District. These areas are visited by mobile clinics that address less serious health problems. Many people still find it necessary to travel to other countries like Mexico, Guatemala, and the United States for more advanced medical treatment and procedures.

Political System

Like most other former colonies of the United Kingdom, Belize has adapted the British Westminster Parliamentary model of government and practiced it during the first eighteen years as an independent state. The government is a bicameral democracy composed of a 29-member House of Representatives and a 12-member Senate. The House of Representatives is elected every five years through popular vote, and the Senate is appointed. The Queen still maintains her presence through the appointment of a Governor General who is considered a titular head of state. The Prime Minister is the head of the executive branch of government, which is the Cabinet. The Cabinet members are chosen either from the House of Representatives or the Senate solely at the discretion of the Prime Minister. Cabinet's primary function is to set policy and administer over ministries such as defense, agriculture, and education.

Economy and Employment

Belize's economy is agriculture-based with citrus, banana, and sugar as the major industries. This sector employs 26 percent of the labor force, making a major contribution to the GDP.⁹ The fishing industry has grown from a subsistence activity to a commercial activity with exports to the United States and Europe. Due to tourism, the fastest growing industry, and the main types of employment are in services such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation.

primary schools, 29 secondary, and 12 post-secondary.³

Preschool Education

Preschool education in Belize is not compulsory, but due to the growing number of women in the labor force, the need for preschools is increasing steadily. The Ministry of Education, through the Preschool Unit, establishes the curriculum and defines its educational and developmental role. The focus of the program at this level is on social skills, concept development, emergent reading, expression, language development, movement, and music. Pupils are stimulated through play. Students attend preschool four hours daily. During 1998-1999, 3,634 pupils were enrolled in preschools across the country.¹⁰ This reflects an increase of 9.7 percent over the previous year.¹¹

Primary Education

As a rule, students begin their primary education at age five and should exit between the age of thirteen and fourteen. The grades (standards) are subdivided into lower-primary, year one through year three, and upper-primary, year four through year eight. The two divisions are usually contained within one school with one principal managing both sections. The National Curriculum provides schools with content specification for eight areas of study, for each of the eight years of the primary level. The areas of study are language arts, English, Spanish, mathematics, science, social studies, expressive arts, and technology. Children are taught in English and are expected to function in English from day one, even though they start school with little or no English.

Secondary Education

According to the Educational Statistical Digest, 81.6 percent of primary school students gained access to secondary schools, with Belize District reporting the highest transition rate.¹² Given that there is no set curriculum in the secondary

schools, the program of study varies widely depending on the emphasis of the school. The Ministry of Education is in the process of developing a national core curriculum for secondary schools to guarantee that students at this level receive the essential knowledge and skills. The core subjects are language arts, mathematics, Spanish, social studies, integrated science, information technology and communication, and life skills and personal development.

Education is free at both the primary and secondary level. At the secondary level, students attend school for 30 hours per week.¹³ Upon completion of four years of high school, a small percentage of the students move on to junior college. This is the first two years of college. Upon completion, students receive an associate degree in their area of study.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The school year is a nine-month instructional period that begins in early September and ends in June. It generally includes 180 days of instruction.¹⁴

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Managers of schools are responsible for the hiring of teachers. In 1999, there were 3,014 teachers across the pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools.¹⁵ Of these, 1,013 were male and 2,001 were female.¹⁶ Across the educational levels, 196 teachers were at the preschool level, 2,064 were at the primary school level, and 754 teachers were at the secondary level.¹⁷ Trained teachers (teaching certificate) represent 49.8 percent of the teaching population.¹⁸ In Belize District, 62.8 percent of the teachers are trained as compared to 29.2 percent in the Toledo District.¹⁹

Teacher Education

The University of Belize is responsible for training teachers at the primary and secondary levels. In 1999, 49.8 percent of the primary school teaching force was trained at Level I.²⁰ Although there is a move towards pre-service training, there are still teachers in the profession with only a high school certificate teaching at the preschool and primary school levels.

Training teachers occurs in phases. Level I is a distance program that allows teachers to access training in their home districts. By design, this program is practical since these teachers remain in the classrooms while pursuing their training and are expected to apply concepts and theories immediately under the supervision of a college supervisor. The primary focus of this program is to ensure that teachers have the basic pedagogical skills to deliver the national curriculum. Areas of study include teaching methods, child development, testing and measurement, language arts, English, social studies, Belizean studies, mathematics, and science. This program culminates with the assessment of student-teaching by a panel of college supervisors.

Upon successful completion of Level I, teachers have the option of accessing the next level of training. When pursuing the Level II program, teachers study full time at the Faculty of Education. This program builds on the Level I program by extending teachers professional knowledge and skills while providing content in the various disciplines. The Level II program also culminates with one semester of clinical supervision, at the end of which teachers receive their final assessment in teaching. Teachers who have completed this program are considered fully trained and certified to teach at the primary level. Today, more and more of these teachers choose to continue their education working towards a bachelor's in primary education.

Qualifications of teachers at the secondary level range from associate degrees to graduate level. While teachers at this level may have content knowledge to teach their subject(s) or areas, they often lack pedagogical knowledge and skills. The Ministry of Education is in the process of developing a program to meet the needs of secondary school teachers.

Teacher In-service Education

With the advent of the licensing of teachers in 2000, in-service education became a requirement to maintain a teacher's license. The Ministry of Education and the University of Belize provide a variety of courses during the summers to accommodate teachers training needs.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The National Curriculum Guide outlines the policies, principles, and expected outcomes of the curriculum and instruction across subject areas for Belizean primary schools. The language arts outcomes are grouped under the following headings: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In delivering the curriculum, teachers are encouraged to integrate these components of language in the language program as well as across the disciplines. Recognizing that Belizean students are learning English as a second language, this is critical in that it expands students' access to English by teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing in standard English across the curriculum.

Literature is an integral part of language learning and teachers are encouraged to use reading as the springboard for speaking and writing activities. The curriculum also promotes the teaching of vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and punctuation in the context of real/meaningful reading and writing tasks. Accordingly, the goal is that upon completion of elementary schooling, a student should:

- Use context clues and cues effectively to communicate when reading orally
- Demonstrate fluency through appropriately applying word identification strategies
- Select material for recreational reading based on personal preference
- Apply functional reading skills (including comprehension skills) in the selection, reading, and interpretation of texts.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Formal reading instruction begins at the age of 5, in the first year of elementary schooling. Children who have been to preschool often come with pre-reading skills that give them an advantage over those who have not been to preschool. This means that there is often a wide range of reading ability among students even at this early stage. This gap seems to widen as students move up the grades.

The National Curriculum outlines Language Arts learning outcomes for all eight grades across the primary level to facilitate the development of the following broad areas:

- Read for information, understanding, and enjoyment
- Listen and view for information, understanding, and enjoyment
- Write clearly, accurately, and appropriately
- Speak clearly, accurately, and appropriately.

A substantial amount of instructional time in the first three years of formal education is devoted to the development of a positive attitude towards reading and the teaching of basic reading skills such as letter recognition, letter sound association, sight words, directionality in reading and writing, and comprehension strategies.

At the end of the 3rd year of schooling, students should be able to:

- Use context clues to decode the meaning of words
- Use phonics to assist word recognition
- Use pictures in books as a clue to meaning
- Identify a sequence of events
- Identify cause-and-effect relationships
- Predict what will happen in a sequence of events
- Read aloud from a familiar text in order to convey meaning
- Identify main ideas and supporting details
- Discriminate between fact and fiction
- Make inferences and draw conclusions
- Interpret and follow instructions/directions.

At the end of the 5th year of school, students should be able to:

- Use context clues to read a selection
- Apply phonetic clues and word identification strategies to distinguish between words
- Read fluently with appropriate intonation and expression for information and pleasure
- Use context clues to interpret a selection
- Identify main ideas and supporting details
- Discriminate between fact and opinion
- Predict what will happen in a sequence of events
- Identify cause-and-effect relationships
- Make inferences and draw conclusions
- Interpret and follow instructions/directions
- Select material for recreational reading based on personal preference.

At the end of the 8th year of primary school, students should be able to:

- Use context clues and cues effectively to communicate when reading orally
- Demonstrate fluency through appropriately applying word identification strategies
- Select material for recreational reading based on personal preference
- Apply functional reading skills (including comprehension skills) in the selection, reading, and interpretation of texts.

Materials for Reading Instruction

The Ministry of Education prescribes set textbooks for the core areas of study. Schools can choose from three options. This means that in most schools there is a set reading text for each grade.

When this is the case, this text forms the basis of the reading program, with reading being taught as an independent subject rather than integrated with the other components of language as prescribed in the National Curriculum. There has been a recent move toward establishing school libraries, especially in urban areas. This fosters reading habits by providing access to a wide range of children's literature. Schools with libraries are encouraged to incorporate the use of the library into the curriculum.

Instructional Time

Students in the lower division (years 1 to 3) are entitled to 20 hours of instruction per week in all subjects over the nine months of the school year. The others students in the middle and upper divisions are in school for 25 hours per week. English language arts is taught across the grades everyday for an average of 105 minutes per day. Reading is taught everyday, with speaking, grammar, spelling, literature, and writing scheduled for once or twice weekly.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

At the primary level, teachers teach all subjects to their students. However, a number of schools do subject teaching in the upper grades (6 to 8). Where there are large numbers of students per grade level, students often are subdivided into classes according to ability. This is more often the case in urban areas that are heavily populated. Teachers within a grade level then meet on a weekly basis to outline a general plan for their classes. This practice ensures that students are getting the same material, even though the pace may be different. As a rule, schools with one class per grade generally use a system of mixed ability. The common mode of instruction is whole class teaching, even though teachers are trained to handle ability grouping, especially in mathematics and reading.

Due to the small number of students per grade level in very remote areas, the common practice is to have multi-grade classrooms. Within a multi-grade classroom, teachers are encouraged to teach the groups separately for the primary subjects and combine them for the secondary ones. Teachers, however, have some flexibility to use whatever procedures and practices best suit their contexts.

According to the regulations governing schools, the ratio of students to teacher is 35 to 1. In practice, there is a wide disparity in student-teacher ratios based on size of school and its location. Overall, the average class size is 26 students.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

The classroom teacher is responsible for the teaching of reading. In some cases in the upper division where subject teaching is the rule, one teacher is responsible for the teaching of reading in several classes or grade levels. Reading specialists are attached to the Ministry of Education and the University of Belize. While they play little or no role directly in the teaching of reading, they offer training on reading instruction and provide support to teachers upon request.

Second Language Instruction

Belizean students are learning English as a second language. The integrated approach of the National Curriculum facilitates the teaching of English across the curricula. Belize's language policy supports diversity and highlights the need for an understanding of the role of culture. At the same time, it recognizes the need for Belizeans, who live in a multicultural society, to be able to communicate more effectively in a variety of situations related to work and everyday experiences. This means that in addition to their first languages, Belizean students must acquire standard English if they are to avail fully of the range of academic opportunities available.

Translating the language policy into practical and effective language acquisition strategies provides a challenge for teachers throughout the grades. The primary focus of the English curriculum is to ensure that students are able to use language effectively for different purposes.

Reading Disabilities

National Examinations in English/reading indicate that a large number of students have difficulties in reading that are not being addressed. In many instances, teachers cannot adequately deal with students with reading difficulties because of a lack of training in diagnosing the problem and the number of students in any one class needing special attention. This has negative effects on students' overall academic performance. The Special

Education Unit makes a concerted effort to assist teachers by providing training in diagnostic testing in literacy and reading intervention strategies.

Literacy Programs



The National Library has an annual reading competition in which individual students read poetry or other literary texts aloud. The goal is to value and stimulate an interest in reading as well as recognize and celebrate excellence. Schools are encouraged to participate.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Most of the testing is done at the classroom level. These tests are prepared and administered by the classroom teacher for the purpose of measuring students' performance and providing feedback to parents.

National Examinations

Nationally, students are tested twice over the eight-year period of elementary school, first at the end of grade five and the second at the end of grade eight. Reading comprehension is tested as part of the English component in both cases. Scores are awarded in percentages.

Standardized Tests

There is no evidence of the use of standardized reading tests in Belizean classrooms.

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Language and Literacy



Bulgaria is a country rich in literary history dating back to the 9th century. The Old Slavonic script created by Cyril and Methodius was first accepted and developed in Bulgaria. From the foundation of the First Bulgarian State more than 1,300 years ago, learning and enlightenment, together with striving for education and culture, have been constant characteristics of the Bulgarian people. The first schools were set up in Bulgaria in 866 (Preslav School) and 888 (Ochrid School). The first Bulgarian newspaper was published in the mid-1800s. In 2002, there were 53 daily newspapers with a circulation of 180 per 1,000 inhabitants. The public library system includes a total of 4,237 establishments (including community libraries) with 894,000 registered users.¹

The national language, Bulgarian – a South Slavonic language, is spoken throughout the country by 100 percent of the population. It is the official language of administration, public relations and services, and instruction in schools. Other languages used in the country include Turkish and Romany.

- To exercise control over all types and levels of schools and kindergartens in the country
- To participate in forming the national strategy for the development of education
- To approve educational documentation
- To look after the introduction of innovations and the supply of textbooks and manuals
- To organize publishing activities in the field of education
- To define unified state educational standards
- To establish, transform, and close state and municipal schools
- To approve the establishment of private schools and kindergartens
- To appoint the heads of the Inspectorates of Education.

The 28 Inspectorates of Education, one in each region, act as specialized regional bodies of the Ministry of Education and Science for administering the education system. They exercise planning, coordination, and control functions over the work of schools and kindergartens within the regions. The heads of the Inspectorates appoint the school principals in the different regions.

Educational departments of municipal administrations represent an element of the government structure and take part in implementing educational policy within the municipalities. The

Education System



Governance and Organization

The Bulgarian education system is centralized. The Ministry of Education and Science is a specialized body of the Council of Ministers charged with determining and implementing government policy in the field of education and science. The main functions of the Ministry of Education and Science are:

Country Profile: Bulgaria

Geographical Location and Size

Bulgaria is located in the East-Central part of the Balkan Peninsula. It is bordered by most of the Balkan countries: to the North by Romania, to the West by Serbia, to the Southwest by the Republic of Macedonia, to the South by Greece, and to the Southeast by Turkey. Bulgaria's area is 110,912 square kilometers.²

Population and Health Statistics

Bulgaria's population is 7.9 million, with 6.4 million aged 18 and over, and 2.6 million aged 60 and over.³ The population density is 71 persons per square kilometer.⁴ Approximately 35 percent of the population lives in urban areas. The ethnic groups are: Bulgarians (85%); Turks (8.5%); Romanians (3.5%); others (3%).

Of the population 15 years and over, only an estimated 1.5 percent is considered illiterate. The birth rate is 7 per 1,000 but the death rate is 14 per 1,000. The infant mortality rate is 12 per 1,000 live births per year.⁵ The average life expectancy is 71 years (67 years for males and 74 for females).⁶

Political System

Bulgaria is a parliamentary democracy. The state system consists of three branches:

- the legislative branch of Parliament (called the National Assembly, consisting of 240 members elected under a proportional system);
- the executive branch of Government (called the Council of Ministers);
- the judicial branch of the court system.

Bulgaria is divided into 28 regions consisting of 260 municipalities. The regions' governors are appointed by the Prime Minister, and within regions, the municipal mayors are elected. Members of Parliament, Government, and mayors are elected for a four-year term of office. The supreme representative of the country is the President who is elected every five years. The President has limited functions.



Economy and Employment

The country's major industries are summer and winter tourism, agriculture, electric energy, water supply, chemical manufacturing, and ship construction. In the past several years, the GNP per capita has been approximately US\$ 1,300 (BGL 2,850).⁷

The main areas of employment are tourism, agriculture, services, food production, manufacturing, and business. In 2001, 43 percent of the total labor force was female. The average unemployment rate was 17 percent in 2001.⁸

municipal education departments are the supporting and managing bodies for preschool education. Municipal mayors appoint kindergarten principals, but municipalities have only a supporting role in school education.

The main source of educational financing is the State budget. In 2001, educational expenditures were 3.8 percent of the GNP per pupil, distributed 3.2 percent to preschool and school education and 0.6 percent to higher education. All kindergartens and about 90 percent of schools are funded through the local budgets of the municipal administrations. Thus, those institutions are called municipal schools. The other 10 percent of schools are financed via the budget of the Ministry of Education and Science, and are called state schools. Funding is determined according to the educational level and type of school. Funds are allocated for capital investment, maintenance and equipment of school buildings, and for staff salaries. Instruction in private schools is not funded by the State. Schools have the right to earn additional income (out-of-budget income) by charging fees for extra services, such as rent, donations, sponsorship, and various educational and creative activities.

Structure of the Education System

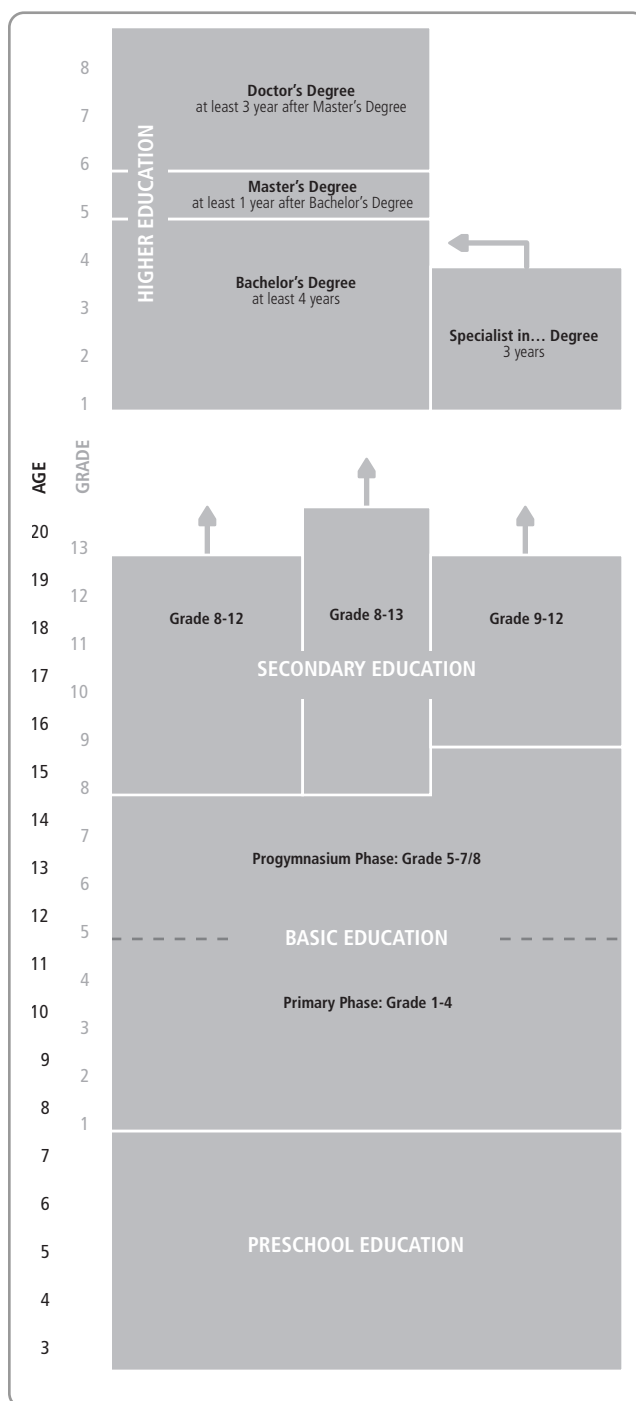
Compulsory education is up to the age of 16. Primary education begins at the age of seven. Children may enter grade one at the age of six, depending upon the choice of their parents, and approved school readiness.⁹ The school year begins on September 15 and ends in June, having 31 to 36 school weeks depending on the level and grade. The structure of the education system in Bulgaria consists of three stages: preschool, school, and higher education. The structure of the educational system in Bulgaria by levels of education is presented in Exhibit 1.

Preschool education is not compulsory and is for children aged between three and seven.

School education consists of two levels.¹⁰

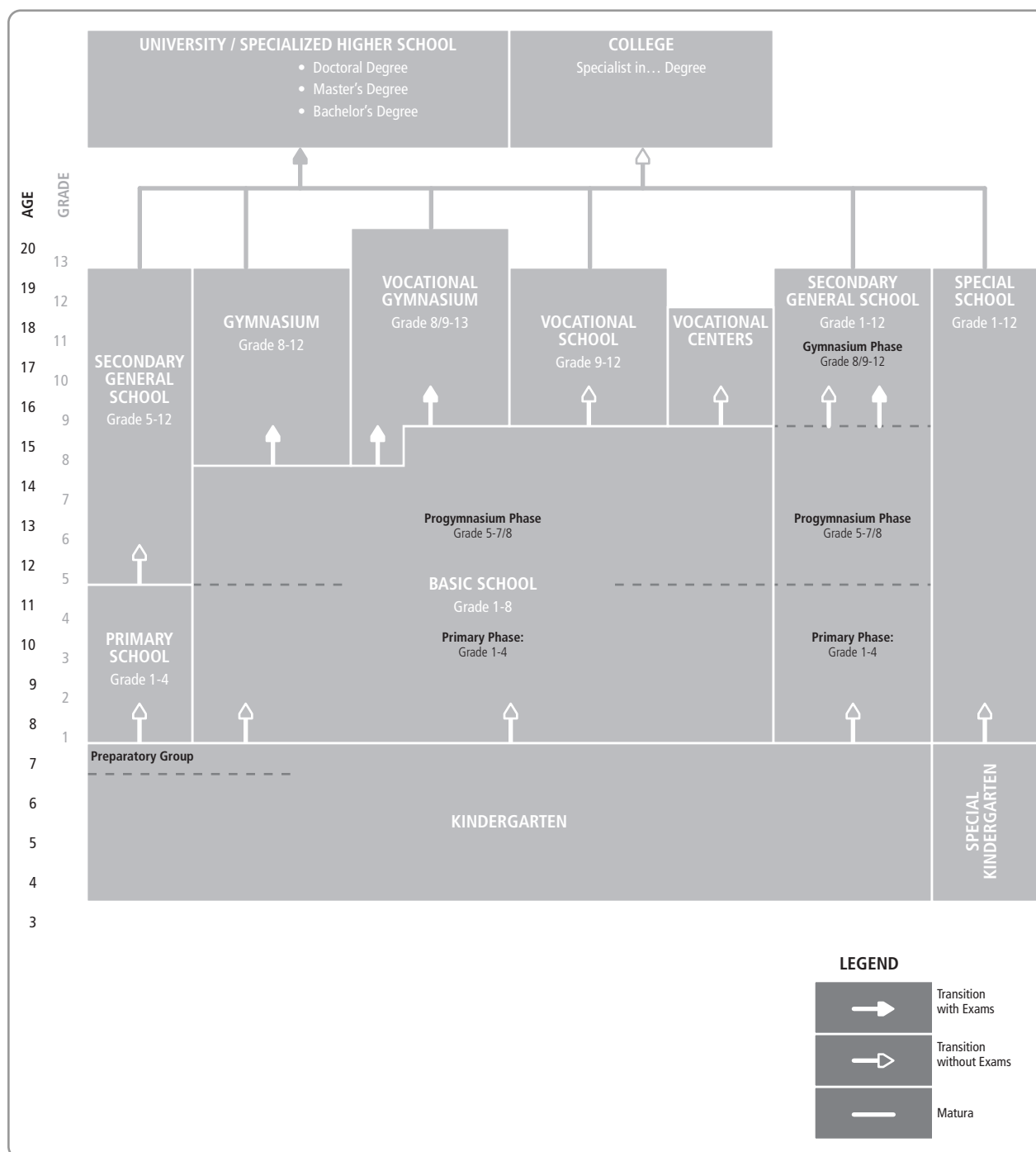
- Basic education is seven or eight years in duration, divided into two phases:

Exhibit 1: Structure of the Educational System in Bulgaria by Levels of Education 2001/02



- Primary education is four years in duration, grades 1 to 4, and
- Pro-gymnasium education is three or four years in duration, grades 5 to 7/8.

Exhibit 2: Structure of the Educational System in Bulgaria by Type of School 2001/02



- Secondary education is four, five, or six years in duration, grades 8/9 to 12/13. In some cases, the entrance to secondary schools follows the completion of grade 7. Those schools have a five-year duration, grades 8 to 12. In other cases, entrance to secondary schools is after grade 8 and those schools have four-year duration, grades 9 to 12. There are also schools (vocation-

al gymnasiums) with a six-year duration after grade 7, from grades 8 to 13. According to the content of preparation, secondary education is divided into general and vocational.

Thus, according to the duration of basic and secondary education, the Bulgarian school system has the following structural models: 7 + 5; 8 + 4; 7 + 6.

Exhibit 2 shows the types of school within the three educational levels. Not including vocational education, basic and secondary school levels provide general education through the following school types:

- Primary school, grades 1 to 4
- Basic school, grades 1 to 7/8
- Gymnasium, grades 8 to 12
- Secondary general school, grades 1 to 12
- Secondary general school, grades 5 to 12.

The vocational education and training system exists at the secondary education level, including three types of school: vocational gymnasium, with four-, five-, or six-year duration, grades 8/9 to 12/13; vocational school, with four-year duration, grades 9 to 12; and vocational centers.¹¹

Higher education includes 3 types of higher schools: university, specialized higher school, and college. Higher education includes the following degrees:¹²

- At least a three-year program ending with a Specialist degree,
- At least a four-year program ending with a Bachelor's degree,
- At least a five-year program or one year after the Bachelor's degree ending with a Master's degree,
- At least a three-year research program after the Master's degree ending with a Doctoral degree.

Different degrees may have specific names, depending on the educational traditions and specific features of the respective branch of learning.

In 2001, Bulgaria had 2,847 kindergartens with 198,244 children and 3,664 schools of all types and levels with 1,054,057 students and 96,887 teachers. There were 152 private schools with 6,975 students.¹³ The higher education system included 41 universities and specialized higher schools, and 47 three-year colleges. There were approximately 245,000 students and

24,000 teachers in higher education in 2001 enrollment ratios by level of education were: 40 percent in preschool; 86 percent in basic education; 70 percent in secondary education; and 35 percent in higher education.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

School principals are responsible for hiring teachers. Of the total teaching force, 80 percent are female. Nearly all of the primary school teachers (90 percent) are female. Approximately 25 percent of all teachers in Bulgaria work in the field of primary education. Concerning their age, 17 percent of primary teachers are under 30, 35 percent are between 30 and 39, 30 percent are between 40 and 49, and 18 percent are 50 and over.¹⁴

Teacher Education

Pre-service education and teacher training is accomplished several different ways.

- Teacher colleges prepare teachers for kindergarten, primary, and basic schools.
- Faculties of education at universities prepare teachers for all levels of education from kindergarten to secondary school, and for all school subjects.
- Departments of education at technical, economic, and other specialized universities primarily prepare teachers for vocational education.

In total, 13 universities have faculties of education and they are the most popular avenue for teacher education. There are 12 three-year teacher colleges, but graduates of these colleges usually continue their studies in part-time short-term programs at universities' faculties or departments of education for obtaining Bachelor's or Master's degrees. Thus, almost all teachers in Bulgaria have Bachelor's or Master's degrees including those in kindergartens, basic schools, secondary general schools, and vocational schools.

Teacher In-service Education

Teacher in-service education is not compulsory. It is provided, however, at three universities' faculties of education and institutes that have programs for improving teachers' qualifications.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Bulgarian official policy on reading literacy requires all students to be able to read by the end of grade 1.

However, many children have begun learning at home or in preparatory groups and can read when they start school.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Being able to read means that a student can demonstrate at the end of grade 1 fluent reading and understanding of an unknown text appropriate to the student's age. School reading instruction begins at grade 1 when most students are seven years old. However, reading instruction is included in programs of kindergartens for students aged five to six.

During primary education, reading is taught as a separate component of Bulgarian language. At grade 1, instruction is divided into 50 percent reading and 50 percent writing. At grades 2 to 4, instruction is divided 40 percent reading, 40 percent writing, and 20 percent improving verbal and written speech.

According to national education standards, the end of grade 4 marks the end of primary education. At this time, students must have a large number of language, social, cultural, and communication competencies. Some of them are:¹⁵

- Read with adequate intonation and understand the meaning
- Find synonyms and antonyms
- Explain, ask questions, and reply analytically
- Use different word-orders
- Speak logically and critically
- Respect others' speech

- Analyze and compare literature texts
- Plan and create own written text.

Materials for Reading Instruction

The materials used at grade 1 include the ABC book, a reader, and workbooks. At grades 2 and 3, students use a reader, workbooks, and a textbook on the Bulgarian language. Materials at grade 4 are the Bulgarian language textbook, workbooks, and a literature textbook. New materials for reading education in primary school are currently being discussed and prepared. They will be put into practice in 2002/2003. All materials used in grade 1, including those for reading instruction, are free of charge. Materials used in grades 2 to 4 are available at bookshops.

Instructional Time

There are 22 compulsory teaching periods a week in grades 1 to 2 and 25 in grades 3 to 4. Additionally, there are four free elective hours a week. Each teaching period is 35 minutes in grades 1 and 2, and 40 minutes in grades 3 and 4. There are 31 school weeks in grade 1 and 32 in grades 2 to 4.

As shown in Exhibits 3 and 4, the Bulgarian national school curriculum is being changed for the 2002/2003 school year. This curriculum policy in primary education aims at: 1) changing the structure of curriculum, 2) introducing foreign language instruction from grade 1, 3) introducing compulsory elective hours, 4) reducing time for reading instruction, mathematics, and some other subjects, and 5) emphasizing links among other subjects.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Generally, all subjects can be taught by one teacher, known as the primary classroom teacher. However, in most schools, subjects such as sports, music, and foreign language are taught by subject teachers. The number of students per class varies from 16 to 28, and the average number of students is 21. The average ratio of teachers to students within classrooms is 1:17.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

The primary classroom teacher is responsible for teaching reading. Bulgarian schools have no reading specialists. There are experts in Bulgarian language

Exhibit 3: Current National Primary School Curriculum 2001/2002

Number of school weeks	31	32	32	32	Total 1-4
Subject's Grade	1	2	3	4	
A. Compulsory					
Bulgarian language	8/248 *	8/256	8/256	8/256	1016
Mathematics	4/124	4/128	4/128	4/128	508
Native studies	1,5/46,5	2/64	2/64	2/64	238,5
Nature studies	-	-	1,5/48	2/64	112
Music	2/62	2/64	2/64	2/64	254
Fine arts	2/62	2/64	2/64	2/64	254
Handwork	1/31	10/227	2/64	2/64	191
Sports	3,5/108,5	3/96	3/96	3/96	396,5
Total A	22/682	22/704	24,5/784	25/800	2970
B. Compulsory elective	-	-	-	-	-
Total A + B	22/682	22/704	24,5/784	25/800	2970
C. Free elective	2/93	4/128	4/128	4/128	477
Total A + B + C	25/775	26/832	28,5/912	29/928	3447

* 8/248 means: 8 hours per week / 248 hours per year

Source: *Guidelines for the Organization of General, Special and Vocational Schools in 2001/2002*. Ministry of Education and Science. Sofia, 2001.

Exhibit 4: New National Primary School Curriculum 2002/2003

Number of school weeks	31	32	32	32	Total 1-4
Subject's Grade	1	2	3	4	
A. Compulsory					
Bulgarian language	7/217	7/224	7/224	7/224	889
Foreign Languages	2/62	2/64	2/64	2/64	254
Mathematics	3/93	3/96	3,5/112	3,5/112	413
Nature studies	1/31	-	-	-	31
Human and Society	-	-	1,5/48	1,5/48	96
Environment	-	1/32	-	-	32
Human and Nature	-	-	1,5/48	1,5/48	96
Music	2/62	2/64	1,5/48	2/64	238
Fine Arts	2/62	2/64	2/64	1,5/48	238
Homework and Technics	1/31	1/32	1/32	1/32	127
Sports	2/62	2/64	2,5/80	2,5/80	286
Total A	20/620	20/640	22,5/720	22,5/720	2700
B. Compulsory elective	2/62	2/64	2,5/80	2,5/80	286
Total A + B	22/682	22/704	25/800	25/800	2986
C. Free elective	4/124	4/128	4/128	4/128	508
Total A + B + C	26/806	26/832	29/928	29/928	3494

Source: *Ordinance No. 4 of September 1999 on General Educational Minimum and Teaching time*. Ministry of Education and Science. Sofia, State Gazette, No. 80, 1999.

and literature at the Inspectorates of Education and the Ministry of Education and Science, but they perform control and organizational functions only and have no teaching or advising role.

Second Language Reading Instruction

There are no special second language reading programs in Bulgaria for immigrants. However, minorities can study their mother tongues at public schools as free elective instruction.

Reading Disabilities

Students' reading ability is regularly monitored and controlled by their teachers. Students who have reading difficulties are given support, but if they fail to make normal progress while receiving such support, specialists can diagnose their difficulties. A few schools have specialists in reading disabilities. However, most of the specialists work at medical centers. There are no extra lessons during school hours for dyslexic children.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

The classroom assessment of students' achievements in oral and written examinations, tests, and in scores for certificates and diplomas at all levels of education is done on the basis of a 2 - 6 point scale, where 2 is poor, 3 is satisfactory, 4 is good, 5 is very good, and 6 is excellent. However, there are no single tests of progress in reading that are commonly implemented and used across Bulgarian schools.

National or Regional Examinations

There are no national or regional examinations. During Bulgarian primary education, students are examined by their teachers in the classroom. The transition from primary to progymnasium phase is done after a successful completion of grade 4.

Standardized Tests

Bulgarian primary teachers do not use standardized tests of reading achievement. The only national standardized test in Bulgarian education is used after grade 7 in application for gymnasiums.

Diagnostic Testing

During basic education, diagnostic tests are not used, except by specialists in reading difficulties to diagnose and identify students' problems. There are some tests of schools' readiness that have been developed by university research teams. However, those tests are not implemented across the country and are very rarely used.

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Language and Literacy



Canada has two official languages: English and French. In 1996, 67 percent of the country's population spoke English only, 14 percent spoke French only, 17 percent spoke both official languages, and 2 percent spoke neither English nor French. In the province of Ontario, 86 percent of the population spoke only English, less than one percent spoke only French, and 12 percent spoke both languages. In contrast, 56 percent of the population in the province of Quebec spoke only French, 5 percent spoke only English, and 38 percent spoke both languages.

Of Quebec's total population of over 7 million, roughly 6 million are Francophones descended from colonists who came from France in the 17th and 18th centuries. Today, Francophones in Quebec maintain their culture even while living on a primarily anglophone North American continent.

Other than English and French, the most commonly-spoken languages (mother tongue) in Canada are Chinese, Italian, and German. In Quebec, the most common languages are Italian, Spanish, and Arabic, while in Ontario they are Chinese, Italian, and German. In 1996, Ontario had over 141,000 people of Aboriginal, Metis, or Inuit origin,¹ while Quebec had 72,430 people of Aboriginal, Metis, or Inuit origin.²

The city of Ottawa in Ontario is the national capital of Canada, and is both bilingual and bicultural. Toronto is Ontario's capital and Canada's largest city, with a regional population of more than 4.5 million. The United Nations states that Toronto is one of the world's most multi-cultural cities, with one-half of its population foreign-born. The city of Montreal is Quebec's largest city, with a

population of over 3.4 million. In fact, almost half of Quebec's population lives in and around Montreal. Of this population, 67 percent have French as their mother tongue, and 14.3 percent have English. Montreal also has a diverse multi-cultural population; in 1991, 30 percent of the population living in the area was foreign-born. Quebec City is the capital of the province of Quebec.

In 1998, Ontario had a total of 843 permanent library locations and 113 mobile libraries, serving a population of 10,707,074 (94% of Ontario's population). The total circulation of public libraries was 99,199,167.³ Quebec had 162 public libraries and 94 branches, with a total of 1,607,338 users. Total circulation for that year was 33,716,402.⁴

Education System



Governance and Organization

The 10 provinces and 3 territories in Canada are each responsible for education within their own jurisdiction through the end of secondary school. Each province or territory sets its own policies for curriculum, teacher certification, accreditation of schools, and reporting of student progress. School boards set local policy within the parameters established by the provincial Ministry of Education, in areas such as school operation, implementation of curriculum, and hiring of teachers and support staff. Individual teachers and schools make decisions about instructional techniques and classroom processes.⁵

In Quebec, the official language of instruction at the elementary and secondary levels is French. English language instruction is available to students

* This chapter focuses on Ontario and Quebec since those two large provinces constitute the Canadian participation in PIRLS.

Country Profile: Canada

Geographical Location and Size

Occupying the northern half of the North American continent, Canada's land mass is 9,093,507 square kilometers, making it the second-largest country in the world after Russia. It also has the longest coastline of any country. Canada shares an 8,891 kilometer boundary with the United States to the south. Due to the harsh northern climate, most of Canada's 30 million people live within a few hundred kilometers of the southern border where the climate is milder. It is estimated that Canada has one-seventh of the world's fresh water.⁶ Canada is made up of 10 provinces and 3 territories. Two of these provinces, Ontario and Quebec, represent 60 percent of Canada's population and are part of the PIRLS project.

Situated between the provinces of Saskatchewan to the west and Quebec to the east, the province of Ontario is bordered on the south by the Great Lakes and on the north by Hudson Bay. The area of Ontario is 1,068,580 square kilometers, made up of the Canadian Shield (a vast rocky plateau), the Hudson Bay Lowlands (narrow coastal plains), and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands. Most of the province's population (90%), and most of the industry, commerce, and agricultural land can be found in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands.⁷

The province of Quebec is bordered by Ontario, New Brunswick, Labrador (the mainland portion of the province of Newfoundland), and the United States. Quebec's area is 1,357,812 square kilometers, making it the largest of Canada's provinces. The province is made up of three main geographical regions: the Canadian Shield, the St. Lawrence Lowlands, and the Appalachian Mountains. The St. Lawrence River links the Atlantic Ocean with the Great Lakes, and almost 80 percent of Quebec's population lives along the river.⁸



Population and Health Statistics

The population of Canada in 2001 was 31,081,887, with a population density of 3.1 residents per square kilometer.⁹ Ontario's population is about 11.8 million and Quebec's is over 7 million. Quebec's population density is 4.7 residents per square kilometer. About 78 percent of Canada's population live in urban areas, 3 percent live in rural farming areas, and 19 percent live in rural non-farming areas.¹⁰

Immigration has always played an important role in the growth of Canada. About 60 percent of all immigrants to Canada settle in Ontario, where there are large numbers of people of Italian, German, Chinese, Dutch, Portuguese, Indian, Polish, and Caribbean origin. Immigration is also important to Quebec, and consists of people of Italian, Eastern European, Portuguese, Haitian, Lebanese, South American, and Southeast Asian origin. About 25,000 immigrants from over 100 countries settle in Quebec every year.

The infant mortality rate in Canada in 1997 was 5.5 per 1,000 live births. The average life expectancy at birth in 1992 was 78 years. In Ontario, life expectancy for males is 75 and for females is 81. In Quebec, life expectancy for males is 74 years and 81 years for females.¹¹

Political System

Canada has a federal form of government that is responsible for national defense, inter-provincial and international trade and commerce, the banking and monetary system, criminal law, fisheries, aeronautics, shipping, railways, telecommunications, and atomic energy. In turn, the provinces and territories are responsible for education, property and civic rights, administration of justice, the hospital system, natural resources within their borders, social security, and health and municipal institutions.¹²

Economy and Employment

Canada's gross domestic product in 2000 was CAN\$ 1,056,010 million. Ontario's gross domestic product (GDP) was CAN\$ 429.5 million. Ontario is Canada's most productive province, generating some 40 percent of the country's gross domestic product. Ontario's major manufacturing industry is the automobile industry, employing more than 140,000 people. Natural resources such as gold, nickel, copper, uranium, and zinc, as well as the forest industry, play important roles in the development of Ontario's economy. Other important industries in Ontario include finance, located primarily in Toronto, and tourism.¹³

Quebec's GDP in 2000 was CAN\$ 223.5 million.¹⁴ Quebec's economy is highly industrialized and quite diversified. Natural resources, energy (particularly electricity), agriculture, manufacturing and service sectors are important to the province's economy. Montreal, the province's commercial capital, has developed competitive industries in space and aeronautics, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, energy and transportation.¹⁵

In 2001, the proportion of males over the age of 15 years in the workforce in Canada was 72 percent, while the proportion of females in the workforce was 60 percent. In Quebec, the proportion of males was 71 percent, and of females was 57 percent, and in Ontario the proportions were 74 percent and 61 percent, respectively. The main types of employment in Ontario and Quebec, as in Canada as a whole, include the following sectors: sales and service; business, finance, and administrative; trades, transport and equipment operators; management; and processing, manufacturing, and utilities.¹⁶

whose parent(s) received elementary instruction in English in Canada (approximately 10% of students in Quebec).

At the national level, the ministers of education from each province and territory have established the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada to ensure communication on issues such as funding, programs, and assessment. The Council also occasionally undertakes national education projects looking primarily at student assessment.¹⁷

Education is the second largest public expenditure in Canada, at CAN\$ 60.5 billion in 1998-99 (CAN\$ 1,996 per capita). Only spending on health exceeds the country's spending on education. In 1995, Canada spent 7 percent of the GDP on education (just over 7% for Quebec and just under 7% for Ontario). In terms of public expenditure as a percentage of total public expenditure, Canada spent 13.6 percent in 1995, with Quebec and Ontario spending slightly more than the national average.¹⁸

Structure of the Education System

Public education is provided free to all Canadian citizens and permanent residents until the end of secondary school – usually age 18. The ages of compulsory schooling vary from one jurisdiction to another, but schooling is usually required from age 6 or 7 to age 16.

Levels of Education

The public education system in Canada is divided into two levels: elementary and secondary. Elementary is in turn subdivided into primary and intermediate, and secondary is subdivided into junior and senior high school.

Pre-elementary Education

Most provinces and territories offer a one-year program for children prior to starting grade 1. In Ontario and Quebec, most schools boards offer a two-year program (junior and senior kindergarten). Children are aged 3 to 6 years in this program.¹⁹

Elementary Education

The primary levels of education include grades 1 to 3. The typical age range of students in these grades is 6 to 9 years. At the intermediate level, students are in grades 4 to 6, and are 9 to 12 years old. In 1992, 98 percent of all children of elementary school age in Canada attended school.²⁰ In Quebec, elementary education is divided into three cycles of 2 years each.

Secondary Education

Junior high school includes grades 7 to 9, and senior high school includes grades 10 to 12 (grade 11 in Quebec). In 1992, 90 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds in Canada were enrolled in school.²¹ In Quebec, secondary school is divided into two cycles, one of three years and one of two years. Students are awarded a Secondary School Diploma after grade 11, which provides access to college (CEGEP) but does not lead directly to university. Students usually attend CEGEP for 2 years before starting post-secondary education.²² In Ontario, students proceed directly to college or university after obtaining a Secondary School Diploma after grade 12.

Types of Schools

In Ontario, the provincial government funds both public and Roman Catholic schools. Of the 4,790 schools in Ontario that receive government funding, 3,173 (66%) are public schools and 1,617 are Roman Catholic schools. In 1999-2000, 68 percent of students in the government-funded system were enrolled in the public system, while 31 percent were enrolled in the Roman Catholic system.²³ In addition, there are 722 private schools in Ontario with a total enrollment of 102,970 students. Private schools do not receive any government funding.

In Quebec, schools are divided by language rather than religion. The provincial government funds both French and English public schools. There are 72 school boards in Quebec: 60 French, 9 English, and 3 representing schools in other languages. There are 272 private schools in Quebec: 216 French, 25 English, and 31 French and English. A total of 9 percent of elementary and secondary school students attend private schools.²⁴ The provincial government subsidizes some private schools in Quebec – these schools receive 52 percent of the funding provided to

public schools. Other private schools have a different status and are not financially supported by the government.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The school year in Canada ranges from 180 to 200 days. It begins in September and ends in June. Most schools close for 2 weeks in December and 1 week in March. Additionally, there are several national or local holidays throughout the school year during which schools are closed.²⁵

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

In 1997-98, Canada had 296,901 elementary and secondary school teachers. In Quebec there were 70,366 teachers, and in Ontario there were 117,160.²⁶ In Ontario in 1999-2000, 76 percent of the elementary teaching population was female.²⁷ Similarly, 84 percent of elementary teachers in Quebec was female. This difference in male-female teacher ratio is evident across Canada.²⁸

The average age of teachers is increasing in Canada: in 1972-73, the average age was 34 years; in 1981-82 it was 38, and in 1992-93 it was 42 years. The proportion of teachers 45 years of age or older increased from 20 percent in 1972-73 to 23 percent in 1981-82 to 41 percent in 1992-93.²⁹ In 1999, 25 percent or more of teaching staff in Ontario and Quebec were between the ages of 50 and 59.³⁰

Teacher Education

Elementary school teachers in Canada must complete a four-year university course plus one year of teacher education, or a three-year university course plus two years of teacher education. Faculties of education within universities conduct teacher education, and provincial Ministries of Education award certificates to successful candidates. Most of the teacher training at the elementary level focuses on general applications across curricular areas.

Teacher In-service Education

Provincial ministries of education, local school boards, and university faculties of education usually offer in-service training. Teachers' associations and

other professional organizations also provide training to teachers. In-service education is not mandatory, but often is essential due to curriculum changes and reassignment of teaching subjects.³¹

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The Ontario Language Curriculum (grades 1-8) includes expectations for each grade level in writing, reading, oral, and visual communication. The curriculum stresses the importance of language learning:

...students acquire skills that are essential in the workplace. For example, they learn to analyze ideas and information and to communicate them clearly, both orally and in writing. Through a study of literature, they come to understand other people and themselves, and to appreciate the power of words and the many different uses of language. By examining productions, they develop the ability to understand and interpret a range of media messages.³²

In Ontario, the following principles and practices are common to all language programs:³³

- Language is essential to emotional, intellectual, and social development and is a key element of the curriculum.
- Reading, writing, oral, and visual communication skills are interconnected and interdependent.
- Personal response to literature is important in developing language and critical thinking skills, as well as positive attitudes to reading.
- Writing is taught as a process, with a focus on writing correctly and appropriately for various purposes and audiences.
- Textbooks are authorized by the province, but teachers are also free to choose from a wide range of learning resources.

The curriculum further defines an effective reader as one who can grasp the essential ideas in a piece of writing, and can also use and apply these

ideas. Students develop the skills needed to process, analyze, and absorb information, and to think clearly, creatively, and critically. The underlying belief is that by exposing students to a variety of reading activities and experiences, they will develop a love of reading, which is seen as one of the most valuable resources a student can take into adult life.³⁴

The Quebec Ministry of Education released a Strategic Plan for the years 2000 to 2003. The objective related to literacy states:

Improve the academic achievement of students by encouraging them to learn as much as they can and to stay in school until they graduate.

The education system is directed to meet this objective by increasing graduation rates across all levels, improving achievement levels, implementing a revised policy on special education, and making education more accessible.³⁵

The Quebec government also approved a new curriculum in 2001, which is compulsory for pre-school and elementary cycles 1 (grades 1 and 2) and 2 (grades 3 and 4), and will be compulsory for elementary cycle 3 (grades 5 and 6) as of September 2002. The new English Language Arts program is described as a literacy program, centered on:

...the connection between the learner's world and words, since language is both a means of communicating feelings, ideas, values, beliefs and knowledge, as well as a medium that makes active participation in democratic life and a pluralistic culture possible.

According to the government, the goal of all literacy programs is to provide opportunities for students to use language to make sense of their experience and break down barriers that separate individuals. Students should develop the language competencies and strategies they will need to become active and critical members of society.³⁶

Reading Curriculum and Standards

The government of Ontario defines the reading process as one that involves understanding the relationship between written language and speech and relating ideas and information encountered in reading to one's knowledge and experience. Some

essential aspects of the reading process include:³⁷

- Reading for particular purposes
- Examining a piece of writing in preparation for reading
- Using a range of reading strategies to understand what is being read
- Critically examining the ideas
- Summarizing and explaining the main ideas.

Ontario's language curriculum details the knowledge and skills that students are expected to acquire in each grade. In reading, expectations range from reading simple written materials (e.g., stories, poems) in grade 2 to reading and interpreting fiction and non-fiction (e.g., novels, biographies) in grade 5.

The Ontario language curriculum contains expectations for each grade and achievement level. The expectations describe the knowledge students are expected to develop and demonstrate in class work, on tests, and in other activities. Students are expected to acquire reading skills and knowledge in the following areas:³⁸

- Reasoning and critical thinking, such as research skills
- Understanding of form and style, such as knowing the difference between biography and fiction
- Knowledge of language structures, including grammar
- Knowledge of conventions, including punctuation
- Vocabulary building.

In each grade, four levels of achievement are specified in the areas of reasoning, communication, organization, and application of language conventions. The standard for the Province has been set at level 3, which corresponds to a high level of achievement. Level 1 identifies achievement much below the provincial standard, level 2

denotes achievement that approaches the provincial standard, and level 4 surpasses the standard.

The new Quebec language arts curriculum states that students demonstrate literacy when:

...the student uses his or her understanding of written, spoken and visual texts in contexts that are personally relevant and that influence his or her personal development, social relationships and/or community. Literacy is the extension of the student's knowledge of basic language and of texts to situations or contexts where his/her understanding is used for personally and socially significant reasons.

The new program focuses on the development of competencies. The idea is that students should be able to use a range of resources, both internal and external, to find an appropriate answer to a question or the solution to a problem. Competencies are complex and progressive. The policy states that focusing on competencies will promote: integrated learning, structuring of school organization in two-year learning cycles, adapting the evaluation of learning to the aims of the program, recognizing the professional nature of teaching, and making the classroom and the school a learning community.

Although reading competencies are described separately in the policy document, reading is seen as part of the integrated language arts program. The belief is that reading development occurs together with writing, viewing, visually representing, talking, and listening. Students use reading to assist them in using information, solving problems, exercising critical judgment, and using creativity.

The curriculum breaks each competency into:

- Focus (meaning, connections to cross-curricular competencies, context for learning and developmental profile)
- Key features (processes essential for its development)
- Evaluation criteria (observable standards)
- End-of-cycle outcomes (benchmarks for what may be expected of students at the end of a cycle).

In addition, the following information and suggestions are included for each competency: cultural references, essential knowledge (resources needed for the development of the competency), and suggestions for using information and communications technology.³⁹

Materials for Reading Education

The Ontario curriculum states that:

...reading programs should include a variety of materials, both fiction and non-fiction. Students should read both classic and contemporary literature of a high standard, including works produced by Canadians. Frequent exposure to writing of high quality will inspire students to work toward standards in their own writing and to develop an appreciation for the power and beauty of the written word.⁴⁰

The curriculum also recommends different types of materials for different grade levels. For example:

- At grades 1 to 3 students should read poetry, folk tales, picture alphabet and counting books, pattern books, etc.
- At grades 4 to 6 students should read fables, myths, adventure and mystery stories, humor, children's classics, etc.
- At grades 7 to 8 students should read myths and legends, short stories and novels including historical fiction, classics, non-fiction, reports, etc.

The Quebec language arts curriculum focuses on three types of text: literary (narratives, poetry, plays, journals, diaries, and picture books); popular (comics, ads, posters, letters, invitations, etc.); and information-based (non-fiction texts, visual texts, and media texts). In addition, the government provides a list of approved resources for teachers to use for each subject area. The curriculum also states that:

...decoding texts is only one part of the process of reading, making it essential that the student partake of the rich cultural heritage found in literary, popular and information-based texts.⁴¹

The Quebec curriculum provides suggestions for information and communication technology resources that teachers can use when developing subject-specific competencies. The Ontario curriculum also provides specific uses of technology in the curriculum, such as the use of CD-ROM dictionaries.

Instructional Time

In Canada, elementary students usually attend school for 30 hours per week. Of these, 23 to 24 hours are spent on instruction, and the rest is divided among daily opening exercises, lunch, and recess.⁴² In Ontario, local school boards, and often schools themselves, determine the amount of time teachers dedicate to language instruction and activities, and reading instruction. There are no provincial directives about the length of time teachers must spend in these areas. In contrast, Quebec, mandates 9 hours per week of language instruction (English or French) in grades 1 and 2, and 7 hours per week of language instruction in grades 3 through 6.⁴³ Elementary school students receive a total of 846 hours of instruction per year.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

In Ontario and Quebec, local school boards or schools determine how and when to group students for instructional purposes. There is no typical class size for a Canadian classroom. Class size may range from under 10 students to over 40. In Ontario, the majority of elementary school classes range from 21 to 28 students. In Quebec, the Ministry of Education has established minimum and maximum numbers of students per class, depending on the grade and the students' socioeconomic background. In 2001-02, kindergarten class sizes ranged from 18 to 20 students, grade 1 classes from 18 to 25 students, grade 2 from 25 to 27, and grades 3-6 from 27 to 29 students.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

In Ontario, local school boards determine the role of reading specialists in reading instruction. For example, school boards may have reading specialists that work with students in a number of schools, assisting student with difficulties, and providing a resource to assist teachers in developing reading programs.

In Quebec as of 1999-2000, about 8,689 special education teachers worked with students who had

learning difficulties, in school. Private schools employed about 180 of these teachers. Special education teacher support is available for students with language difficulties, as well as those with difficulties in mathematics and other subject areas.

Second Language Instruction

The Ontario Ministry of Education states that the role of the school is to assist students for whom English is a second language to acquire the language skills required to allow them to participate on an equal footing with their peers. Programs and assessment methods are to be adjusted to accommodate the needs of these students and support them in their learning.⁴⁴ The decisions about how to meet the needs of these students are made at the local school board level.

The Quebec Ministry of Education provides services to students whose first language is not French to help them integrate into school and society. Examples of these services include welcoming services and special classes. These programs are available to students for longer than one school year, if required. The services help support students while they learn French, with the goal of integrating the students into normal classrooms.⁴⁵

Reading Disabilities

In Ontario, local school boards determine how students with reading disabilities will be identified and taught. For example, in some school boards, classroom teachers identify students with reading difficulties. Teachers with special qualifications assess these students, and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is created to meet the student's specific needs. The IEP contains strategies for the classroom teacher and parents to assist the student, and ideas on how to modify the program so the student can complete the curriculum requirements to the best of his or her ability.

In Quebec, the principal of the school, the parents, the student having difficulties, and the school staff work together to establish an intervention plan to meet the needs of the student. The intervention plan must meet the school board's requirements. The principal is responsible for ensuring the plan is carried out and periodically evaluated to ensure that it is responsive to the student's educational needs.

Literacy Programs



In 1999, the Ontario government implemented a variety of initiatives to promote early literacy and child-development as well as parenting programs. The programs include:

- Creation of five Early Years Demonstration Projects around the province to test and evaluate different community-based approaches to early child development and parenting
- Pilot assessment of children's development upon entering school in these project communities
- Creation of an Early Years Task Group to advise the government on developing a province-wide network of early child development and parenting initiatives
- Public education on the importance of children's early years
- Funding to assist local programs from the business, charitable and voluntary sectors.

In addition, Ontario implemented an Early Reading Strategy in 2001 to provide extra assistance to students in order to raise the reading achievement of students in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3, as measured by province-wide tests. The Early Reading Strategy includes the following components:

- Schools set a three-year target for improvement in students' reading achievement.
- School boards review students' results when they receive grade 3 province-wide test results, and adjust their targets accordingly.
- Schools report annually to school councils on progress made toward meeting their targets.

The Ontario government states that it will provide additional funding to purchase student learning resources to support the Early Reading Strategy, and to provide training for principals and teachers on assessment methods, setting targets, and related activities. In addition, selected schools across the province needing extra assistance to improve student achievement will receive

additional help through the implementation of reading improvement programs. Board-level literacy coordinators will work closely with these schools to develop strategies for improvement.⁴⁶

In the spring of 2000, the Quebec Ministry of Education made a commitment to emphasize the importance of education in all sectors of society, and to promote success for the greatest possible number of young people. As a result, all elementary and secondary schools must develop and implement a plan for success, with clear and measurable goals for improving student achievement. The program involves all aspects of school life, including literacy, and schools are required to set targets for each year.⁴⁷

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

In Canada, classroom assessment is used extensively for both formative and summative purposes. Formative assessment involves identifying which concepts students understand and which ones they are having difficulty with during the learning process. Based on the information from these assessments, teachers can then adjust their teaching methods to meet individual needs. Teachers across Canada use paper-and-pencil tests, class projects, and individual assignments when evaluating student achievement. Examples in textbooks and exemplars in curriculum guides provide guidelines for teacher-made quizzes and examinations. The use of observational techniques and portfolio assessments is also increasing in classrooms.⁴⁸

Summative assessment involves the evaluation of how well students understand and demonstrate their knowledge and skills. This type of assessment forms the basis for reporting to students and parents. In Quebec, teachers are required to maintain individual student Language Arts portfolios containing samples of the student's development in each of the competencies. The reading portfolio may include reading samples, responses, drawings, preferences, presentations of group work or role-plays, self-evaluations, reflections, and goals. These materials are used for assessment and evaluation of individual students.⁴⁹

National Examinations

Canadian students participate in a variety of international, national, and provincial assessments. Internationally, students across Canada participated in the following assessments:

- Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS-1995)
- Repeat of Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS-1999)
- 2000 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)
- Second Information Technology in Education Study (SITES) Module 2
- 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (assessed the literacy skills of the adult population).

In terms of national assessments, a sample of 13- to 16-year-old students across Canada participated in the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) beginning in 1993. SAIP assesses mathematics and problem solving, reading and writing, and science on a three-year cycle.

In Ontario, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) was established in 1996 to ensure greater accountability across the province. Every year, all grade 3 and 6 students in the province participate in reading, writing, and mathematics assessments, and grade 9 students participate in a mathematics assessment. These tests assess student achievement according to the outcomes in the provincial curriculum documents. In grade 10, all students participate in the Test of Reading and Writing Skills. All students must pass this literacy test to obtain their secondary school diploma.⁵⁰

Quebec has a series of examinations, called uniform examinations, for all secondary students. These examinations are summative and compulsory to certify completion of secondary school studies. In 1997-98, the subjects were language of instruction and second language in Secondary V, and history of Quebec and Canada and physical sciences in Secondary IV. In addition, the province of Quebec has a series of compulsory examinations for evaluation of student learning of

certain subjects not required for certification of studies. These examinations are for French in Elementary 6 and Secondary III. Other examinations are being developed. The government also has developed a series of optional complementary examinations for evaluation of students in compulsory or optional subjects that school boards and private schools can choose to use. In elementary school, there are examinations for French and English language arts in Elementary 3 and 6, and mathematics for Elementary 6. In secondary school, the examinations are available in French and mathematics.⁵¹

Students in Quebec have participated in over 20 language assessments since 1991. Sixteen of these assessments were part of the Indicators Program by the Council of Ministers of Education. French- and English-speaking students completed both reading and writing assessments. Francophone students in Quebec also have participated in two French-language international reading and writing studies, comparing French-speaking students in Quebec with those from France, Belgium, and New Brunswick, Canada.

Standardized Tests

In Ontario, individual school boards or schools determine if and when they will use commercial tests of reading achievement. Commonly used examples of such tests include the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test, Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Canadian Achievement Test, Developmental Reading Assessment, Reading Recovery™, and First Steps.

Quebec students are regularly tested throughout their school careers. A test of written language ability is prepared and administered by the Ministry of Education every year.

Diagnostic Testing

In Ontario, local school boards determine the process for diagnostic testing and screening of students with learning difficulties. Most often, the classroom teacher identifies such students. A specialized teacher from the school board comes into the school to assess the student and create an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

In Quebec, a distinction is made between students at risk, students with behavior problems, and handicapped students. Once a student is identified, a qualified teacher administers a diagnostic

test to identify the source or nature of the problem. When the cause is determined, appropriate learning strategies are used to meet realistic goals for each individual student.

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Language and Literacy



Colombians have been reading newspapers for several centuries. The first newspapers were published in 1791, and their quality improved with the arrival of the printing press in 1848.¹ Currently, there are approximately 20 daily newspapers and magazines, with a circulation of 46 newspapers per 1,000 inhabitants.²

There are approximately 1,300 public libraries in the 1,036 municipalities of Colombia.³ The Ministry of Culture, by means of the National Library, is the central agency responsible for the National Public Libraries System. In Colombia, the public library system is usually attached to government agencies, and libraries specialize in collections belonging to specific academic areas. Each library gets its supplies through purchases, donations, and publication exchanges made by government agencies such as Ministries or Research Institutes. Both institutional libraries and public libraries have begun to automate the information about their collections, in order to create a computerized network of information for the users' benefit. This network is called "Red de Servicios de Información Documental" (Documental Information Services Network). Access to some of these libraries requires that the user work for an institution or be a certified researcher, while access to others is free.

Colombia's official language is Spanish, but more than 292 Amerindian dialects are spoken, including those pertaining to the linguistic families Arawak, Karib, Chibcha, and Tukano, among others. This shows an aspect of the country's enormous cultural diversity. The use of these dialects promotes social coexistence and the establishment of social links within the community. In these linguistic communities, Spanish is used as a second language.⁴

Educational System



Governance and Organization

There are three government agencies responsible for the educational process in Colombia: Congress, the Ministry of National Education, and Territorial Entities. Congress is responsible for issuing legislation, which gives the national government authority for education. The Ministry of National Education is responsible for educational policies, planning, inspection, supervising, administration, and norms. Territorial Entities are responsible for the administration of regional educational services. Public expenditure on education is 4 percent of GNP.⁵

The Ministry of National Education establishes curricular guidelines that cover 80 percent of the school's curricular development. Mandatory curriculum areas include natural sciences and environmental education, social sciences, history, geography, political constitution and democracy, art, ethics and human values, physical education, recreation and sports, religious education, humanities, spanish and foreign languages, mathematics and technology, and computer science. Educational institutions are free to organize 20 percent of the curriculum through an Institutional Educational Project (PEI). Educational institutions may be both public and private, but they must all comply with the regulations established by law.⁶

Structure of the Education System

In Colombia, the educational system is divided into four levels: preschool education, basic education (primary and secondary cycles), high education and higher education (university studies). Most recently, the Colombian Constitution issued in 1991 established mandatory education for children between

Country Profile: Colombia

Geographical Location and Size

Located at the Northeastern part of South America, the Republic of Colombia has coasts both in the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. Colombia has an area of 1,142,000 square kilometers and a coastline that is 2,900 kilometers long. Its capital is Bogotá D.C., located at the center of the country. Crossing the country from north to south, the Andes are the most important topographic aspect of Colombia. In Colombia, the Andes are divided into three mountain ranges—the Eastern, Western, and Central. The Central range has several volcano peaks, which together make the National Snowcapped Mountain Park. The main rivers are: Magdalena, Cauca, Amazon and Atrato, among others.⁷

Population and Health Statistics

Colombia has a population of approximately 42,000,000 inhabitants, and a population density of 40 persons per square kilometer.⁸ Seventy-three percent of the population is urban. The main population centers are found in the West-Center and Caribbean areas.

Settlement by Spaniards, Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans, and, since the 19th century, Arab immigration to the Caribbean coast has given rise to three major ethnic groups of mixed race: Mestizo (Indian and white), Mulato (black and white), and Zambo (Indian and black). The population in the mountain ranges and the high plateau is primarily Mestiza. In the Caribbean Coast region, Mestizos and Mulatos predominate, and in the Pacific Coast region, Mulatos and Zambos.

Life expectancy is 70 years, although this varies according to gender: 67 years for men and 74 years for women. The infant mortality rate in 2001 was 23 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁹



Political System

Colombia is a unified Republic. There is only one form of government, one Constitution, and one legislation ruling over the entire national territory. It is organized into 32 Departments and a district capital with decentralized administration. It is a democratic, participative, and pluralistic Republic. The President of the Republic is the Chief of State and the highest administrative authority. Power is divided among three branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judiciary. The Legislative branch is responsible for issuing legislation according to the Constitution, and for political control over the Government and its administration. The Executive branch is responsible for warranting the rights of all Colombians, international relationships, directing public forces, and promoting peace and security. The Judiciary branch is responsible for the administration of justice.¹⁰

Economy and Employment

The main economic sectors include agriculture, industrial activities (mining, manufacturing, construction, transportation, communications, and business), and services. The main employment sector is services, accounting for 66 percent of total employment.¹¹ The labor force is made up of 38.4 percent women and 61.6 percent men. Annual income per capita was US\$ 2,170 in 2001.¹²

five and fifteen years of age, including one year of preschool education and nine years of basic schooling. It also stated that education should be free of cost in public schools for low-income families.¹³

Preschool Education

Preschool education, aimed at children under six years of age, promotes the child's integral development in biological, cognitive, psychomotor, socio-affective, and spiritual areas. Preschool education includes three grades – the first two are preparatory to schooling and the third is mandatory.¹⁴ Of the 10.8 percent of children entering preschool,¹⁵ 50 percent attend public schools and 50 percent private schools.¹⁶

Basic Education

Basic Education is directed to children between 6 and 15 years of age, and includes nine grades (from first to ninth grade). It is divided in two cycles:

- Basic primary education, a five year cycle, for children 6 to 10 years old, and
- Basic secondary education, a four year cycle, for ages 11 to 15 approximately.¹⁷

The percentage of children entering basic primary school is 52.9 percent,¹⁸ of which 80 percent attend public schools and 19 percent private schools.¹⁹ Of the 26.7 percent of children entering basic secondary school,²⁰ 63 percent attend public schools and 37 percent private schools.²¹

High School

High school includes two grades – tenth and eleventh. It is a continuation of basic secondary education and may be academic or technical. Academic high school includes areas from secondary education at a higher level, and other areas such as economy, political science, and philosophy. Students may specialize in a given area of science, art, or humanities. Technical high schools provide theoretical and practical courses in those specialties required by the production and service sectors. Some academic high schools offer a special modality, "Pedagogic High School," where the students, after specializing for four years in basic areas of knowledge, are certified for teaching in basic primary schools. Only those institutions classified

as "*Escuelas Normales Superiores*" are certified for providing these academic programs.

Upon completing high school, students receive a High School diploma, required for entering higher education institutions.²² The schooling rate in the higher education is 14.4 percent.²³

Duration and Timing of the School Year

Colombia has two academic calendars known as A and B. Calendar A begins the last week in January, and ends in November; calendar B begins in September and ends in June. Determined by the Ministry of National Education, currently the mandatory schedule for schools is 20 hours per week for preschool, 25 hours per week for primary schools, and 30 hours per week for secondary and high schools. Schools are open for instruction five days a week, from Monday to Friday, for a total of 40 weeks per academic year.²⁴

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

In Colombia, the teaching force for basic primary education is made up of 77 percent women and 23 percent men.²⁵

Teacher Education

The *Escuelas Normales Superiores* and Higher Education Institutions are the institutions responsible for teacher education. The *Escuelas Normales Superiores* offer a four-year high school program. The student specializes in one basic area of knowledge and, upon completion, receives a Pedagogic High School diploma, certifying him/her for teaching in basic primary schools. A Bachelor's title, issued by higher-level institutions, is required for teaching basic secondary school and higher schooling levels.²⁶ Teacher training includes one year of mandatory supervised practice in a school.

Teachers who enter the State educational service are nominated by decree. They are selected by competitive examinations among those who comply with all the legal requisites established. Each municipality fills its available posts through this mechanism. Teachers enter the National Teaching Scale, a classification system, where teachers are graded according to their academic background and their teaching experience.

The grade in the scale determines the teaching level allowed for each individual teacher.

Teaching is ruled by the norms established in the Teaching Statutes and in Law 115 of 1994, General Law for Education. Teaching primary school requires certification as a teacher, as well as training in a specific area of knowledge. Other professionals, with education in areas different from pedagogy, may teach some levels or grades, and may also be included in the National Teaching Scale, if they have studied pedagogy for one year, either in Colombia or abroad.²⁷

Instruction in reading requires that the teacher be a certified teacher, has completed the institutional practice period, has entered the National Teacher Scale, and presents grades for courses taken in Linguistics or similar areas.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policies

The curricular guidelines established by the Ministry of National Education for the reading and writing areas emphasize the following aspects:

- Promote an authentic construction of knowledge based on reading
- Accept the student as a valid interlocutor in an ongoing learning process
- Continuously evaluate the development of the writing-reading process in children
- Accept constructive mistakes as necessary steps in the process of constructing reading and writing abilities
- Eliminate excessive corrections that interrupt the process, confuse the child and hinder learning
- Give children opportunities for empirical interaction with texts
- Perform writing and reading activities in contexts where they are really required, so that they satisfy real needs, and thus develop communicative competence

- Take into consideration that learning to read and write are epistemological problems that influence the way humans know the world.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

In Colombia, the proposal for teaching language, written speech, and reading in school, includes the following issues:

- Increase and promote autonomy and research
- Take into consideration the text's semiotic and linguistic aspects, pragmatics, cognitive psychology, and sociology of language
- Direct language instruction to the social uses of language and discourse, in real communicative situations, where reading is understood as a process of meaning construction
- Use different kinds of texts and discourses
- Enhance four communicative abilities: talk, write, read, and listen
- Transform reading into the construction and structuring of meaning, based on an interaction between the reader, the text and the context
- Project reading and writing outside the school
- Use sampling, prediction, inference, and validation strategies in reading.²⁸

The learning of written language and reading starts in preschool and is a construction process that lasts for life and is ever present throughout schooling. In Colombia, the curricular guidelines establish the need to integrate different areas of knowledge such as mathematics, reading and writing abilities, and inductive thought, at a practical level. However, the specificity of each discipline as an independent field and discourse is preserved.

The reading teacher bases instruction on the curricular guidelines and principles issued by the Ministry of National Education, but is permitted flexibility when encountering significant variations associated with the reading-writing process. The goal is that teachers are permanently trained and up-to-date in the area of reading, implement the

Institutional Education Project, and direct their activities to the enhancement of the educational process by contributing new ideas and suggestions to the educational community.²⁹

Materials for Reading Instruction

Investment in reading materials, both for teachers and for children, is made at four levels: national, regional, local, and institutional. Materials for children include illustrated books, books on various arts and sciences, and manuals. These manuals usually belong to the child, so that he or she can work on them at home.

Teachers receive materials according to the curricular guidelines issued by the Ministry of National Education. Information centers have been created so that teachers may have access to theoretical sources. There are also short periodical publications on general guidelines for language teaching and learning, as well as strategies and alternatives for teaching. The creation of public municipal libraries has been promoted, and additional materials such as videos, manuals and publications catalogues, among others, are available.³⁰

In some sectors, investment has been made in college education programs for teachers, in order to promote study and research in reading and written language in general, through seminars, workshops, congresses, symposia, and publications. A series of teaching technologies has been implemented, such as computer assisted instruction, databases, electronic texts, and expert systems. However, the coverage of such systems at a national level is very limited for primary education, due to the difficult access to such systems by children in schools located in marginal areas.³¹

Instructional Time

Total time assigned to reading and language activities varies according to the teacher and the Institutional Educational Project in each school. However, according to the general curricular guidelines established by the Ministry of National Education, language activities (spelling, writing, grammar, etc.) should be scheduled four hours per week. Individual reading, aloud or in silence, should be assigned one hour a day, during class work. Reinforcement work in groups is also contemplated. Such groups should have permanent teaching supervision, in order to identify the children's development and difficulties in this area.³²

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Classes are usually composed of groups of 30 to 35 children in urban areas, although this number may be significantly smaller according to the socio-economic level and the location of the school.

In order to promote reading in the classroom, some schools have organized a "reading corner" inside the classroom, with different texts the children use daily by themselves or with the teacher's help. Some schools have also "murals," a wooden base placed on one of the walls in the classroom, so that the children may post documents produced by themselves or by others. Children should have permanent contact with interesting written documents for their age level, and for which they are responsible. Additionally, there are meetings where children discuss texts previously read by all.³³

Second Language Reading Instruction

In Colombia, 1.4 percent of the population speaks languages other than Spanish (Amerindian dialects).³⁴ Some of these languages have alphabets completely different from the Spanish alphabet. This has led to the adoption of the teaching of Spanish as a second language, which allows schools to create spaces where an integrated bilingualism is possible, while preserving the mother language within the school context. In order to attain this goal, more teachers are being trained in these different languages, so teaching Spanish is not a priority in these cultures.³⁵

Colombia emphasizes instruction in foreign languages as a means for international communication and in order to satisfy the student's professional, academic, or personal needs. The purpose is to project the country's image through its citizens, in different scientific, economic, technological, and cultural areas at an international level. Learning a foreign language is mandatory for students eight years and older. Some schools offer a bilingual education across preschool education to high school (most of the schools choose English as a foreign language).

Reading Disabilities

In Colombia, individuals with physical, sensory, psychic, cognitive, or emotional disabilities that hinder educational progress in any area are asked to engage in pedagogic and therapeutic activities directed at helping them overcome such disabilities.

Private institutions or state institutions that offer specialized help may undertake these activities.³⁶

In order to identify children with reading disabilities, schools use tests and instruments that evaluate a wide range of factors associated with learning how to read.

Literacy Programs



One of the basic literacy programs presently developed is “*Colombia Crece Leyendo*” (“Colombia Grows by Reading”), jointly undertaken by the Foundation for the Promotion of Reading (Fundalectura), the Ministry of Culture, and the National Library. This program intends to create an interest among the citizens and the mayors of cities throughout the country on the importance of creating Municipal Public Libraries as a development factor. It also provides counseling to municipalities and to librarians on subjects associated with public libraries, such as new technologies, bibliographies, programs for promoting reading, children rooms, and local service information, together with the Public Library Group at the Ministry of Culture.

In order to increase the number of people who read in Colombia, the “Prolectura Network” was created. This network is an informal group made up of different Colombian entities. Its main purpose is to promote reading and literature for children and young people. In pursuing this purpose, the network has established an interchange of information, which produces documents and publications with other entities, publishes and promotes activities in reading, and enhances links with other regional, national, and international association with similar aims.

Other programs created to promote reading in Colombia are aimed primarily at developing public reading networks, transform reading instruction methods, promote the creation and strengthening of school libraries, create media spaces for literary criticism and orientation, and support book marketing.³⁷

One of the school programs established to promote reading is called “Itinerant Libraries.” This program organizes a small collection of books with different types of texts that may interest children and takes it to different classrooms to be used in reading exercises or taken

home by the students. Such in-school programs are aimed at generating the habit of daily reading in children, using texts that motivate them, such as stories, fables, and riddles.³⁸

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Assessment practices are directed at supporting the child’s process of learning how to read and write, and verifying the evolution of the child in attaining the process.

The evaluation follows the instruction plan, programs, micro unities, and design of classroom sessions and pedagogic projects through the application of instruments weekly, monthly, or bimonthly. Such instruments allow for a description of the progress made. They also collect information on the student’s activities, such as written assignments, class participations, and presentations, among others.³⁹

National or Regional Examinations

In Colombia, since 1991, under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education, ICFES has administered the test SABER, in order to evaluate the cognitive achievement of students in the basic cycle in the areas of language and mathematics, for grades three, five, seven, and nine. In the language area, the test emphasizes the evaluation of the student’s communicative competence, using informative, narrative, argumentative, and explanatory texts on different subjects.⁴⁰

Another examination administered throughout the country upon completion of secondary school that includes language evaluation is the State Examination for Entering Higher Education (commonly called the ICFES exam). In the language test, the student is asked to identify what the text says, how it says it, its purpose, and why it says it. The test also evaluates the dimensions of intertextuality and critical analysis. The texts used for this evaluation are iconic texts, that is, posters, comics, caricatures, essays on literature, common texts such as letters, newspapers and scientific articles, and literary texts such as stories, fables, and poems.⁴¹

Finally, the Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of Educational Quality Language

Test (LLECE), was administered between 1995 and 1998 under the coordination of UNESCO's Regional Office for Latin America. This test was part of the "First International Comparative Survey" that evaluated students from third and fourth grades in the areas of language and mathematics in 13 Latin American countries. In the area of language, the survey included reading comprehension, metalinguistic practice, and text production, associated with five types of questions: text identification, distinguishing between the text's author or narrator and audience, identifying the text's message, recognizing specific information in a text, and identifying vocabulary associated with a text's meaning.⁴²

Diagnostic Testing

In the evaluation of reading difficulties, pedagogic and achievement tests are used to determine students' abilities and attitudes regarding language, and identify specific problem areas. The administration of such tests may be individual or collective. Some of the tests used are: ACRA for learning strategies; BEHNALE, an evaluation battery to identify abilities needed for learning reading and writing; BLOC, an objective language battery, based on specific criteria; CLT-CLOZE, two language comprehension tests; EDIL, a test that explores individual difficulties with reading; EVOCA, a test estimating mastery of vocabulary; and PROLEC, an evaluation battery applied to the reading processes in children in primary education. These tests are administered by experts working at public institutions, such as psychologists or counselors, or by private institutions specializing in evaluation of these areas.⁴³

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Language and Literacy



After 1960, the year of independence, each of the two primary ethnic groups in Cyprus maintained its own system of education, using either Greek or Turkish (the official languages) as the language of instruction. English is widely spoken and is mainly used in trade transactions between Cyprus and other countries.

Education System



Education has been regarded as very important in Cyprus for the last two centuries. During the nineteenth century, only a small percentage of the population was educated. Throughout the twentieth century, however, especially after the Second World War, the number of educated people increased rapidly. Before independence in 1960, the main goals of education were raising the people's standard of living, inculcating national ideas, and strengthening the national conscience. Church leaders supported education morally as well as financially, especially secondary education, which was outside the control of the government. Since independence, education has been seen by the people as a means toward better employment and improving their socioeconomic status. The government and political parties also considered education as the path to raising the standard of living of the people through better training, thus maximizing productivity and making the best use of natural resources. Furthermore, education has been regarded by the government as a human right, and as such it is the government's duty to provide equal educational opportunities for all citizens. All of these determinants increased the demand for more education at all levels. The general

aim of education in Cyprus is to develop a free and democratic citizenry with individuals fully realizing their potential and contributing to the social, scientific, and cultural progress of the island.

Governance and Organization

The formal educational system of Cyprus is highly centralized. The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the enforcement of educational laws and the preparation of new legislation. The government of Cyprus finances public education, while private schools raise their funds primarily from tuition fees. Teachers in public schools are appointed, transferred, promoted, and dismissed by the Educational Service Commission, which is an independent five-member body. The Ministry of Education formulates the intended curriculum for all subjects. Syllabi, curricula, and textbooks are prescribed to a large extent by governmental agencies. The education system in Cyprus has four stages: pre-primary, primary, secondary, and higher.

Expenditure in 1998-99, on all levels of education both public and private, was 401 million Cyprus pounds¹ (1 Cyprus pound = 1.71 Euro), of which public expenditure amounted to 251.5 million pounds.² This expenditure accounts for 14.6 percent of the country's budget and 5.4 percent of the Gross Domestic Product.³ The current costs in pounds per pupil by level of education were as follows: 786 pounds for pre-primary, 1,067 for primary, 1,856 for secondary, 2,640 for third level, and 5,907 for special education.⁴

Across all levels of education there were 1,214 schools, 164,548 full-time pupils, and 11,255 teachers, resulting in a pupil/teacher ratio of 14.6.⁵ The student enrollments by level of education were as follows: pre-primary 26,969

Country Profile: Cyprus

Geographical Location and Size

Situated at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, Cyprus is a small island, 226 kilometers long and 98 kilometers wide, occupying an area of 9,251 square kilometers.⁶ Two parallel ranges of mountains stretch from west to east covering roughly half of the island. Since 1974, Turkey has occupied about 37 percent of its area.⁷ The country's capital, Nicosia, which is the largest city, is situated in the center of the island.

Population and Health Statistics

According to the first official census in 1881, the population of Cyprus at that time was 186,173.⁸ The population at the end of 2000 was 759,100,⁹ and the population of the Greek area of Cyprus (not the part occupied by Turkey) was 671,300. The urban population was nearly 62 percent of the total.¹⁰ The composition of the population for 2000 was 85.2 percent Greek Cypriots (including Armenians, Maronites, and Latins), 11.6 percent Turkish Cypriots, and 3.2 percent foreign residents (mainly British, Greek, Greek-Russians, and Lebanese).¹¹

The average life expectancy is 78 years, although average life expectancy for males is about four years less than for females.¹² The infant mortality rate is about seven deaths per 1,000 live births.¹³

Political System

Cyprus is an independent, sovereign republic of a presidential type. Under the 1960 Constitution, the executive power is entrusted to the President of the Republic who is elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term of office. The President exercises the executive power through a Council of Ministers appointed by him. Legislative power is exercised by the House of Representatives, consisting of 80 members elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term.

Economy and Employment

According to the occupational classification system (International Labor Office 1990), craft and related workers (15%), service workers and shop and market sales workers (19.5%), elementary occupations (16.1%), technicians and associate professionals (11.5%), and plant and machine operators and assemblers (8.6%) form the major occupational



groups. The rest were legislators, senior officials, and managers (3.6%); professionals (12.1%); and clerks (13.3%).¹⁴ This does not include agricultural establishments. For 2001, the unemployment rate in Cyprus was 3 percent of the economically active population.¹⁵

Unemployment tends to be highest among graduates of secondary schools or persons who have not completed their studies at such schools (55.7%) followed by elementary education graduates (24.0%).¹⁶

Based on the available data for 2000, the tertiary sector of the economy (trade, hotels, transport, and services) accounts for 66.3 percent of total employment.¹⁷ The secondary sector (manufacturing, electricity, and construction) as well as the primary sector (agriculture and mining) declined to 21.9 and 1.1 percent, respectively, in the period from 1990 to 2000.¹⁸ The government plays a significant role in the economic development of the island. In 2000, more than half of the labor force held a secondary or post-secondary educational qualification (degree, diploma, certificate, or trade qualification). It has been estimated that in 2000, the average labor force member had 11.3 years of formal schooling compared with 10.1 years of schooling for the same group in 1990.¹⁹ Between 1990 and 2000, the proportion of the labor force with a secondary or post-secondary qualification rose from 58 to 67.5 percent.²⁰

(in 679 schools – pupil/teacher ratio 17.4), primary 63,834 (in 363 schools – pupil/teacher ratio 17.7), secondary 62,366 (in 127 schools – pupil/teacher ratio 12.2), third level 10,842 (in 33 institutions – pupil/teacher ratio 12.7) and special education 537 (in 12 schools – pupil/teacher ratio 3.9).²¹ Another 121,974 pupils and trainees were in part-time institutes and other non-formal education activities. Cypriot students abroad totaled 12,488 during the academic year 1998/99.²² Of the total, 80.2 percent were enrolled in public schools and 19.8 percent in private schools.²³

The academic year commences on 1st September and ends on the 30th of June. It is divided in three quarter terms (September 10 – December 10, December 11 – March 10, March 11 – May 31). The length of the school day is 7:30 a.m. to 1:35 p.m. Lessons, which run on a five-day week, seven periods of 45 minutes duration per day, begin on September 10 and end on May 31. June is a month for examinations.

Structure of the Education System

Pre-primary Education

The three categories of nursery schools – public, communal, and private – are all under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The public nursery schools are established by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The communal nursery schools are established and run by community authorities and parents' associations. The private nursery schools are established and run by individuals with the approval of the Ministry of Education. Pre-primary education covers about 50 percent of the children aged three to five.²⁴

Primary Education

According to the Education Acts for Elementary Education, primary school provides six years of compulsory schooling to children once they attain five years and eight months of age. Officially introduced in 1962, primary education is free. In reality, primary education has been universal since 1945. Schools function in every town or village when the number of children is more than 15. Communities with fewer than 15 children are served by neighboring communities. Nationally, the official pupil-teacher ratio is approximately 18:1.²⁵ In actuality, schools with fewer than 20

pupils have one teacher and those with 20 to 39 pupils have two teachers. The main evaluation procedure adopted is the continuous one. No written examination is given at any level. At the end of their six-year compulsory schooling, primary school leavers receive a leaving certificate.

General Secondary Education

Public secondary education offers a six-year program of instruction for children aged 12 to 18. Lower secondary school (Gymnasium) caters to pupils aged 12 to 15 and offers a broad spectrum of general education. There are no entrance examinations in the public sector of secondary education. Private primary school leavers must undergo a battery of entrance examinations to enter public secondary schools. Upper secondary school (Lyceum) is open to all pupils who have successfully completed the Gymnasium. The Lyceum offers pupils a three-year program with three categories of subjects that are structured in five streams. All of them include compulsory core subjects, specialization, and supplementary subjects. Pupils select one of five tracks upon registration at Lyceum: classical studies, science, economics, commercial, and foreign languages. Since 1995-96, the Unified Lyceum has been introduced at a small number of schools.

Assessment in secondary schools is mostly continuous and internal. Continuous assessment in the Gymnasium is on a scale of A-E, supplemented by final examinations in June on a scale of 1-20 for Greek, mathematics, history, and natural science. Continuous assessment in the Lyceum is on a scale of 1-20 and is supplemented by final examinations in Greek, mathematics, and the optional subjects in each of the combinations. Since 1990-91, the final examinations in the third and final Lyceum class are externally organized.

Secondary technical and vocational education represents about 21 percent of the total student population in upper secondary education (ages 15-18 years old). It is offered to students who graduate from the Gymnasium at the age of 15 and have elected to follow either the technical or vocational stream. The main difference between the technical and vocational streams is that in the syllabi, the technical stream gives more emphasis to academic subjects, while the vocational stream emphasizes technological subjects, workshop practice, and industrial training.

A number of private secondary establishments ranging from missionary boarding schools to vocationally-oriented institutions and foreign language centers offer tuition in specialized fields. Although private secondary schools are independent in their operation and curricula, the majority are registered with the Ministry of Education and Culture and comply with certain curriculum and facility requirements mandated by law.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

In 1999, there were 11,255 (full-time equivalent) teachers employed in schools in all levels of education giving a pupil/teacher ratio of 14.6.²⁶ A total of 12.2 percent were employed in pre-primary education, 28.4 percent in primary schools, 40 percent in secondary education, 6.7 percent in tertiary education, 1 percent in special education, and 11.6 percent in non-formal education.²⁷ About 65 percent of school teachers were female.²⁸

Approximately 72 percent of primary school teachers are female, based on the most recent Statistics in Education. Of the primary school teachers, about 25 percent have taught less than five years, 39 percent between 5 and 14 years, 10 percent between 15 and 24 years, and the rest more than 25 years.²⁹

Between 1960 and 1970, there was a relative shortage of secondary-school teachers. By the 1980s, however, due to static enrollment and reduced teacher retirements on the one hand and the tremendous number of teacher graduates from universities on the other hand, there was a high surplus of secondary-school teachers in all subject areas. Some of them will never have the chance to be appointed. In primary education things are different. The number of students entering the teaching profession each year has corresponded to the needs of the system at the time of their graduation and there has been no problem of oversupply.

Teacher Education

Before 1992, primary and preprimary teacher training was provided by the Pedagogical Academy, an institution which offered three-year courses. Since 1991-92, the Department of

Education of the University of Cyprus has undertaken this role, providing four-year initial teacher-training programs. All primary-school teachers attended a specific in-service program at the Pedagogical Institute for upgrading their professional qualifications and their salary scale.

For secondary teachers, a university degree in a particular subject constitutes the only requirement for entering the profession. This degree generally is in a major discipline. Considerable effort is being directed to improving the quality of teachers' academic qualifications. For this purpose, the Pedagogical Institute organizes optional as well as compulsory seminars free of charge. There are two compulsory seminars, one for secondary teachers on probation and another for secondary deputy heads. All secondary-school teachers on probation are obliged to attend for two days a week a year-long course specifically designed for them at the Pedagogical Institute. Successful completion of this course is a prerequisite for permanent appointment. The second course also lasts for one year, but is conducted once per week. Since 1999, for appointment in secondary schools, graduates are obliged to attend a one-year course offered by the Pedagogical Institute.

Evaluation and Promotion

The evaluation of teachers is carried out by inspectors. Normally teachers are assessed every two years. Inspectors and school principals cooperate in teacher evaluation, but the final decision rests with the inspector. For promotion purposes, the criteria are: teaching experience, teaching performance, and academic qualifications. Candidates for promotion present themselves for an oral interview before the Education Committee.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Reading instruction begins at age six, in the first grade of the primary school.

Reading is taught as part of language instruction and is apportioned most teaching-time in the three first grades of primary school. Language is considered an integrated subject, including listening, oral speech, reading, writing, orthography, grammar, studying skills, and skills for acquisition of information. In the primary curriculum,

each language skill is defined by particular general aims and objectives.

As stated in the Cyprus Primary Curriculum³⁰ (p. 79), the primary reading curriculum in Cyprus is modeled on the Greek reading curriculum. Reading textbooks called “My Language” are edited in Greece and sent free of charge for use in Cypriot primary schools.

The general aim of the reading curriculum (p. 82) is to help students read texts with fluency, understand their content, evaluate them in respect of their content and form and be cultivated emotionally and aesthetically.

At the end of grades one and two (objectives are defined for two grades) students must be able to:

- Read with fluency and understand small texts
- Read various texts for acquisition of information and for personal pleasure
- Recognize and recall the basic elements (persons, point of views, ideas, facts) of a text
- Draw conclusions based on information in the text
- Recognize ways of expression (e.g., description, narration).

By the end of grades three and four, all students must be able to:

- Read with fluency and appropriate style with due regard to punctuation marks
- Identify and understand the main elements of a text, putting them in chronological and logical sequence
- Argue for or against using elements from the text
- Understand the meaning of words, phrases and sentences in context
- Identify ways of expression and understand why authors selected them
- Identify the structural elements of a text (e.g. persons-characters, time and place, events).

It also is a curricular goal that students become familiar with the Cypriot and Greek literature. They should enjoy well-written texts and become friends of good books. Finally, students are to acquire reading skills that enable them use reference books effectively in order to concentrate, compare and test information.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Instructional emphases stress a supportive, communicative environment for all students that provides experiences to foster success.

The following are considered features of effective organization of activities: interaction among students and the teacher, cooperative learning in small teams, differentiation of teaching materials, remedial activities, and continuous formative evaluation of the individual and group work.

Teachers also should provide opportunities for inquiry and experimentation; field trips; observations, interviews, presentations, dialogue, and role playing; use of information sources; and projects involving constructions, mapping, and modeling.

Materials for Reading Instruction

Graded language textbooks are typically used in teaching reading. Other supportive and supplementary materials include: packages of materials prepared by teachers of the first grade; authentic/informative material from newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and leaflets; literature books; and books written at the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education entitled *I don't forget and I struggle*. Technology and especially the use of computers for teaching subject areas have been recently introduced in the primary schools on an experimental basis.

Language textbooks (Readers) come from Greece for all the students of primary schools, along with Teachers' Guides which include methodological suggestions for teaching reading. All materials for reading instruction are available in time for every new school year and in appropriate quantities for students and teachers.

Instructional Time

The total instructional time across all subjects for primary schools increases as students progress through the grades as follows: 31 periods per week for grades one and two, 34 periods for grade three, and 35 periods for grades four to six. Each teaching

Exhibit 1: Language Instructional Time in Primary School

	Periods* of teaching time per week					
	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade
A. Schools with more than 6 teachers	13	13	14	13	10	10
B. Schools with 3-5 Teachers						
B.1 Schools with 3 teachers	7	7	8	8	6	6
B.2 Schools with 4-5 teachers						
B.2.1 Non-mixed grades	13	13	14	13	10	10
B.2.2 Mixed grades	7	7	8	8	6	6
C. Schools with 2 teachers	6	6	6	6	5	5
D. Schools with 1 teacher	3	3	3	3	3	3
E. School with 3 grades	12	12	14	-	-	-

* period = 40 minutes

period lasts 40 minutes. Exhibit 1 indicates the time allocated for language instruction and activities during primary school for schools of various sizes.³¹

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Since inspectors support cooperative learning in schools, group work is typical during language activities. The maximum number of students is 30 in grade one, and increases to 32 in grades two to six.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

During their pre-service education, all teachers receive courses in reading instruction. Additionally, a number of them follow the Language Direction, with three more courses in language (content and teaching).

Second Language Reading instruction

English is the second language taught in grades four to six for two periods per week by teachers with one-year training. Reading time is incorporated into the total time of English language teaching.

Reading Disabilities

Teachers identify reading disabilities in their classrooms. Depending on the degree of the disability, one of the following alternatives can be implemented:

- Classroom teachers provide individual remedial work or differentiated instruction in response to the needs of each student, or
- If the children have serious disabilities, the case is forwarded to the educational psychologist who decides whether the case should be considered by the District Committee of Special Education.

Literacy Programs



The program “Education and Experimental Implementation of the Communicative Approach at the Primary Schools” commenced in 1996. Since 1999, a literacy program has been developed aimed at upgrading the language teaching at the first grade of both primary and secondary school, and at reducing functional illiteracy. The program “Literacy for Adults,” organized yearly by the Training Centers of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, aims at helping illiterate persons to participate actively in all the social activities. Cyprus participates in International Research programs (i.e., PIRLS-IEA) as well as in European conferences and short seminars for Literacy, especially in the context of programs such as Comenius and Socrates.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Usually, formative assessment is conducted through teacher-made tests. Summative evaluation is based on predefined undifferentiated tests which are included in the Language textbooks. Self-evaluation practices, portfolio, and record-keeping are alternative types of assessment.

National or Regional Examinations

No national examination exists for the primary schools. Secondary school students have a national common examination at the end of the three grades of Lyceum. In 1999, the Ministry of Education

announced a policy of National Standards. Since then, coordinated by the University of Cyprus, a number of working groups have been working toward identifying standards in language, mathematics, and science.

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Language and Literacy



The official language of the Czech Republic is Czech, one of the Slavic family of languages. Of the few minorities in the country, the Poles are the only group to exercise their right to be educated in their own language (from preschool to the upper-secondary level of education). No interest has been expressed in education in Slovak, probably because its close similarity to Czech. The introduction of preparatory classes in the Czech language and assistance in better social integration is a measure that has been taken to meet the needs of the Romany minority; it is also intended for children from socially and culturally disadvantaged backgrounds.

The adult literacy rate was 99 percent in 1999.¹ In 1996, there were about 10 different national (and several tens of regional) daily newspaper titles with a circulation of 254 newspapers per 1,000 inhabitants.² The extensive library system includes The National Library of the Czech Republic (as a center of the system of libraries), the K.E. Macan Library and Printing Press for the Blind, The Moravian Regional Library in Brno established by the Ministry of Culture, Regional Libraries established by the relevant regional authorities, Basic Libraries established by the relevant communal authorities, and Specialized Libraries.

The existence of the Czech State dates back to the early Middle Ages. The Czech Lands became a kingdom in the 13th century and its significance peaked in the 14th century under the rule of Charles IV, the Czech king and Roman emperor. He established a university in the capital Prague in 1348 that was the first institution of higher education north of the Alps. After 1620, the Czech lands became part of the Austrian (later Austro-

Hungarian) monarchy. After its demise in 1918, Czechoslovakia was established uniting the Czech territory and that part of Hungary inhabited by Slovaks. After Hitler's occupation of the country in 1938, Czechoslovakia was split into the Protectorates of Bohemia and Moravia and the Slovak state. It was restored after the war and lasted until 1993. In 1993, Czechoslovakia was split and from that time it exists as two independent states – the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

Education System



Governance and Organization

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport determines the conception, state, and development of the education system. It publishes general educational programs, defines the compulsory content of education, is responsible for teachers' salaries and teaching aids. The Ministry also is in charge of the school register and is the organizing body for pedagogical centers and detention homes for young people.

Fundamental changes took place in the year 2001 when (in connection with the state administration reform) the higher territorial self-governing units (regions) were established. The Ministry of Education retains and strengthens its conceptual responsibilities, but real execution of state administration in education was transferred into responsibility of regions. In addition, the regions acquired their own competence in education: they became founders of all schools and educational establishments except of those founded by municipalities, and educational establishments for institutional or preventive care, which are founded by the state. The communities are responsible for

Country Profile: Czech Republic

Geographical Location and Size

Established January 1993 after the split of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic is situated approximately in the geographical center of Europe with an area of 78,864 square kilometers, making it the 21st largest country in Europe. It shares borders with Germany, Poland, Austria, and the Slovak Republic. The Czech Republic consists of three territorial complexes: Bohemia in the western part, and Moravia and Silesia in the eastern part. The country's capital, Prague, is located in the middle of Bohemia. The highest point of elevation is the peak of Mt. Snezka (1,602 meters above sea level) and the lowest point is where the river Labe leaves the Czech territory (117 meters above sea level).



Population and Health Statistics

The population of the Czech Republic is about 10,300,000 inhabitants (12th largest in Europe), with a population density of approximately 131 inhabitants per square kilometer, and 75 percent of the population living in urban areas. The country has a large number of municipalities (6,258) and is characterized by a relatively balanced distribution of population among them. Prague has 1.2 million inhabitants, and there are six other cities with populations exceeding 100,000. National minorities include small percentages (2% or less) of Slovaks, Poles, Germans, and Romanians. The infant mortality rate was 6 per 1,000 live births in 1997. The average life expectancy at birth is 71 years for males and 78 years for females.³

Political System

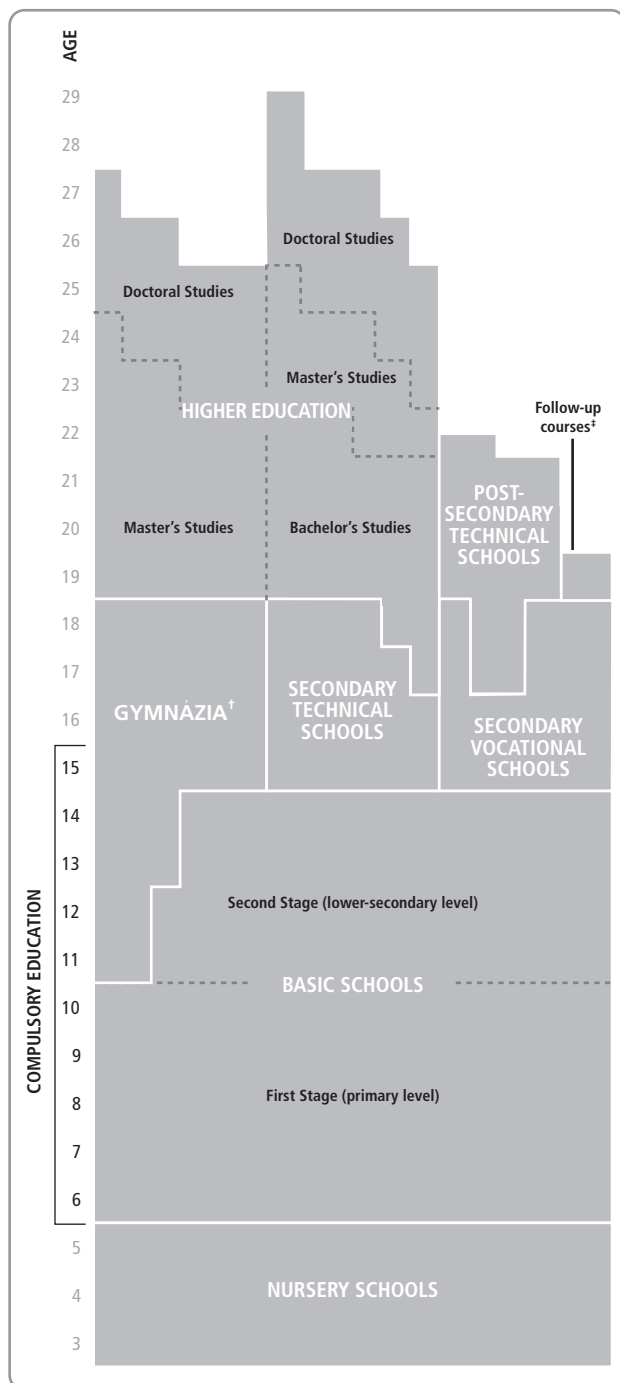
The Czech political system is a parliamentary democracy including three branches: legislative (Parliament), executive (President, Cabinet and the State Attorney's Office), and judicial (Supreme Court and lower court system). The Parliament consists of the Chamber of Deputies, elected every four years, and the Senate elected for a six-year term of office (one-third of senators are elected every two years). The president is elected by the Parliament for a five-year term of office. Local self-government consists of two levels: municipalities that are the basic self-governing units, and 14 regions, which work from January 1, 2000. Their sphere of action includes education as well. Actual political development in the Czech Republic is marked by efforts to achieve formal as well as real integration into the European structures (accession into European Union is planned for 2004).

Economy and Employment

The Czech Republic is one of the most stable and prosperous of the post-Communist states. The economic growth results from exports to the European Union, especially Germany, and foreign investment. The GNP per capita was US\$ 5,240 (US\$ 10,380 PPP Intl.) in 1999⁴, which is about 50 percent of the OECD average. The GDP is composed primarily of services (54% in 1999) and industry (42%, especially metallurgy, machinery and equipment, motor vehicles, glass, and armaments), while agriculture forms only 4 percent. The main export commodities are machinery and transport equipment and other manufactured goods.

The employment structure has seen revolutionary changes. The unemployment rate, after a short period of significant growth at the beginning of the transformation process, was running at 8.3 percent in 2001. Women represented 44 percent of the total labor force in 2000 and unemployment among them was 3 percent points higher than that among men. The highest unemployment rate – 33 percent – was among youth aged between 15 and 19.⁵

Exhibit 1: Education System of the Czech Republic (Since 2001)



† Compulsory education lasts nine years. The majority of pupils accomplish it at basic schools. Pupils who study at a multi-year *gymnázium* accomplish it in relevant years of *gymnázium*.

‡ A follow-up study is designed for graduates of three-year courses of secondary vocational schools. It gives them the opportunity to improve their qualification and pass *maturitní zkouška*, which opens the access to university studies.

compulsory schooling. They establish and administer preschool institutions, primary schools and lower-secondary schools, guaranteeing their financing (except for salaries and teaching equipment funded by the State).

The Czech Republic's total public expenditure on education represented 4.6 percent of its total GDP per capita in 2000.⁶ Education is funded from public budgets, meaning the central State budget and municipal budgets.

Structure of the Education System

Pre-primary Education

Exhibit 1 describes educational provision at each grade level in the system.

Communities are responsible for overseeing nursery schools as part of the preprimary level of the educational system. The basic age group in these schools is between 3 and 6 years. Attendance is not compulsory; nevertheless, it covers nearly 86 percent of the children in the age group. In the final preschool year, it is almost universal. The majority of schools are free, but parents can be asked to pay a maximum of 30 percent of the running costs.⁷

Primary and Lower-secondary Education

School attendance is compulsory for two levels of education. For five years, usually from the ages of 6 to 11, pupils attend a primary level, and for four years (ages 11–15) they attend the lower-secondary level of a 9-year Basic School. About 10 percent of pupils leave basic school at the end of the fifth year (end of primary level) for the eight-year gymnasium or at the end of the seventh year for the six-year gymnasium (after passing the entrance examination set by the school) to complete their lower-secondary studies. At the primary level, the same teacher usually teaches all subjects, whereas, at the lower-secondary level, teachers are specialized, generally in two subjects. The national teaching standards set the objectives and the basic curricula content, and when approved various educational programs can be employed to achieve them.

Upper-secondary Education

Three kinds of schools provide upper-secondary education. They are the gymnasium, which is a general upper-secondary school with academic program for 15–19 years of age, secondary technical

(15 through 17, 18, or 19 years of age), and secondary vocational (also 15 through 17, 18, or 19 years of age). Prerequisites for acceptance are successful completion of compulsory education and meeting entrance requirements. The gymnasium, the technical school, and some of the vocational schools end with the final examination and certification that allow students to apply for the post-secondary studies. In 2000, the enrollment ratio for upper-secondary schools was more than 90 percent of that age group.

Types of Schools

Non-state basic schools represent only 1.2 percent of all primary and lower-secondary schools and they account for 0.4 percent of the total number of pupils. One-third of non-state primary and lower-secondary schools are denominational schools.

In contrast, non-state secondary schools comprise 22 percent of all secondary schools and of the pupils 12.8 percent.⁸ Private schools receive a state contribution towards their operational costs. This funding is also formula-based, but its methods are still under development. School fees and other private sources cover capital expenditures and rent for the school premises.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The school year begins on 1 September and lasts 10 months, until 31 June of the following year. The main holiday is in July and August. Lessons of 45 minutes are spread over five days a week. There are 22–25 lessons per week at the primary level and 27–30 lessons per week at the lower-secondary level.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

In 1999, 94 percent of teachers in primary schools were women, while at the lower-secondary level (the 2nd stage of a Basic School) women represented 76 percent of the teaching force. More than one quarter (28%) of primary and lower-secondary teachers were between 50 and 60 years of age, another quarter were between 40 and 50 years and another quarter between 30 and 40 years. About 17 percent were teachers less than 30 years old and more than 4 percent of them were aged more than 60 years.⁹

Teacher Education

Training for the teaching profession is entrusted to universities and is always supplemented by practical experience in schools of varying duration. Upon successful completion of a diploma thesis and the final state examination, teachers obtain a qualification certificate and an academic title.

Primary and secondary school teachers obtain their qualifications following Master's degree courses. Teachers at the primary schools gain their Master's qualification after four-year courses, usually at university faculties of education. The content of the courses consists of general humanities subjects, the Czech language, mathematics, and pedagogical and psychological subjects. They may specialize in music, arts, physical education, or in a foreign language.

Teacher In-service Education

The law stipulates the requirement for in-service training of teachers, but does not prescribe any particular format. Teachers may prefer the self-study option. Participation in educational events is voluntary. There is no set number of days for in-service training. The Ministry of Education is currently preparing a new concept.

The Ministry is at present setting up regional education centers that offer further teacher training, support services, and information and documentation services. Universities offer promotion and refresher training. Scientific societies, professional associations, and various private organizations also participate.

There are also various types of further teacher training: induction courses for teachers at the start of their career, refresher training for teachers returning to the profession after a long interruption, qualification training courses to upgrade educational qualifications, and educational studies for graduates from non-teacher training faculties.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Reading development is considered to be one of the basic goals of a primary education. The concept of reading has changed since 1989. While in the past only reading skills were stressed, the current concept of reading in Czech primary schools now focuses on

the functional use of reading – reading literacy development as a necessary means of communication and continuing education. Reading is understood not only as acquiring a skill and its use, but in a wider sense as an important means of individual cultural and personal development.

Reading development is not only a school topic; families, publishers, and booksellers and all of society are relied on to participate. Also, policy makers and public servants are expected to support the importance of reading as a cultural value.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Since reading is a phenomenon developed even before the child's entrance into formal schooling, reading instruction in schools builds on pupils' previous development. The Czech Republic has three educational programs for primary school – the General School, the Basic School, and the National School. According to the programs, reading is considered to be one of the essential competencies for living, for life-long learning, and for free-time activities.

Goals for reading instruction in the educational programs are described according to specific grades. Analysis of the goals shows that reading in primary school is understood as an integral part of the mother tongue. The goals are:

- To develop reading techniques
- To improve reading and understanding
- To work with text in a sense of retrieving information and its following treatment
- To use reading as a means of communication.

Reading is closely associated with literature (pupils learn about literary genres through reading books) and its aim is also to develop positive attitudes towards reading. One of the basic goals is to develop critical thinking skills during reading.¹⁰

Development of functional reading is realized through the use of reading materials in all areas of education (in other subjects). In the Czech Republic, there are Basic Education Standards, which state the output requirements for pupils in specific areas (individual subjects). Schools can develop their own school curricula on the basis of these standards.¹¹

The goals defined by the Educational Programs, Standards, and other documents stress new approaches and elements in reading instruction (e.g., active work with texts, reading and understanding, or critical thinking). However, with the exception of a few innovative schools, these goals are mostly only theoretical. Although general awareness of the new concept of reading (a change from technical reading towards functional reading) has been growing, the traditional approach from the past still remains in reading instruction in most of the Czech schools.

Materials for Reading Instruction

Since 1990, it has been possible for teachers to work with a variety of textbooks (published by various publishers) developed according to various methods of initial reading. The basic materials used for reading development come from a wide range of reading books offering samples of literature from different genres for children and youth. Since the books usually are provided in sets of materials, they are complemented with other didactic materials, such as worksheets, folding alphabet letters, and sheets for practicing writing. For initial reading, there are spelling books and simple readers. Materials are offered through many catalogs and magazines, and are widely accessible.

The Ministry of Education gives its approval to those reading books that fit with the Standards and have the necessary methodological level. Most schools have adopted the use of those reading books that meet the Ministry's approval. In some schools, reading is also developed through the use of other materials – various texts types, children's and youth magazines, children's books, and encyclopedias. There are also new kinds of multi-media materials (e.g. CD-ROMs and other ways of using ICT) that support reading development. Schools are recommended to establish school and class libraries; in some schools lessons can be taught within the library itself. Schools are also encouraged to cooperate with public libraries on various projects.

Methods Used for Reading Instruction

In primary schools, various methods for developing reading literacy are used. These methods differ in the extent to which they are based on the pupil's own cooperation and the cooperation among all pupils, creativity, thinking, experience, and independence. For application of these

methods, teachers build on various reading activities, such as reading aloud or silently, and implement various forms of organization for instruction.

The most widespread opinion among teachers (and also among parents and inspectors) is that the best way to teach reading is through reading aloud, both individually and collectively. Reading aloud is part of instruction not only in primary education but also in the upper grades, although it is in direct conflict with the Educational Standards.

Comprehension is gauged entirely through use of so-called lower-order thinking questions, requiring only repeating and listing simple facts mentioned in the text. Children's higher-order thinking abilities are often undervalued and teachers avoid opportunities to develop students' abilities to think about the text, to ask more sophisticated questions, or to require students to justify their answer. Rather, they are asked to find the only one correct answer (often one-word) at the level of a simple reproduction of some fact.

With the introduction of the educational project Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT), new methods are appearing in instruction. The program introduces instruction in workshops and uses methods such as quick orientation in unknown text, controlled reading, "folder reading", literary groups or clubs, reading with foresight, key words, and "reading against the grain", among others. Reading skills also include writing skills. The program also is focused on development of the skills for creating meaningful texts and their training in school instruction.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Organization of reading instruction in a specific class depends on the teacher, who decides the optimal organization given the instructional methods and activities. Typical class size is 21 pupils for primary school, and 23 pupils for lower-secondary school. Most of the lessons are organized in a traditional way with the teacher teaching to the whole class. Recently, methods based on pupils' activity and creativity have gained support (e.g. critical thinking, co-operative learning, problem solving etc.), although they are not yet widespread in the classrooms. For example, in the Step-by-Step program¹² children are concentrated in learning centers, which also include the reading center. In the learning centers, students work in small groups to complete complex tasks. Time spent at such

centers is longer than in lessons in typical classrooms. Organization of instruction should maximize support for the development of functional reading and its meaningful use. Therefore, integrative approaches such as project learning, integration of reading into other subjects, and instruction in blocks are supported.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

All primary level teachers obtain training in reading instruction and work with dyslexic pupils. They are able to recognize, to diagnose defects, and help pupils to overcome problems. Other specialists involved in instruction include the school psychologists and special pedagogues, however, they are not significantly represented at Czech schools so far. Specialists from pedagogical and psychological centers work only with some pupils and not directly in instruction.

Other specialists can have a mediating influence on instruction. They can provide teachers with information within in-service training and courses, or they can be authors of textbooks or other instruction material. The Czech Reading Association (CzechRA), the Czech branch of the International Reading Association, plays an important role in teachers' continuing education.

Use of Technology for Reading Instruction

Use of technologies in instruction depends on finances and the "progressiveness" of the teacher or the headmaster. There is a certain caution about new technologies and technical upgrades that can restrain the possibilities of working with them.

Currently for reading instruction, there are audio records with exhibits of both Czech and world literature. There are also programs for the PC and CD-ROMs, but because of inadequate ICT facilities in Czech primary schools, they are used mainly for working with dyslectic pupils.

Reading Disabilities

There is a focus in reading instruction on the early detection of possible disabilities in reading, such as slower development of some pupils' reading or dyslexia. Teachers identify reading defects on the basis of listening to students read aloud and observing other features. Then, educational and psychological counselors or school's special pedagogues and psychologists carry out a competent investigation and they also provide an individual

remedial (re-educational) program. Such a program requires an intensive cooperation with the student's teacher and family.

Some schools provide dyslexic pupils with divided instruction, where they receive reading instruction in a separate working group. In other schools, teachers work with the dyslexic pupils not only within the regular classroom, but also outside of regular class instruction. Some teachers develop (sometimes in cooperation with psychological experts) an individual development program for pupils with reading difficulties, especially for slowly developing readers.

Teachers can attend special seminars, lectures, and courses on reading disabilities and their remedies. These courses are organized by pedagogical centers, faculties, or the Czech Association for Dyslexia.

Literacy Programs



In the Czech Republic, there are no national projects promoting reading as of yet. There are projects, however, at the regional and especially at the school level. Projects supporting reading are prepared also by CzechRA, Children's Libraries Club, and other local libraries at the local level. CzechRA works to create common projects in which various target groups (teachers, publishers, booksellers, etc.) can participate. For example, the Children's Libraries Club prepared the project "A Night with H.Ch. Andersen", that involves reading fairy-tales to children in the libraries in the evening. The Czech section of IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) also organizes some activities to promote children's reading.

An important project to promote reading and reading literacy is the RWCT program, which provides in-service teacher training to master the instructional methods leading to development of the higher-order thinking skills necessary for functional reading. The training also introduces reading workshops. At these workshops, children read books they choose themselves, at longer time blocks; then, in small groups with the teacher, they talk about the book and their feelings about reading it, and about things they don't understand. They also write notes in a reader's diary and explain their attitudes towards the book to the others. The program introduces some other

innovative methods to develop children's reading and writing skills both at the workshops and outside. The "Step by Step" is another program following goals similar to the RWCT program.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Reading is assessed according to the directions of the Ministry of Education.

All teachers are obliged to carry out a continuous assessment of each student's reading development (as well as in other subjects), and the student's development program must link up to this assessment.

There are two ways of assessing reading – classification on the 1–5 scale and oral assessment. The results of assessments carried out during the year are taken into account in end-of-year-assessments. Pupils receive reports at the end of the first semester and again at the end of the school year. After 1990, the use of oral assessment, following an agreement with parents, became widespread in many schools, especially in the younger classes. These oral assessments were later officially authorized by a decree from the Ministry of Education in September 1993. Around 8 percent of teachers at the first stage of basic school use this type of assessment, mostly for individual cases of pupils with disabilities or as a supplement to the usual assessment system.

Assessment in reading includes the evaluation of reading speed, correctness, fluency, and pronunciation. To evaluate these signs, teachers may create their own non-standardized diagnostic tests or use one of the standardized tests. The most widespread standardized test is the Reading Quotient Test used especially for detecting dyslexia. Speed and fluency are evaluated primarily through reading aloud or answering simple questions based on the text. Teachers also assess ability to work with text as well as reading interests and behavior on the basis of specific students' work (solving of reading literacy tasks) or through dialogue with students.

National or Regional Examinations

The Czech Republic has not developed any reading literacy tests so far, and has only a range of tests focused on reading skills. There also is no regular national examination of reading literacy level. The

national information comes from the international IEA and OECD surveys (RLS, IALS, PIRLS, PISA) or from specific national research probes.

Research in Reading

Research in reading at the national level is conducted mostly through specific research probes by pedagogical faculties and usually is carried out only on a small sample of schools, students, or teachers. For this reason, international research in reading provides extremely valuable information. The instruments are developed by world experts and they are always administered to a representative sample of the desired population in countries all over the world. Moreover, it enables international comparison of the pupils' reading performance. The Czech Republic, as a member of IEA, has taken part in all of the IEA studies conducted since 1995, including the 1991 Reading Literacy Study (replicated in the Czech Republic in 1995) and PIRLS 2001. In addition to the IEA studies, the Czech Republic also participated in OECD surveys in education, including IALS (1999, adult population) and PISA (2000, 15-year-olds) that focused on reading literacy in a number of countries all over the world.

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Language and Literacy



Literacy beyond school in England is evident in the strong tradition of newspaper readership, with 14 national daily papers and 11 national Sunday papers in circulation in 2000. The standard of the broadsheet newspapers is high and many are available in business and tourist centers around the world. The most popular newspapers are the tabloids, offering a mix of news reporting with popular items, sports, and gossip. The daily newspaper circulation is 331 per 1,000 of population in the United Kingdom as a whole,¹ although readership is declining.

There is an extensive public library system in England with 3,501 libraries and 34.5 million registered users, although, across the United Kingdom as a whole, library usage has declined since the mid-1980s.²

The number of children's books issued has stayed reasonably constant³ and children aged 14 and under in England borrowed an average of 9.1 books each in 1999–2000.⁴ Many libraries now offer a range of additional services including Internet access.

Education System



The education system in England has been in a state of considerable change and development since the mid-1980s.

The following describes the position current in 2002, and what is anticipated in the future, based on announcements already made.

Governance and Organization

Approximately 93 percent of pupils in England are in publicly-funded education with the remaining in private non-grant aided institutions.⁵ Education at a national level is administered by the Department

for Education and Skills (DfES). At municipal and county levels, local education authorities (LEAs) are responsible for organizing state-funded education within their area, although a great deal of education policy is centrally determined.

Governing bodies at the school level have a high degree of autonomy, including the allocation of funds. Some schools at both primary and secondary levels are associated with a particular religious faith, although the majority of these schools accept children from other faiths. In the primary sector, 28 percent of pupils attend schools associated with a particular faith, the majority of these being of Church of England or Roman Catholic foundation. There are a small number of schools with Methodist, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh affiliations.⁶

Funding of schools is largely determined by the number and age of students on roll. Public expenditure on primary education in the UK was 16 percent of GNP per capita in 1998. The equivalent figure for secondary education was 25 percent.⁷

Exhibit 1 shows the structure of the three major phases of the educational system: pre-primary (up to age 5), primary (5 to 11 years old), and secondary (11 to 16 years old). All publicly-funded schools must follow the National Curriculum for pupils aged from 5 to 16, the years of compulsory schooling. This curriculum was introduced in 1989 and revised in 2000. In the Foreword to the 2000 curriculum, the aim of the curriculum is specified:

[The National Curriculum] sets out a clear, full and statutory entitlement to learning for all pupils. It determines the content of what will be taught, and sets attainment targets for learning. It also determines how performance will be assessed and reported.⁸

Country Profile: England

Geographical Location and Size

England is part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is separated from mainland Europe by the English Channel and the North Sea, and borders Wales to the West and Scotland to the North. The Republic of Ireland is to the West, across the Irish Sea, and beyond that, the Atlantic Ocean. England has a surface area of approximately 130,422 square kilometers with a population density of 381 persons per square kilometer.⁹



Population and Health Statistics

The population of England was projected (in 1998) to be 49.5 million by 2001 with anticipated growth to almost 52 million by 2011.¹⁰ A large proportion of the population (7.4 million) live within the London area.¹¹ The median age of the population is rising: in 1998 it was 36.9 years and is expected to stabilize at about 44 years in about 2040.¹² Average life expectancy in England for males is 75 and for females 80.¹³ The infant mortality rate for England was 5.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1999.¹⁴

In 2000, eight percent of people resident in England were from an ethnic minority group,¹⁵ with the majority in four metropolitan regions. Large-scale immigration from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean followed the passing of the 1948 British Nationality Act, a trend subsequently curtailed by legislation passed in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁶ In general, ethnic minority groups have a younger age structure than the white population, reflecting past immigration and fertility patterns. In 2001, 88 percent of primary pupils were of white UK or European heritage and about 6 percent were of Indian, Pakistani, or Bangladeshi heritage.¹⁷ Ten percent of primary pupils speak English as an additional language, including a third of all pupils in London.

Political System

The country has a long history of democracy, although women were fully enfranchised only in 1928. It is a constitutional monarchy but with no formal written constitution, and the monarch is head of state and head of the established church.

There are three main political parties, with representatives (Members of Parliament) elected to the lower house, the House of Commons, at general elections held at least every five years. Cabinet government operates with a Prime Minister at its head. The upper chamber, the House of Lords, is currently being reformed in order to reduce the influence of the hereditary peers.

Economy and Employment

The largest sector in the economy is manufacturing, although in the last quarter of the twentieth century there was substantial growth in the service sector, particularly in the southeast region of the country, and a decline in heavy industry. Financial and public services, pharmaceuticals, high-tech and precision engineering, and tourism are all significant areas of employment at the start of the twenty-first century. Agriculture is in decline and is largely mixed. Main crops include wheat and barley. The GNP per capita (UK) in 2000 was US\$ 24,500 (US\$ 23,550 PPP Intl.).¹⁸ Great Britain joined the European Union (then the European Economic Community) in 1973, but has not adopted the euro and retains the pound sterling as the official currency.

In England in 2000, 80 percent of men were employed, as were 70 percent of women.¹⁹ Nationally, the trend is for more young people to stay in full-time education after the age of 16, and the proportion of females (45 percent) in the labor force has been increasing.²⁰

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is a non-departmental government body that advises central government about the curriculum and its assessment, in both general and vocational education, from pre-primary to higher education. QCA is responsible for organizing the national system of both statutory and non-statutory assessment.

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) is a non-ministerial government department, with the remit to improve standards of achievement and quality of education through regular independent inspection, public reporting, and informed independent advice. OFSTED's principal task is the management of the system of school inspection, defined originally by the Education (Schools) Act 1992. This provides for the regular inspection of over 23,000 schools in England that are wholly or mainly state-funded.

Approximately one percent of pupils attend maintained or non-maintained special schools. Pupils with statements of special educational needs (those with greatest need) represent about three percent of all pupils and over half (61 percent) attend maintained mainstream schools (nursery, primary, and secondary).²¹ Other pupils, with less marked special educational needs (approximately 20 percent of the school population), are supported in mainstream schools.

Structure of the Education System

Pre-primary Education

A wide range of provision exists for children between the ages of three months and five years, including childminders (up to five years of age), day nurseries (up to five years of age), preschool groups or playgroups (from two-and-a-half to five years of age), nursery schools or classes (from three to five years) and reception classes in primary schools (from age four). Nursery provision is available free of charge in maintained, voluntary, and private establishments, to all four-year-olds whose parents want it. Provision for three-year-olds is currently funded partly at the discretion of the LEA and partly through direct government grants, but all areas are working toward the Government aim of universal, free nursery provision for this group by 2004. In 2001, 95 percent of all three- and four-year-olds in England attend nursery provision, and 63 percent of this population attended maintained or independent schools.²² This phase of education, from 3 to 5 years (the term after the child has his or her fifth birthday), is known as the foundation stage and is not compulsory. All publicly funded education is expected to deliver an appropriate curriculum covering the six areas of learning based on published guidelines. Legislation is currently going through Parliament to include the Foundation Stage within the National Curriculum.

Exhibit 1: Structure of the System

		Compulsory Education	
Phase	Pre-primary	Primary	Secondary
Age	Up to age 5	5 to 11 years	11 to 16 years
Stage	Foundation stage: 3–5 years	Foundation stage: (to end of reception year) Key stage 1: 5–7 years Key stage 2: 7–11 years	Key stage 3: 11–14 years Key stage 4: 14–16 years
ISCED	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2
Curriculum	Personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; creative development.	Core subjects: English, mathematics, science; Foundation subjects: design and technology, information and communication technology, history, geography, art and design, music, physical education. Religious education is also taught.	Key stage 3: as for primary plus a modern foreign language and citizenship. Key stage 4: the three core subjects plus design technology, information and communication technology, modern foreign language, physical education and citizenship. Religious education is also taught.

Primary Education

Primary education in England is from ages 5 to 11 and comprises key stage 1 (5 to 7 years old) and key stage 2 (7 to 11 years old). While some schools cover the age range of a single key stage, most primary schools are for children from 4 or 5 to 11 years old. The national curriculum (revised 2000) specifies areas of study as well as the knowledge and skills to be taught within each subject. Three 'core' subjects and seven 'foundation' subjects are specified. Major national initiatives (the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies) have promoted specific teaching methods in these areas including the 'Literacy Hour' and 'daily mathematics lesson'. There are no prescribed textbooks.

Secondary Education

Compulsory secondary education starts generally at age 11 and continues to age 16. Most secondary schools also provide education for students aged 16 to 18 years. Secondary education is generally non-selective with students attending a local school, based on parental choice. Some areas have grammar schools that select pupils on the basis of their ability, but attendance is only 4.4 percent of all pupils in England.²³

Duration and Timing of the School Year

Publicly-funded schools are expected to offer education for 190 days in each year. A further 5 days are made available for teacher in-service education, organized at the discretion of each school. In most schools, the school day starts at about 9 in the morning and finishes between 3 and 4 in the afternoon.

The academic year starts in September and is organized into three terms, each of approximately thirteen weeks. There are vacations of approximately six weeks in July and August and two weeks at Christmas and Easter, with three breaks of one week's duration in the middle of each term.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

There were 197,700 regular teachers in primary schools in England in January 2002. Taking into account the short-term teachers, the total was 207,700.²⁴ Eighty-four percent of teachers in primary

schools were female. Less than one percent of teachers were unqualified.

Since 1986, the teaching force in both primary and secondary schools in England has gradually become older.²⁵ Of full-time teachers in nursery and primary schools in England in 2000, 44 percent of the females and 49 percent of the males were aged 45 or over.²⁶

There are concerns about the retention of teachers within the profession with an estimated four in ten teachers leaving teaching before they have completed three years in the classroom.

Teacher Education

Teaching is an all-graduate profession into which there are three routes. Prospective teachers must have gained two or more Advanced levels (or equivalent) prior to acceptance in a training course and have five or more passes at grade C or above in the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) including English and mathematics. GCSEs are most commonly taken at age 16 and A-levels at age 18.

Prospective teachers may undertake a three- or four-year degree which combines the study of one or more academic subjects with professional training in aspects of education (BEd or BA with qualified teacher status). Alternatively, a three-year bachelor's degree can be followed by a one-year postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE). The third, least common, way of attaining qualified teacher status is an employment-based route. The majority of teachers entering secondary schools have a relevant degree and PGCE. First degrees that confer qualified teacher status are more common among primary teachers.

The content of initial teacher training programs is in part determined by the rigorous demands of a series of professional competencies which student teachers must attain. Student teachers are registered with higher education institutions and spend a large proportion of their time in the classroom under the supervision of a practicing teacher.

During the early part of their teaching career, newly qualified teachers are supported by a mentor within their school and qualified teacher status is confirmed on satisfactory completion of three school terms of teaching (the 'induction period'). This is intended to provide a bridge between initial training and effective professional practice.²⁷

A five-year recruitment strategy was launched by the Teacher Training Agency in 1997 with the slogan, 'No-one forgets a good teacher'. The aim was to attract more and better qualified candidates into the teaching profession and to make teaching more representative of society as a whole by encouraging more applications from members of minority ethnic groups, men (especially into primary teaching), and people with disabilities. The strategy is considered to have been successful, but strong recruitment to teacher training courses over a number of years and the retention of teachers currently in the profession is necessary if the current concerns about teacher shortages are to be alleviated.

Teacher In-service Education

There are a variety of opportunities for continuing professional development for teachers. These range from short one-day courses to higher degrees, studied part-time over several years. In-service training may be provided by individual local authorities, by higher education institutions, or by specialist companies or consultants. The introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies in primary schools in the late 1990s was accompanied by extensive training for subject leaders and school head teachers.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The current government has set a target of 80 percent of children achieving level 4 in English in the statutory national tests at age 11 by 2002. In 2001, 75 percent of pupils achieved level 4 or above, a figure unchanged from 2000 but 10 percentage points above attainment in 1998, and one which masks a considerable disparity in attainment in reading and writing. There is a significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in English throughout primary and secondary education.

In 2001, 40 percent of children aged 11 attained level 4 for reading, and 42 percent attained level 5. Performance at these levels is described in the National Curriculum as follows:

Level 4: In responding to a range of texts, pupils show understanding of significant ideas, themes,

events and characters, beginning to use inference and deduction. They refer to the text when explaining their views. They locate and use ideas and information.

Level 5: Pupils show understanding of a range of texts, selecting essential points and using inference and deduction where appropriate. In their responses, they identify key features, themes, and characters and select sentences, phrases, and relevant information to support their views. They retrieve and collate information from a range of sources.

A further target concerns narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest attaining LEAs.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Reading is one of three elements in the National Curriculum for English, alongside speaking and listening, and writing. The knowledge, skills, and understanding to be taught in each key stage are specified, alongside the contexts, activities, areas of study, and ranges of experience through which the subject is to be taught. The revised National Curriculum for English (2000) describes the development of the reading skills of pupils at each of the key stages as follows:

During key stage 1, pupils' interest and pleasure in reading is developed as they learn to read confidently and independently. They focus on words and sentences and how they fit into whole texts. They work out the meaning of straightforward texts and say why they like them or do not like them. (p. 18)

During key stage 2, pupils read enthusiastically a range of materials and use their knowledge of words, sentences and texts to understand and respond to the meaning. They increase their ability to read challenging and lengthy texts independently. They reflect on the meaning of texts, analyzing and discussing them with others. (p. 25)

During key stages 3 and 4, pupils read a wide range of texts independently, both for pleasure and for study. They become enthusiastic, discriminating, and responsive readers, understanding layers of meaning and appreciating what they read on a critical level. (p. 34)

The National Literacy Strategy Framework for teaching supports the planning and implementation of the programs of study for reading and writing in the National Curriculum. The curriculum specifies that work in speaking and listening, and reading and writing should be integrated.

Children are introduced to a wide variety of text types in the primary phase and are taught to apply a range of reading strategies, including phonics, and to develop their literal, inferential, and evaluative understanding of texts.

The role of phonics teaching in the early stages of learning to read has been the subject of some debate in English education. From being taught in only a minority of schools in the early 1990s, this approach is now much more widely used, often within shared and guided reading sessions. The National Literacy Strategy details the progression expected in the teaching of phonics. In 2001, OFSTED indicated that this was an aspect of primary literacy teaching that was more widespread but in need of improvement.²⁸

The teaching of reading is organized in three distinct ways in the National Literacy Strategy. Shared reading is a class activity using a common text such as a 'big book' or text extract. This work is supported by the teacher, often through modeling, and children are introduced to texts that are more demanding than those they are able to read independently.

Guided reading is where children work with a greater level of independence. Small groups of children, at similar reading levels and with their own copy of the text, work with a teacher on texts that are matched to their ability. Independent reading, as the name implies, is when children work without the support of the teacher on texts that they are able to read with fluency and confidence.

Materials for Reading Instruction

There are no centrally published materials for teaching reading and many independent publishers produce sets of graded readers. Many schools use graded schemes in conjunction with selections of fiction and non-fiction texts in class and school libraries. A small number of dual language texts are available. In recent years, the National Literacy Strategy has led to the publication of a very wide selection of teacher and pupil materials.

Instructional Time

The evaluation of the third year of the National Literacy Strategy by OFSTED indicated that the daily literacy hour is a regular feature of primary schools.²⁹ This is supplemented in most schools with additional time which is used in a variety of ways. OFSTED found that a large majority of schools allocate between seven and eight hours a week to English overall, including shared, guided, and independent reading sessions.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Classes are most usually organized for single grades, but a class may span two, three, or more grades in very small schools. Average class size in England is 26.4 in primary schools.³⁰ In September 2001, the Government introduced a statutory limit of no more than 30 in the size of infant classes for 5-, 6-, and 7-year-olds. The average class size for this age group was 25.2 in January 2002.³¹ There is no retention and children automatically move from one year group to the next.

Children are generally taught in class groups by the same teacher for most of the day, but in some schools there may be some setting by ability in English and mathematics. Reading instruction within the National Literacy Strategy is characterized as a mixture of shared and guided reading in small groups.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

In most classes, the class teacher teaches reading as part of the English or literacy curriculum. Each school has a teacher designated as the English or literacy coordinator and this role frequently involves the management of resources and the development of policy rather than direct teaching of children outside the coordinator's own class.

Second Language Reading Instruction

English is the language of instruction within the National Curriculum for English. OFSTED found that the majority of schools with significant numbers of pupils from ethnic minority groups provide additional support for pupils within the literacy hour.³² These schools often receive additional funding.

Reading Disabilities

For children experiencing significant difficulties in developing literacy skills, additional support may be made available from a specialist teacher or

from a teaching assistant. Materials and training have been produced as part of the National Literacy Strategy in the form of 'Early Literacy Support' for pupils in year 1, 'Additional Literacy Support' for pupils in year 3, and 'Further Literacy Support' for year 5 pupils. In these approaches, the role of the teaching assistant, working under the guidance of the class teacher, is central and the programs are designed to target the lowest-performing 20 percent of pupils in average classes.

Literacy Programs



Two major literacy initiatives have been pursued in recent years in England, one at primary level and the other in lower- secondary schools.

Although neither the National Literacy Strategy nor the Key Stage 3 National Strategy are statutory, there is an expectation that publicly-funded schools will adopt them.

The National Literacy Strategy

In 1998, the National Literacy Strategy was introduced into almost all primary schools in the country. This was in response to concerns that too many children leaving primary education at age 11 had not mastered the basic skills of reading and writing. The Framework for teaching, produced as a central element of the Strategy, provides a detailed framework for the teaching of reading and writing that specifies teaching objectives for each year from reception (4- and 5-year-olds) to year 6 (11-year-olds). This was accompanied on its introduction by a substantial amount of training for teachers and the provision of support materials. A particular way of organizing the time devoted to literacy teaching and the class is advocated (the 'Literacy Hour') although in the years since the introduction of the Strategy, teachers have increasingly adapted the hour to their class circumstances.

The first 15 minutes of the Literacy Hour is devoted to the reading and writing of texts with the teacher sharing a text with the whole class. The next 15 minutes is devoted to work at word level for children at key stage 1 and at word or sentence level for children at key stage 2, again with whole class groups. Pupils are divided into ability groups for the next 20 minutes of the lesson, when they work independently, the teacher working with one or two groups on

guided text work (reading or writing). For the final 10 minutes, the plenary, the class gather and review what has been taught.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Teachers are expected to make regular assessments of pupils' attainment against the national curriculum level descriptions. From a focus on summative, end-of-key stage assessment related to national education targets and performance league tables, attention is now being given to assessment for learning or formative assessment. Teacher assessment levels are reported to parents alongside statutory test results at the end of each key stage. In English, teachers assess children on each of the three attainment targets, speaking and listening, reading and writing. Teachers can elect to use centrally produced optional tests in English and mathematics as a means of collecting further evidence to support their own assessments.

National or Regional Examinations

There is an extensive structure of formal assessment in England, starting with the assessment of children in funded settings at the end of the foundation stage (94 percent of 4-year olds in 2001).³³ Assessments are statutory at the end of the foundation stage and at the end of each key stage (ages 7, 11, and 14 years). Children are assessed in English (reading, writing, and spelling) and mathematics at age 7, and science is included at ages 11 and 14. All assessments are through formal written tests, which are newly developed each year. Reading and writing are assessed separately but there is no statutory test of speaking and listening, the other aspect of English within the national curriculum.

At age 7, reading assessment includes a reading task at levels 1 and 2 and a reading test for levels 2 and 3. Children produce one piece of writing, which is assessed by their teachers for both content and technical features such as punctuation. There is also a separate spelling test.

At age 11, the reading test is based on a full-color stimulus booklet, usually containing three or four different texts, which are thematically linked, and a separate question booklet with about 30 questions. There is a writing test and a

separate handwriting test and a spelling test in which target words are presented in context. From 2003, pupils in key stages one, two, and three will be required to complete two pieces of writing on specified themes and these will be assessed for both content and technical accuracy. There is a separate spelling test in which target words are presented in context. All the tests for 11- and 14-year-olds are marked externally by trained markers and the scripts are returned to schools. About four percent of children are judged by their teachers to be working below the levels covered by the tests at age 11. These children do not participate in the main assessment.

At age 11, pupils are awarded a level for reading and writing separately and then for English overall. It is this last outcome that is the subject of the national target in 2002. Since the tests are newly developed each year, extensive arrangements are in place to maintain standards from year to year. Results of the tests of 11 year olds are published nationally on a school-by-school basis and, from 2004, those for 14 year olds also will be published. This has contributed to the tests' high profile in England. The results for 7 year olds are published at a national summary level.

At age 16, secondary school pupils participate in a variety of vocational and non-vocational examinations. There are national targets for the percentage of pupils who attain these awards. Pupils take Advanced level examinations in three or four subjects at the age of 18, after two years of post-compulsory education. Examination results are published for individual schools for pupils aged 16 and 18.

Standardized Tests

A wide variety of standardized tests are available from commercial publishers and some schools elect to use these to supplement information from the statutory tests. In addition, national optional tests are available and are widely used.

Diagnostic Testing

On entry to compulsory schooling, there is an initial screening to identify children most likely to benefit from the Early Literacy Support program. Schools may administer additional tests to particular cohorts for screening purposes but this is organized at a school or local level. Children who are experiencing particular difficulties may be referred

to the educational psychology service. Educational psychologists are trained to interpret a series of individually administered instruments and to recommend specialist support if appropriate.

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Language and Literacy



France established freedom of the press by law in July 1881. Today, there are about 3,100 titles with an annual printing of 8 billion copies. There are just under a hundred national and regional dailies, excluding specialist papers, and about 12 million copies are printed daily with a circulation of 218 newspapers per 1,000 inhabitants.¹ The regional press, with 409 titles and a combined annual circulation of 2.2 billion has weathered the economic crisis better than the national press.

French, the official language, is spoken by nearly 100 percent of the population. The use of regional dialects and languages is declining. However, various languages associated with recent immigration are spoken in urban areas.

Education System



Governance and Organization

In July 1989, a law was enacted declaring education as the first national priority. The third article of this law stipulated a national objective that in ten years the entire age group reach at least the level of Vocational Aptitude Certificate (CAP), or Vocational Studies Certificate (BEP), and 80 percent complete the end of higher secondary school.

Education always has had great symbolic importance in France. It aims to develop and maintain national unity by providing all pupils with the same education, regardless of their social and geographical origins. Four basic principles govern public education: equal access, non-discrimination, neutrality, and secularity.

France's education system is largely the responsibility of the State and, thus, of the Ministry of National Education. The government is responsible for the definition and implementation of educational policy. For many years, the education system was highly centralized, hierarchical, and uniform in its organization and operation. In 1982, in an important act of decentralization, France appreciably increased the role of regions and departments by transferring to them some powers and responsibilities previously exercised by the State.

Regions are responsible for overseeing the functioning of the *lycées* (higher secondary schools); departments have the same responsibility for the *collèges* (lower-secondary schools). Administratively, nursery schools and elementary schools are under the direct control of the towns in which they were created. The towns also support and manage the budgets of these schools.

Although control over education is shared between the State and the local governments, the State holds an important role as the guarantor of the functioning of the public system and of the coherence of education. The State defines the educational orientations and the curricula. It recruits, trains, and manages education staff, establishes the status and the rules of functioning of the schools, and appoints teachers and administrative staff. Only the state may define and establish diploma levels. Public examinations are open to all pupils.

There were more than 15 million schoolchildren and students in France in 1999-2000, representing a quarter of the population. The budget of the Ministry of National Education is larger than that of any other ministry. In 2001, the Ministry had a budget of 50.6 billion euros (US\$ 45 billion) and accounted for 22.7 percent of State spending. The State is responsible for the salaries of teachers

Country Profile: France

Geographical Location and Size

France, western Europe's largest country, is located on the edge of the Eurasian continent (between latitudes 41° and 52° North). Forming a hexagon of which no side is longer than 1000 kilometers, France shares its borders with eight neighboring countries: Andorra, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, Spain, and Switzerland. Excluding the overseas administrative divisions, the area of mainland France is 550,000 square kilometers with over 3,400 kilometers of coastline (the North Sea, English Channel, Atlantic Ocean, and Mediterranean Sea). In general, the climate is cool in the winter with mild summers. However in southern France, along the Mediterranean Sea, the winters are mild and the summers are hot.

The geographical features of the country are diverse with mostly flat plains or gently rolling hills in the north and west, and mountains in the south and east. Two chains of mountains make natural borders: the Pyrenees border Spain and the Alps border Switzerland and Italy. Mont-Blanc, the highest point in Europe, is located in the French Alps.

France includes a number of outposts and islands all over the world. In all, they cover an area of some 120,000 square kilometers. These regions of France consist primarily of four overseas departments (DOM): Guadeloupe and Martinique in the West Indies, Reunion in the Indian Ocean, and French Guiana in South America. France also has overseas territories.

Population and Health Statistics

As of January 2000, mainland France had a population of 58.7 million – the twenty-first largest population in the world and third largest in the European Union. Including the more than two million inhabitants of the overseas departments and territories, the population of France is 60.4 million.²

With an average population of 107 inhabitants per square kilometer, France is relatively densely populated in global terms.³ The population distribution is highly uneven, however, with half the population occupying just over 10 percent of the surface area and some districts with fewer than ten inhabitants per square kilometer.

Urbanization occurred later in France than in some other European countries. During the 1950s, France started to catch up; recent data indicate 75 percent of the population living in urban areas.⁴ Paris, France's



largest urban area and capital, is home to 10.3 million people – more than 20 percent of the total number of city-dwellers.

In the last 50 years, France has experienced a rapid population growth resulting from the “baby boom” years; the continued fall in the death rate, particularly infant mortality (which was 52 per 1,000 live births in 1950, compared with fewer than 5 per 1,000 today); and high levels of immigration (which, on average, accounted for a quarter of this growth).⁵ Approximately 4 million foreigners currently live in France. An increase in the average life expectancy (75 years for men and 82 years for women) has also contributed to this growth.⁶

Political System

The Fifth Republic, established by the Constitution of 1958, strengthened the power of the executive branch (the President of the Republic and the government). The President is elected for five years by direct universal suffrage and may be re-elected an indefinite number of times. The Prime Minister is nominated by the National Assembly majority and is appointed by the President of the Republic.

The legislative branch, a bicameral Parliament, consists of the Senate and the National Assembly. The Senate comprises 321 seats. Senators are indirectly elected by an electoral college to serve nine-year terms and are elected by thirds every three years. The National Assembly comprises 577 seats. The deputies are elected by popular vote under a single-member majority system to serve five-year terms.

The judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court of Appeals (judges are appointed by the president based upon nominations from the High Council of the Judiciary); the Constitutional Council (three members appointed by the president, three by the president of the National Assembly, and three by the president of the Senate); and the Conseil d'Etat.

France is divided into 26 regions subdivided into 100 departments and 37,000 municipalities. The decentralization law of 1982 altered the balance of power between the state and local authorities, giving far greater local autonomy in decision-making by sharing administrative and budgetary tasks with local authorities.

Economy and Employment

The main natural resources are: coal, iron ore, bauxite, zinc, potash, timber, and fish. France now manages to satisfy 50 percent of its total energy needs but is still heavily dependent on hydrocarbons. The GNP per capita in 2001 was US\$ 24,170.⁷

French agriculture employs 6 percent of the total workforce and accounts for only 2 percent of the national GDP. The manufacturing sector, including construction and civil engineering, accounts for 29 percent of jobs. The tertiary sector accounts for 70 percent of the GDP and 65 percent of jobs. In 2000, the female labor force was 45 percent of the total labor force and 2.4 million people were unemployed (9.8 percent of the labor force).

and other education staff. The education system is the country's biggest employer, with 1.2 million teaching, administrative, and ancillary staff – more than half of all state employees. If spending by local authorities, households, and businesses is included, France's total education and training budget in 2000 amounted to 98.3 billion euros (US\$ 87 billion), 7.1 percent of French GDP. The largest expenditures are secondary education (33.7%) followed by primary (22.2%) and higher education (13.5%).

Structure of the Education System

State education is free to all students, with the exception of university registration fees, which are far lower than in most large industrialized nations. Compulsory schooling includes elementary school and lower-secondary school (between the ages of 6 and 16).

Pre-elementary Education

Nursery school is free of charge, but is not compulsory. It accepts children beginning at the age of 2, providing places are available. In 2000, all children between 3 and 5 attended a pre-elementary school and the enrollment ratio of 2-year-old children reached 35 percent. All nursery school classes benefit from the services of a specialized person, recruited by the municipality. Usually, the children are grouped according to their age in three sections: junior, average, and senior. This distribution is flexible, taking into account the progress of each child, the level of maturity, and the competencies which he or she has acquired. The general objective of nursery school is to help the child to develop, form his or her personality, and prepare him or her for success at the elementary school.

In nursery school, emphasis is placed on mastery of the language. Children learn to speak, begin to build their own language, and learn to write. Artistic education also holds an important place in the nursery school curriculum.

The goal of the art curriculum at this level is to help children to develop sensibility, imagination, and a creative capacity.

Elementary Education

Elementary education, which begins at age 6, is free and compulsory for all children. Schooling at this level usually lasts five years, although it may be increased or decreased by one year according to the knowledge acquired by the pupil. Promotion from primary school to the first class of secondary education is automatic.

Elementary school includes five classes in two cycles: fundamental learning, which begins in the senior section of the nursery school and continues through the first two years of the elementary school; and consolidation of learning, which includes the last three years of elementary school.

Secondary Education

Secondary education is divided into two successive stages: the *collège* (lower-secondary school) and the *lycée* (upper-secondary school). The lower-secondary school takes students from the *sixième* form (or grade) to the *troisième* (usually from ages to 11 to 15). Currently 3.3 million pupils are enrolled in lower-secondary schools (public and private). Lower-secondary schools are managed by a board, chaired by the head teacher, that includes teachers, parents, and local officials. Several categories of personnel work in lower-secondary schools: teaching staff, recruited after 3 years of university study; administrative staff; and technical and service staff.

Upon completion of the *troisième* form, students attend a general, technical, or vocational *lycée* which prepares them for the corresponding *Baccalauréat* (known as *le bac*) which they usually take at the age of 18.

There are two types of upper-secondary school:

- General and technological high schools (LEGT) lead to the General and Technological *Baccalauréat* or to the Certificate of Technician. General streams include: L (literature), ES (economic and social studies), and S (scientific). Technological streams include: STT (tertiary science and technology), STI (industrial science and technology), and STL (laboratory science and technology).

- Vocational high schools (LP) lead to the Vocational Aptitude Certificate (CAP), the Vocational Studies Certificate (BEP), and the Vocational *Baccalauréat*.

Types of Schools

State education in France is nondenominational, enrolling 86.2 percent of the pupils at the primary level and 80 percent of those at the secondary level. Also subject to the control of the state, the private schools are primarily denominational – mainly Roman Catholic. Generally they operate under a contract with the State that grants them a substantial income. The state pays teachers' salaries as well as for their initial and continuous training. Private schools under contract respect schedules and curricula applicable in public education. In this sector, families pay school fees, which vary according to the particular schools.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

Since 1992, the duration of the school week is 26 hours. Generally, students are in school 6 days per week (Monday-Saturday) with half days on Wednesday and Saturday. Outside of the school hours, there also is often a service of supervised studies, mostly overseen by teachers, which caters for children whose parents work.

Besides the 26 hours of compulsory education, children frequently play sports and practice artistic and cultural activities. Those activities are organized by the local authorities or by associations.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Generally, primary education teachers are responsible for teaching all subjects to their class. When the teachers' team agrees, it is sometimes possible to have groupings by subject. Teachers are capable of teaching either level (pre-elementary and elementary) according to their preference, subject to availability of posts in the department where they wish to teach.

In 2000, in the public sector, there were 302,000 primary schoolteachers (79% women).⁸ The average age for male teachers was 42.7 years, and for females 40.9 years. In total, one teacher in two was between the ages of 40 and 52, and one in

three between 46 and 53. Six point six percent work part-time.

Teacher Education

Since 1992, primary teachers must hold a diploma from a post-secondary cycle of studies of at least 3 years. The candidates must be nationals of one of the countries of the European Union.

Initial training on theory and practice, takes place at an IUFM (university institute of teacher education). Candidates are chosen for participating in the first year by their file or possibly after an interview. The competitive examination, required for all pre-elementary and elementary teachers, takes place at the end of the first year of IUFM. Successful students become trainee teachers and are paid for a compulsory year of training. At the end of the compulsory year, they are appointed to a pre-elementary school or an elementary school.

At the end of training, trainees are assessed on their work with the pupils in class, the disciplines studied at the IUFM, and a report written by the trainee concerning a practical aspect of education. If the evaluation is positive, then the trainee teacher becomes a full-fledged primary school teacher with civil service status.

The following is the institutional definition of a primary school teacher:

“The primary school teacher is a general-purpose teacher, able to teach all the disciplines of the primary school curriculum. He or she has a vocation to teach and to educate from the junior section of pre-elementary school to the last level of elementary school. He or she exercises a profession in constant evolution.”

Professional skills are organized according to four main domains:

- The disciplines taught at primary school;
- The situations of learning;
- The behavior of the class and the diversity of pupils; and
- The exercise of educational responsibility and professional ethics.

At the IUFM, training is approached in connection with pupils’ class work. Even though it is a disciplinary domain with specific contents, the French language is approached mainly from the following perspectives:

- The problems of learning reading (steps and methods);
- The analysis of textbooks from the first year of the cycle;
- The connection between reading and writing; and
- The evaluation of the competencies in reading.

Teacher In-service Education

Besides the initial vocational training of teachers, the IUFM also is responsible for organizing in-service training. During their careers, primary school teachers have a credit of 36 weeks for further training (the equivalent of a school year). This is not compulsory. In-service training courses are offered every year at both the local and national levels. The contents of training are largely decided by the national and local educational priorities. The teaching of reading features strongly in these courses.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

At a June 2000 press conference on education in the primary schools, the Minister of National Education described preserving the national language as an absolute priority. Language is the basis of social integration, and knowledge of the French language is indispensable to knowledge attainment. In order to achieve in other disciplines, students must comprehend their language. It is the backbone of learning.

At the recent General Conference of Reading and Languages, people debated and discussed how to facilitate the learning of reading. Among the primary ideas expressed, two essential points were stressed:

- Mastery of the oral language in pre-elementary school, to extend more easily to written language; and
- Learning of reading in elementary school.

Knowing how to read and enjoying reading are the major objectives of the first years of elementary school. Between the ages of six and seven, the child should become acquainted with the functioning of written language. This includes connecting sounds with their graphic translation; understanding sentence structure, and understanding the differences between written and spoken language.

Between the ages of 8 and 10, the pupil should read to learn, or read to understand. The student reads to learn across all the disciplines, encountering long texts which are more and more complex. These rich texts motivate the pupil to think, be moved, enjoy oneself, and learn. Such texts also encourage discussion among pupils.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

The curriculum for the primary school, defined in 1995, governs the action of each teacher. The teaching staff has the responsibility to build a coherent progression, to adapt the rhythm of the curriculum to the diversity of the children, to define strategies, and to evaluate students.

The elementary school curriculum indicates clearly that to learn to read is to incorporate two very different activities: identifying written words, and understanding the meaning of words in verbal (texts) and non-verbal (supports of texts, situation of communication) contexts. The first activity is specific to reading and the second concerns oral language. The content competencies that the pupils must acquire during each of the three cycles of primary school, were defined nationally after numerous consultations. The aspects of mastery of oral language, reading, and writing are very strictly linked in the text of the curriculum. However, there are specific reading competencies which the pupils must have acquired at the end of each cycle.

At the end of cycle 2, the cycle of the fundamental learning (ages 7 to 8), in *understanding*, the pupils should be able to:

- Understand the explicit information of a literary or documentary text suited to both the age and culture of the pupils
- Find answers to simple questions in a printed documentary text or on an Internet site
- Find the subject of a literary text
- Read aloud a short passage and correctly restore the accents of groups and the melodic curve of the sentence (silent preparation)
- Reread independently an illustrated story read in class with the teacher

With regard to the *word recognition*, they should be able to:

- Understand the alphabetical system of coding writing
- Recognize the regular correspondence between graphemes and phonemes
- Propose a possible spelling (phonetically correct) for a regular word
- Decipher an unknown word
- Identify immediately most of the short words (up to 4 or 5 letters) and the most frequent long words.

At the end of cycle 3, the cycle of the consolidation of learning (ages 10 to 11), the pupils should be able to:

- Use school catalogs (paper or online) to find a book
- Use the information of the jacket and the title page of a book to know if the book is the one required
- Reading silently and understand a short literary text (e.g., a small short story, an extract)
- Read and understand a long literary text, and remember what was read

- Read personally at least one book of literature a month
- Repeat in their own words something they heard being read
- Participate in a debate on the interpretation of a literary text and find evidence to support interpretations in the text
- Understand that interpretation of a literary work depends on the constraints of the text
- Understand the difference between a literary and a historical story, between fiction and reality
- Remember the titles of texts read during the year, and the names of their authors.

The new curriculum made public in February 2002, emphasizes two aspects of reading: the diversity of written language and kinds of written documents to be used by pupils, and the division of learning to read across specific courses, as well as the use of texts across disciplines. The new curriculum rests on the assertion that pupils learn to read in all disciplines and through different written documents, such as works of fiction, stories, historic documents, geographic descriptions, and reports of scientific experiments.

Materials for Reading Instruction

France does not have compulsory methods or didactic materials for teaching reading. The choice of teaching equipment and material is made through discussion among the teachers at a school on the basis of the range offered by publishers. Local or regional associations and resource centers sometimes publish educational materials.

The official documents recommend using a textbook for teaching reading, particularly for novice teachers. However, this textbook never can be the only book used with the pupils. The reading of literature, facilitated by teachers, is also necessary and remains the only way to foster understanding of complex texts.

To help increase motivation, pupils are exposed to numerous supports for reading, from books to computer screens to poems and magazines. This

allows them to understand the daily usefulness of reading and writing.

The school library “Centre de Documentation” (BCD) is a place for reading and participating in reading activities. It supports personal work or teamwork between the pupils and assists them in various disciplines.

Instructional Time

The total instructional time in primary school is usually six hours per day, including two 50-minute breaks. A normal school day runs from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Schedules fixed in 1995 prescribe a total of 26 hours of class per week: 9 hours of French in second cycle; and 9 hours of French and modern languages in the third cycle (education in modern languages can be provided within the limits of ninety minutes). The exact amount of time designated for reading instruction varies according to the practices of teachers and schools.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

According to the official educational policy, variety in teaching methods is important. Teachers bear professional responsibility for selecting the most effective methods for achieving the aims of the national school syllabus.

Reading instruction is characterized by a combination of individual and group activities. It is not uncommon for classes to be divided into smaller groups according to pupil ability. Thus, “reading corners” often exist within the classroom so pupils can be free to read materials of their own choosing, while others are being taught.

The term “class” corresponds normally to a group of pupils taught at the same level during a school year. However sometimes, because of strengths, schools contain composite classes with two or more grade-levels (in 1999, they represented nearly 22% of all French classes). Certain schools, mostly rural ones, contain only a single class, grouping together all the levels. In 2000, 2.4% of the French classes were in such schools. In 2000, the mean size of classes was 25.5 pupils in pre-elementary and below 23 in elementary.

Second Language Reading Instruction

Classes of “initiation” are created for non-French speaking pupils. A special syllabus applies to these pupils.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

Reading specialists play little or no role in teaching reading in French schools. Assistance with reading difficulties comes from “RASED,” a network of teachers and psychologists. Teachers who work within “RASED” are in charge of teaching pupils with learning difficulties, although their assistance is not specific to reading. Their aim is to prevent learning difficulties that some pupils may encounter in school.

Reading Disabilities

French pupils’ reading ability is monitored through regular assessment by their teachers. Those who have particular difficulties are given support by their classroom teacher. When they fail to make normal progress while receiving such support, their difficulties are diagnosed by the “RASED” team. There are special needs classes (adaptation) intended to support children who, for different reasons, have difficulties in elementary school.

Since 1991, there are also “CLIS” (classes of school integration). They are for pupils with physical, sensory, or mental handicaps who can benefit, in the normal school environment, from learning that is adapted to their age, their capacities, and their handicaps. In 1999, they represented 1.6 percent of all French classes.

Literacy Programs



There is a National Agency to Fight Against Illiteracy (ANLCI). The aim of this agency is to coordinate and optimize the means provided by the State, the regions, and the companies to fight against illiteracy.

The Minister of National Education also has the help of several advisory bodies. The National Reading Observatory (ONL), created in June 1996, gathers together researchers, teachers, inspectors, and representatives of parents. Its mission is to analyze educational practices in the field of learning and improvement in reading.

Every year the Ministry of Education organizes or supports a number of nationwide literacy events. Among other purposes, these events are to facilitate an interest in reading and access to reading in ways other than through school. Some examples of these activities include:

The week of the press in school. Every year all teachers are invited to participate in this civic educational activity, aimed to help pupils enter the world of printed media.

Poets’ spring. A national event during which an entire week is spent developing thousands of initiatives to promote poetry in all its forms.

The Week of the French language and the French-speaking world. Every year, several hundred events in which schools can participate are organized throughout the country. Pupils are often given theme projects to do, and attention is focused on the importance of France’s literary heritage and on literacy as the key to its enjoyment.

Read and make read. This is a call to retired persons to pass on to children the pleasure of reading, a mobilization of national dimension supported by more than 130 writers and by the Ministry of Education. At the request of the teacher and the school, retired persons offer a part of their spare time to help elementary school pupils develop a taste for reading and literature.

Competitions also are also organized and supported at the national level:

Reading’s battle. A competition of articles and reports proposed to 6 to 12 year old children to help them discover the world of books.

My city likes reading. A competition inviting mayors to make known their policy in favor of books and of reading, more particularly their initiatives to develop relations between school and cultural places. This competition rewards mayors for their work on behalf of books in their cultural, social, and educational dimensions.

Other competitions, such as challenges to reading and reading rallies, are also organized on the basis of local or private initiatives.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Every child has a school report that is regularly sent to his or her parents.

The school report is a good instrument for connection and communication between teacher and family. It details the results of periodic evaluations, competencies acquired by the pupil, recommendations for the pupil's passage in a class or in a superior cycle, and final decisions made regarding the student. The progress of a pupil in each cycle is decided, on the recommendation of the pupil's teacher, by the cycle teachers council. Parents are regularly informed about their child's school situation.

Diagnostic Testing

Since 1989, a national assessment of competencies in reading, writing, and mathematics has been conducted every year at the beginning of the cycle of consolidation of learning and at the beginning of the first grade of lower-secondary school. This is a large-scale assessment involving all pupils in each grade, which means about 1,500,000 students for both grades. The national assessment is administered at the very beginning of the cycle and of the school year because its aim is to supply every teacher with knowledge of their pupils' abilities in the three fundamental domains. This helps teachers to choose the best educational approaches.

At the same time, it has begun to give teachers, from pre-elementary to higher secondary school and in an increasing number of disciplines, diagnostic and formative evaluation tools which they can use, as they wish, to adapt their educational practices to the variety of pupils' needs. These tools, which were sent to teachers as paper documents, are now available online. Teachers who access this site can select, according to various research criteria, the tests that appear to them to correspond best to the context of their class and to their pupils.

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Ministry of National Education

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Language and Literacy



The official national language is German. Learning a first foreign language – mostly English, but also French or Latin – is compulsory beginning in secondary education, so that English is generally understood in Germany.

Germany has a rich literary history, which finds expression in a great variety of daily newspapers. Along with nationwide daily newspapers there are regional local newspapers in most towns. The circulation of daily newspapers is 311 per 1,000 inhabitants.¹ Public libraries are partly held by the *Land* (university libraries) and partly by the cities (municipal and local libraries). More than nine million borrowers are registered across the 11,817 public libraries.²

Education System



Governance and Organization

Each of the sixteen *Laender* has sole legislative and administrative power over educational policy within its geographical area. This includes regulation of curricula and time schedules, professional requirements, school buildings and equipment, and teacher recruitment.

The *Laender* organize the supervision of the school system in two or three tiers: the Ministry of Education, its school boards at the regional level, and its school administrators at local level.

The *Laender* coordinate their educational policies through the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs. Resolutions and recommendations of the Standing Conference become legally binding only when they are adopted into *Laender* laws, decrees, or

regulations of *Laender* authorities. The Standing Conference also deals with all curricular problems and innovations requiring coordination between *Laender*, such as recognition of examinations, the education of foreign students, and environmental education. The federal Ministry of Education and Research has a concurrent right to legislate for the in-company part of vocational education, as well as to outline legislation on general principles for the higher education system.

Although the *Land* does not have a monopoly on education, only about 5.3 percent of school-age children attend private schools.³ These schools must be accredited by the *Land* and are supervised by it. The state, however, is also required to subsidize them.

The public expenditure on education in 1998 was about 160 Mrd. DM (US\$ 73.4 billion),⁴ 4.3 percent of the GNP. Schools are financed in one of the following three ways,

- Personnel costs are paid by the *Laender*. Teachers, who are usually civil servants of a *Land*, are assigned to schools in proportion to the number of pupils enrolled. The amount paid by the 16 *Laender* for personnel salaries (including non-teaching employees, e.g. caretaker) in 1998 was 66 Mrd. DM (US\$ 30.3 billion), about 41.5 percent of their budgets for education.⁵
- Non-personnel costs such as building maintenance, equipment, laboratories, and libraries are paid by the local authority in its capacity as school maintaining body (*Schulträger*), although the *Land* contributes to new construction and large investments such as new computers.
- In some *Laender*, parents pay for textbooks and learning materials.

Country Profile: Germany

Geographical Location and Size

Germany is situated in the heart of Europe and borders nine other European countries. From north (the border with Denmark) to south (the Alps), Germany has a length of 876 kilometers and covers an area of about 357,000 square kilometers. In the North, Germany has access to the North Sea and to the Baltic Sea. With its northern lowlands, the densely wooded low mountain ranges and the high mountain range – the Bavarian Alps – Germany has a great variety of landscapes.

Population and Health Statistics

Germany has 82 million inhabitants. Population density in the former West Germany is 235 persons per square kilometer and 145 persons per square kilometer in the former East Germany. In spite of the high population density, only three cities – Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich – have more than one million inhabitants. Eighty-seven percent of the population lives in rural areas, most of them in communities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants.⁶ Following reunification, Berlin once again became the capital of Germany, in the summer of 1999.

In the year 2000, non-German ethnic groups represented nine percent of the population. This includes about 2 million Turks, 662,000 from the former Yugoslavia, and 619,000 Italians. Due to immigration, the population as a whole increased slightly from 1990 to 1999 with a growth rate of 0.4 percent.⁷ In 2001, average life expectancy was 74 years for men and 80 years for women.⁸ Infant mortality rate was 5 per 1,000 live births.⁹

Political System

Germany is a federal republic of 16 *Laender* (states) with a democratically elected, federal first chamber of parliament, the *Bundestag*. The *Laender* are represented in the second chamber, the *Bundesrat*. The *Bundestag* is headed by the federal chancellor, who is elected for four years by all German entitled to vote (at the age of 18). The governments of the *Laender* also are elected for four years by the inhabitants entitled to vote in the *Land*. Areas of government jurisdiction are divided between the federal government and the *Laender*. Education and cultural affairs fall in the domain of the *Laender*.



Economy and Employment

Germany, a member of both OECD and the G7 Economic Group of countries, is rated as a high-income country by the World Bank. The gross national product per capita in 2000 was US\$ 25,620 (US\$ 23,510 PPP Intl).¹⁰ The gross national product is made up mainly of manufacturing, industry, catering, financing, renting and business services as well as public and private services. The majority of the country's export earnings are from vehicles, machinery, and chemicals.¹¹

In 1999, 72.4 percent of men and 56.9 percent of women at the age of 15 to 65 were working.¹² The female labor force was 42.2 percent of the total labor force in 2001.¹³ The main types of employment are in services (64.2 percent), industry (33.1 percent), and agriculture (2.7 percent).¹⁴

Structure of the Education System

Compulsory schooling commences at the age of 6 and finishes at 18. Nine or ten of these years, depending on the school system of the individual *Land*, must be spent in full-time schooling, and the following years either in full-time schooling or part-time vocational schools in conjunction with a trade or apprenticeship program. Exhibit 1 shows the structure of Germany's education system.

Pre-primary Education

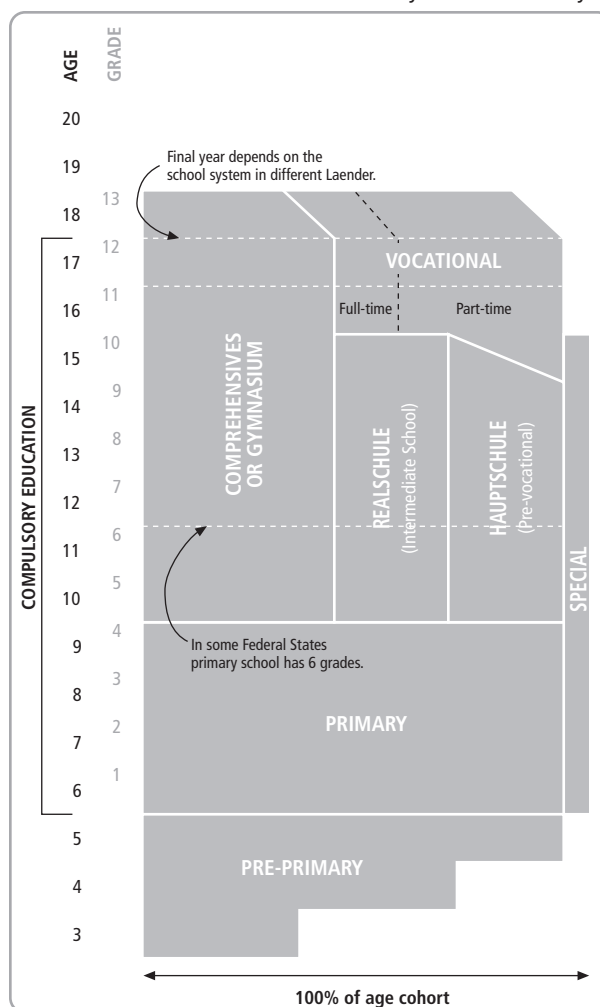
Pre-primary education is not directly linked to the education system and attendance is voluntary. Kindergartens for children between the ages of 3 and 6 are maintained by the local authorities, the church, or by private organizations. Some *Laender* offer preschools (*Vorklassen/Schulkindergärten*) for five-year-old children. The curriculum for kindergarten and preschool mainly involves playing and social activities. In general, it is expected that children entering primary school would have encountered some preparation in physical abilities, speech, creativity, music, social comportment, and daily routine but no special instruction in reading. About 90 percent of children in Germany attend a kindergarten or a pre-primary school.¹⁵ In some *Laender*, there are special preschools for children who have not reached school-readiness by the age of 6.

Primary Education

Primary school, *Grundschule*, is the lowest level of the education system attended by all pupils and generally comprises grades 1 to 4 for pupils aged 6 through 10, although in some *Laender* it comprises grades 1 to 6 for pupils aged 6 through 12. Children aged 6 or 7 who for different reasons have not acquired the physical and mental maturity to follow regular instruction attend special schools where they receive special support (e.g., schools for children with learning disabilities, for the mentally handicapped or the physically handicapped). In some *Laender*, there are integrated classes where handicapped and non-handicapped children are taught together. In 1999, about 3 to 4 percent of all children of primary school age attended special schools.¹⁶

Most primary schools are half-day schools. Only a few primary schools offer all-day supervision. In addition, there are some after school centers (*Horte*) and different forms of youth welfare services so that working parents can be

Exhibit 1: Structure of the Educational System in Germany



sure their children have somewhere to stay. However, traditionally many mothers decide to give up their jobs.

In primary school, children are taught German, mathematics, *Sachunterricht* (a subject concerned with social, historical, scientific and geographical topics), physical education, music, art, craft and needlework, and religious instruction. German as a subject includes instruction in reading and writing. In some *Laender*, instruction in foreign languages is obligatory beginning in the third grade, and, in a few cases, from the first grade.

Lower-secondary Education (Sekundarbereich I)

Secondary level I, for students aged 10 through 15 or 16, offers differentiated teaching in accordance with student ability, talent, and inclination. Students are placed into one of the three types of school according to academic ability. There is no streaming within these except in comprehensive

schools that include all three types of school (*Hauptschule*, *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*). In comprehensive schools, children are assigned to different groups according to their ability.¹⁷

In 1999, students attended the different types of schools as listed below.

- *Orientation stage* covers classes 5 and 6, either as part of the various secondary schools or separate from them (7.5 percent)
- *Hauptschule* provides a sound basis for subsequent vocational training (grades 5 through 9 or 10; 20.0 percent)
- *Realschule* equips young people for subsequent careers in positions located between the purely theoretical and the purely practical (grades 5 through 10; 22.8 percent)
- *Gymnasium* equips students for intellectual activity and prepares them for higher education (grades 5 through 10; 28.8 percent)
- *Comprehensive schools* (not in all *Laender*), including Waldorf schools (grades 5 through 10; 9.2 percent)
- School types with different school careers (7.4 percent)
- *Special schools* in various forms for children with disabilities (4.0 percent)

Upper-secondary Education (Sekundarbereich II)

Upper-secondary general education (23.9 percent in 1999), for students aged 15 or 16 through 18 or 19, offers a three-year course qualifying students to enter higher education.¹⁸ Until the middle of the 1970s, the course was organized in terms of types of *Gymnasien* including classical and modern languages, mathematics, and science. This has been replaced by a system of basic and intensive courses combined with compulsory and optional ones. Many limitations are placed on students' choices to ensure that all students achieve a broad range of knowledge.

Upper-secondary education also encompasses full-time vocational schools (22.3 percent in 1999) and combined vocational programs (53.8 percent

in 1999) in the Dual System.¹⁹ The German Dual System of vocational training and education involves cooperative apprenticeship at two learning sites – the school and the workplace. Enterprise-based vocational training and education has two sponsors: the *Laender* governments, which establish and finance vocational schools, and the enterprises themselves, which finance and provide apprenticeships.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

For all levels, the school year includes 38 weeks of instructional time or between 190 and 220 days, depending on whether it is a five- or six-day school week. In primary schools, children have a five-day week. The school year ends with a six-week summer break between mid-June and early August. Two additional breaks include two weeks each at Christmas and Easter. In addition, other breaks are organized at the *Laender* level.

Teachers and Teacher Training



Teaching Force

After having successfully participated in examinations for the first and second phase (preparatory service) of teacher training, teachers can be employed by the ministries of education of the *Laender*. Teachers are assigned to specific schools. Schools themselves do not have great influence on teacher recruitment but currently there are efforts to strengthen the autonomy of the schools and to grant them a role in choosing the teachers. Teachers can work full-time or part-time. The vast majority (81.9 percent) of teachers employed part-time in general education are women.²⁰ At least half of all female teachers in general education are employed part-time.

From 1960 to 2000, the ratio of male to female teachers shifted in favor of female teachers, from 43²¹ to 65^{22,23} percent over the forty-year period. This did not occur in the same rate in all types of schools. There was a clear increase in female teachers at primary schools to about 81 percent, whereas at the *Gymnasien* there was only a slight increase to about 48 percent.²⁴

Due to hiring many new teachers in the 1970s, decreasing enrollment in the late 1980s, and the limited financial resources available, very few new

teachers have been hired in recent years. Therefore, the average age of teachers at primary school is about 48.

Teachers' salaries follow the civil service system: teachers at primary schools are paid at the level of those who complete specialized colleges. All other teacher salaries are comparable to those of other university graduates, such as judges or doctors in the health-care system. More important, every two, three, or four years, civil servants are awarded an automatic salary increase.

Teacher Education

Admission to a teacher education program depends on possession of the *Abitur*, a general higher education entrance qualification obtained through the upper-secondary school leaving examination.

Teachers for all types of schools have to complete two training phases. First, there are higher education studies for a period of three to four years, during which future teachers study predominantly one or two academic subjects, not necessarily subjects taught in school. The school related studies include courses in educational theory, sometimes psychology, and in *Fachdidaktik* (didactic studies and methods in the academic subjects they study). Higher education studies include practical pre-service training, during which trainees visit schools, in general twice for a period of about 2 or 4 weeks, for observing and practice teaching under the supervision of experienced teachers. This study concludes with part I of the degree examination. The subsequent introduction to school practice (preparatory service) comprises practical involvement in schools and complementary training at seminars. This phase concludes with part II of the degree examination. There have been attempts to merge the two phases of training, but at present they remain separate.

Teachers in Germany are usually prepared for specific kinds of schools, either for primary schools or secondary schools like *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, *Gymnasium*, or vocational schools. Especially regarding teacher education for primary schools, however, there are important differences between the *Laender* that relate to the following factors.

- *Institutions of teacher training.* Prior to 1980 (and in the German Democratic Republic until 1990), all training of primary teachers was conducted in colleges of education. More recently, the

majority of primary school teachers are trained at universities, like the other types of teachers.

- *Type of teacher training.* In half the *Laender*, teachers are specifically trained for primary schools. In the others, teachers are trained for a combination of schools, including primary schools where they give lessons in all subjects of the curriculum and in secondary schools where they teach the subject they studied in part I of their training.
- *Length of education.* For part I, students study for three or four years at a university or an institute of higher education. For part II, the preparatory period may range between 18 and 24 months.
- *Content of the training.* The studies in part I may involve specialization in one or two subjects. While in some *Laender* the proportion of primary school related studies is quite high (up to 50 percent), in others it is only about 10 to 20 percent. Primary school related studies include obligatory courses in German and mathematics but with different amounts of time. In some *Laender*, the amount of study time related to reading instruction is rather minimal and more often related only to beginning reading instruction.

Teachers in primary schools are expected to teach in all major subject areas (German, mathematics, and *Sachunterricht*) even if they were not especially trained for these subjects. There are no specific reading teachers, since reading is embedded in the teaching of German language.

An agreement of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Laender* guarantees mutual recognition of the university examinations for the teaching profession. Nevertheless, due to the diversity of training programs for primary school teachers, there are sometimes problems achieving this.

Teacher In-service Education

In-service training for teachers is compulsory but regulated differently by each of the *Laender*. In most of the *Laender*, the teachers themselves decide on the content and quantity of in-service training they attend. In all *Laender*, there is ample

opportunity for teachers to attend in-service development. This is intended to keep teachers up-to-date on the subjects they teach as well as on broader fields of psychology and sociology in education and didactic methods. Courses are organized regionally or at the *Land* level, often during school hours, and teachers are excused from school duties to attend. The greatest number of further education courses for teachers are offered by the state institutes for continuing and further education which were created in the 1970s.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The three R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic) are considered important for primary school children. Literacy is seen as the basis of general education, enabling individuals to participate in the culture and the democracy of a society.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Introduction to reading starts at age 6 with compulsory schooling. In each *Land*, there exists an obligatory curriculum that comprises general instructions for teaching methods and specific instructions for the content of the subject in question. Normally, reading instruction is divided into two phases: introduction to reading skills that should be imparted – differing from *Land* to *Land* – in the first or second class, and further reading that is taught until the end of primary schooling. During the first phase, the children should learn to comprehend the alphabetic principle, so that they are able to read and understand simple unknown texts. In the second phase, emphasis is put on how to read fluently and correctly.

Some of the *Laender* also mention the development of interest and motivation to read as an objective for the first phase while some mention this as an objective for the second phase. The most frequent recommendation for encouraging the motivation of the children is to choose a great variety of texts. It is pointed out that the texts should be interesting and should be adapted to the development of the children.

Concerning first lessons in reading, most guidelines refer to the disadvantages of an exclusively synthetic or analytical method of learning

to read and so analytical-synthetic methods are obligatory. Beginning with a single word, children become acquainted with the elements of letter and sound by all senses – to differentiate between letters visually, to differentiate sounds by hearing and speaking, and to copy and write letters and words. Almost every *Land* aims to connect learning to read and to write for a balanced approach.

Recognition of the function of a text is meant to be a part of subject-matter in several *Laender* – generally for a second phase. Some *Laender* recommend training of reading speech from second class up, and others recommend it for the first class (6-year-old children). Some curricula emphasize the importance of children learning to read competently as soon as possible. Other curricula consider it necessary for children to be able to choose among different subjects and structure their own time for learning.

In most curricula, there is a special chapter on differentiation of teaching. Differentiation should take into account individual differences among children caused by a variety of reasons (e.g., initial range in abilities before entering compulsory school, linguistic competence, motivation, interest in learning, and learning ability). Some curricula include special consideration for children whose first language is other than German.

Materials for Reading Instruction

A great majority of teachers in the first class use a basal reader or a learning-to-read program. In the following classes, most of the teachers use textbooks that contain exercises for German lessons. Textbooks are created corresponding to the curriculum of the respective *Land*. They must be approved by the Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Land* in question. Different publishing houses publish several textbooks that are usually revised every 5 years. Within the bounds of freedom of teaching methods, teachers can choose from the list of approved textbooks. In addition or as a substitute, many teachers use worksheets for special exercises taken from existing material or created by themselves.

Most classes have a classroom library and children are free to choose reading material. Many teachers also use public libraries.

Instructional Time

In Grades 1 to 4, a school week is divided into 20 to 25 class periods of 45 minutes each. Instruction time is between 8:00 a.m. and 1:15 p.m. School starts for children between 8:00 and 9:30 and finishes between 11:00 and 1:15. Most *Laender* are trying to offer a reliable half-day school for children with fixed beginning and ending times. About 5 to 6 hours a week is devoted to German, which includes reading and writing. The estimation of the exact amount of teaching time in reading is difficult because the states differ in the number of total instruction hours in primary schools as well as in the number of hours for language. The exact amount of time designated for reading also varies according to the practices of teachers, since reading is embedded in German language activities (including reading, writing, spelling, literature, and grammar).

Classroom Organization and Class Size

During primary schooling, children usually attend the school whose catchment area includes their home. The classes are arranged according to grade, but the age of the children in a class can vary enormously according to parents' application and to the physical and mental maturity of the child. School enrollment takes place from ages 5 to 7. Furthermore, there are some children who have to repeat the previous year. In most classes, most of the time ex-cathedra teaching (*Frontalunterricht*) is practiced. Some teachers divide their class into small groups according to children's ability.

The average number of pupils in a class in primary school is about 22.4.²⁵ In primary schools, class size normally is higher than in the Gymnasium.

In the first two school years, children in classrooms often are grouped at tables of four. Usually there is a special corner intended for particular materials, for example, a corner with books and other reading materials.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

The class teachers are in charge of teaching the beginning stages of reading. In some, but not in all schools, there are special teachers for remedial education that teach groups of children with specific learning disabilities (e.g., difficulties in reading, orthography, and mathematics). There are no reading specialists.

Second Language Reading Instruction

The growing number of immigrant children provides a challenge for teachers and schools in German language acquisition. Such children who attend the schools in the catchment area together with German students sometimes have difficulties learning to read and write in German. The average of students from non-German speaking backgrounds is 12 percent for Germany, but in larger cities we also find an average of 23 percent.²⁶ Teachers have to cope with the problem that some pupils have difficulties not only in German but also in their mother tongue and accordingly struggle with reading and writing in both languages. Children from other cultural backgrounds learn to read and write in German, though some schools may offer learning-to-read programs in two languages (bilingual alphabetization). Only a very few schools offer special courses in German language instruction for these students.

Reading Disabilities

All *Laender* have special regulations for the diagnosis and remedial education of children with specific reading and spelling difficulties. Since reading problems are nearly always connected with spelling difficulties, both domains are considered.

In the first year of school, it is the task of the normal classroom teacher to offer support for children with difficulties in learning to read and write, for instance through individual help. If the problems persist in subsequent school years, the children receive additional remedial instruction as well as normal classroom instruction. According to the regulations in some *Laender*, specific courses for children with learning problems are offered as extra lessons in small groups during school hours. In practice, however, not all schools offer this type of remedial education, sometimes because of a shortage of teachers.

Teachers are expected to carefully observe pupils' progress in reading and spelling, diagnose failures, and give special support. Standardized tests are not used as a basis for diagnosis. Some curricula recommend using individual reading techniques to identify the problem and develop suitable remedial exercises.

Literacy Programs



In Germany, there are no national literacy programs or programs specific to the *Laender*. It is up to the teachers or to the schools to make some special efforts (e.g., projects, an evening of lectures, visits to public libraries, or an exhibition of books).

Adult education institutions offer courses of alphabetization for adults.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Continuous assessment of pupils' achievement is an important part of the professional role of a German teacher.

Children receive marks for their performance in oral and written tasks. Marks are awarded in whole numbers on a scale from 1 (very good) to 6 (insufficient). In the middle and at the end of a school year, children receive certificates with marks. During the first grade, and in some *Laender* also for second grade, pupils receive a report giving a detailed description of their progress and weaknesses in specific areas of learning. Progressing to the next grade depends on meeting the minimum demands in all relevant subjects. The assessment criteria are mentioned in the curricula of some *Laender*.

National or Regional Examinations

There are no national examinations at the primary school level.

Standardized Tests

The use of standardized tests is not common in German schools. A variety of standardized reading and spelling tests exist, but they are used mainly for identifying reading difficulties or for research purposes. In very rare cases, teachers use tests on their own initiative.

Diagnostic Testing

If a pupil fails in reading and spelling and if the teacher wants to have the child diagnosed as "reading and spelling disabled," the child may be referred to a school psychologist who will administer reading, spelling, and intelligence tests. Screening tests are not used.

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Language and Literacy



Spoken by the large majority of the total population, Greek is the official language of Greece. Muslims are Greece's religious minority group, and primarily their native language (Turkish or Pomakika) is taught concurrently with Greek. Greece also has other minority groups, such as Roma, whose native language is Romany. However, they often use Greek at school and in most of their social activities. Since the early 1990's, Greece has been a target country for migrants who originate primarily from countries in south-eastern Europe. Each ethnic group speaks its native language, especially the older members of the communities.

The illiteracy rate in Greece is approximately 3 percent.¹ In the last few years there has been a noticeable reduction in newspaper circulation. In 1999, only 153 out of 1,000 people bought a newspaper on a daily basis, even though the number of newspaper titles has increased.²

Education System



Governance and Organization

The Greek education system is highly centralized, with all decisions made directly by the Minister of Education. The Ministry develops the curriculum, which is the same for all schools (public and private) throughout the country, and textbooks are prepared according to Ministry guidelines. Bureaus of the Ministry transmit decisions to schools and regulate technical issues concerning the schools under their responsibility.

The Pedagogic Institute (PI) functions as an advisory body to the Minister, and each incoming minister appoints its senior administrators. Its objectives are to conduct scientific research, study issues in primary and secondary education, prepare proposals for planning educational policy, monitor and study the development of educational technology and assess its application in education, and plan and implement teacher training programs.

The Center of Educational Research (KEE) also acts as an advisory body to the minister and evaluates projects and plans.

At the local and school level, involvement is particularly limited. School committees operate at the municipal level and there is a parents' association in each school. However, the role of each body is simply administrative. They distribute a small part of the Ministry's budget to each school in their region and organize events of local interest, but have no involvement in hiring staff, choosing the curriculum, or deciding on the teaching methods used in their schools.

The role of the school principal is administrative and limited to the orderly function of the school. Teachers in all public primary and secondary schools in the country are appointed and paid by the Ministry of Education. Their role is to teach according to the curriculum and textbooks issued by the Ministry of Education. Once they are assigned a class to teach, there is no evaluation or control regarding their functioning. At a school level, they form the assembly of teachers and, together with the principal, have a duty to make decisions about major school issues such as the behavior of a particular student. The owners and the principals of private schools can select their staff according to their own criteria, as long as staff members are graduates of pedagogic academies or universities.

Country Profile: Greece

Geographical Location and Size

Greece lies on the southern point of the Balkan Peninsula, which also is the southeast border of the European Union. Although Greece consists of many different geographical landforms, a large part of the country is mountainous. Greece also has innumerable islands, both small and large; many are in the Ionian Sea (to the west) but most are in the Aegean Sea (to the east). Demographic and economic changes, especially in the 1970's, led to the migration of a large part of the population to urban areas.

Population and Health Statistics

Of the total population of 11 million³, 60 percent⁴ lives in urban areas. Approximately 3.5 million people live in Athens, the capital of Greece and its largest city.⁵

The infant mortality rate is 6 deaths per 1000 live births.⁶ As in most western countries, women have a higher average lifespan (81 years of age) than men (75 years of age).⁷

Political System

Greece is a republic and has a constitutional parliamentary democracy system of government. Citizens of Greece vote every four years to choose the 300 members of the *Kinovouloio* (the Parliament), who select the Prime Minister. The President, elected every five years by the parliament, is the leader of the country. In accordance with the Constitution, the President has limited, mainly ceremonial duties. The Prime Minister, as the leader of the majority party, chooses the members of the cabinet and essentially holds all power.

Prefects and mayors, elected every four years, theoretically have power over local issues, although in practice their duties are limited. The Government decides the financing of prefectures and municipalities.



Economy and Employment

The economy of Greece is supported to a large extent by services, mainly because of the country's geography and natural resources. In 1990, services constituted 59 percent of the GDP, a large proportion of which came from tourism. The mountainous terrain keeps agricultural production low (15% of the GDP). Finally, industry constitutes 26 percent of the GDP but is mainly manufacturing, rather than heavy industry.

The GNP per capita has increased considerably in the last few years. Since 1994, it rose from roughly US\$ 8,000 to US\$ 12,000. The current GNP is US\$ 12,110.⁸

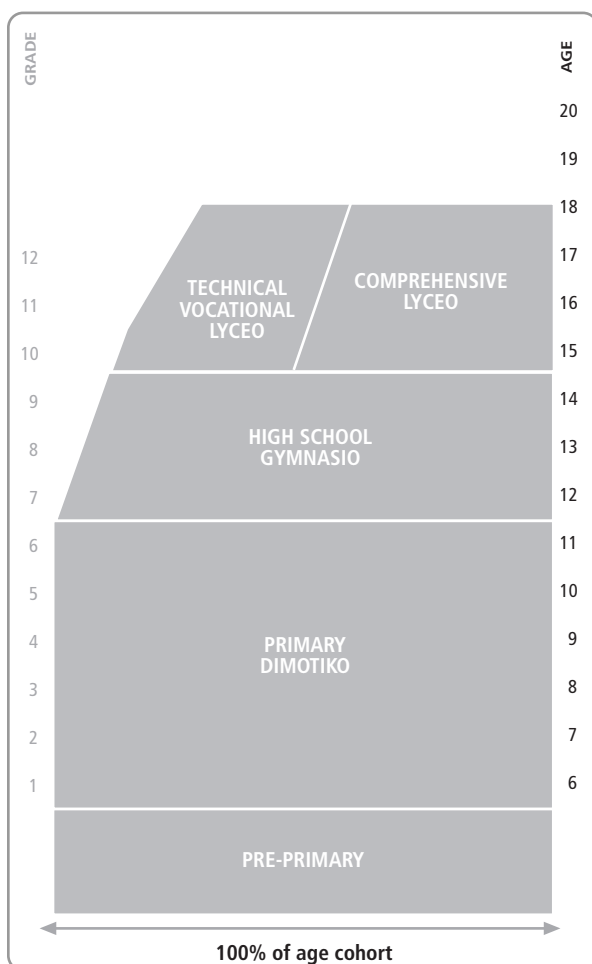
Men comprise approximately two-thirds of the workforce, and even higher percentages in the sectors of agriculture (74%) and industry (78%).⁹ In 2000, the rate of unemployment was 11.3 percent.¹⁰

Structure of the Education System

Since the foundation of the New Greek State in 1828, education has been a crucial issue. According to the Constitution, education is one of the basic missions of the state. Thus, from early on, free education for all Greeks has been established in state schools. Since the 1980-81 school year, attendance has been compulsory for children from 5½ to 15 years of age.

The structure of Greek education is presented in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1: Structure of the Greek Education System



Kindergarten enrollment is optional for all children who have reached the age of 4 years and 6 months by October 1st. If the number of students per teacher is low, the minimum age for entering kindergarten is lowered to 3 years and 6 months.

Dimotiko is the second level of primary education. It is comprehensive and lasts 6 years. All children that were born 6 years before the year of their enrollment must attend the first grade of

primary school. Therefore, students in the first grade are between 5.7 and 6.7 years of age. Access to each next grade is automatic since there are no examinations in *Dimotiko*.

Secondary education consists of two levels. The first is *Gymnasio* (high school), which lasts three years and concludes the 9 years of compulsory education. In high school, all graduates of primary schools are enrolled without entrance examinations, but there are examinations to enter the next grade. Schools at this level offer general education since they are considered to be the follow-up of primary schools, but there are a few schools specializing in sports or music.

The second level is *Lyceum*, which also lasts three years. Students enroll in *Lyceum* after passing examinations at the end of the 3rd grade of *Gymnasium*. Two types of *lyceum* exist: the comprehensive, which leads to university studies and which the majority of students attend, and the technical vocational schools, in which students are trained to work in technical professions.

About 5 percent of primary school students and 6 percent of high school students attend private schools.¹¹ These schools operate under the same rules and curriculum as public schools.

There also is an informal type of private tuition/schooling (crammer schools) known as *frontistirio*, whereby parents pay a teacher to come to their home and help their children with school subjects, usually language and science. Although it is considered to be illegal, there is a broad acceptance of this phenomenon.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

Courses begin each year in the second week of September and usually finish on June 15th for primary schools and June 1st for secondary schools. Examinations in secondary schools take place in the period from June 1st to June 20th. During the school year, schools break for Christmas and Easter for two weeks each, and 6 holy days are scattered through the school year. There are usually about 170 school days for primary schools and 155 (or 175 with the examinations days) for secondary schools.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

According to recent data, women comprise 57 percent of the primary school teachers.¹² Few schoolteachers are under 30 years of age (6%), more than half (58.2%) are between 31 and 40, about a quarter (24%) are between 41 and 50, and 12 percent are above 50 years of age.¹³

Teacher Education

Until 1986 when they were abolished, pedagogic academies offering two-year courses were where primary schoolteachers studied. In 1984, pedagogic departments of primary education began to operate in the universities. In these new departments, courses last eight semesters. Today, eight pedagogic departments function throughout Greece, each deciding its own course structure.

All departments offer courses in sociology, psychology, pedagogics, and teaching instruction. In order to graduate from the University, a student must complete certain required courses specified by each department, as well as a number of courses that can be selected depending on the student's interests. Essentially, therefore, teacher's education covers certain basic principles, but is differentiated according to department and personal interests.

Until recently, the Ministry of Education made all teaching appointments exclusively on the basis of Epetirida, which is essentially a priority list based on graduation data from the university. In 1999, a new system was begun whereby a percentage of schoolteachers was appointed by the Epetirida but the rest appointed after examinations organized by ASEP (an independent authority for appointments). However, by 2001, almost all schoolteachers were still chosen from Epetirida.

Teachers in primary schools are not required to specialize in specific subjects. Each schoolteacher teaches all subjects in the class. Only foreign languages, physical education, and in certain cases computers are taught by specialized staff.

Teachers who are graduates of two-year pedagogic academies must attend additional courses to reach the educational standard of teachers who are graduates of universities. The duration of these additional courses depends on the number of years they have been teaching. PEKs (Regional Training

Centers) function in each prefecture and teachers have the opportunity to attend seminars on subjects that relate to teaching. Finally, meetings are organized periodically at a local level and usually concern specialized subjects.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

According to the Ministry of Education the general aim of language teaching in primary school is "to teach the child to use the modern Greek language in the best possible way: to understand, to speak, to read, and to write with ease."

The primary goals regarding comprehension are to:

- Be in a position to comprehend written text, in general
- Conceive the basic message of text
- Explain the structure in paragraphs or bigger units
- Give titles to paragraphs or bigger units
- Be able to tell the content of a text
- Justify the choice of expressions by the author.

Goals regarding speech and writing are to:

- Be able to use speech as required (suitable formulation for each proportional recipient), making conscious phrasal choices
- Be able to write letters, announcements, invitations, descriptions of events and all types of speech, appropriate to the students age, in such a way that can be understood by the recipient and be effective
- Produce cohesive texts, with an introduction, main part, and conclusion and separated into paragraphs.

Even though these characteristics are described in detail by the formal curriculum, they

Exhibit 2: Language Curriculum for the Lower (A-B) and Upper (C-F) Primary School Grades

		Grades A-B	Grades C-F
Verbal Speech		Develop logical order in the child's verbal speech, and use simple structures and simple vocabulary.	Practice listening, the improvement of the student's verbal expression level, as well as the speed that the student formulates a well-structured speech.
Written Speech	Reading	Acquire the basic skills of reading and comprehension of written texts, as well as the recovery, use and comprehension of information. Reading skills should be built based on the verbal speech and the experiences of each student.	Develop the student's ability to read fluently and accurately as well as to comprehend the content of texts of increasing reading difficulty. Also, appreciate the diversity of the language.
	Writing and Production of Written Speech	Develop writing skills and formulate notions through writing.	Develop communication skills through writing accurately and effectively, using the form and the style that are suitable for different circumstances. Also, enjoy written speech.
	Literature	Bring the student in contact, in the first two years of Primary School, with accredited texts of mainly Greek, artistic and folk literature, familiarize the student with books (out of school) and encourage the development of creative imagination.	Progressively familiarize the students in higher grades with Greek and international literature, as well as with more complex uses of language.
	Vocabulary	Clarify and stabilize preschool age vocabulary. Enrich vocabulary with words and expressions essential to the needs of their every-day communication. Use basic words and expressions in written and oral speech.	Enrich individual vocabulary, with suitable use of the specific vocabulary required in each school subject.
Grammar		Develop awareness of basic elements of structure and function of language, with the help of intuition and the practical application of rules.	Enhance awareness of structure and the function of language, at the level of communication, text, sentence and word.
Information Management		Acquire skills such as searching for information and the ability to decode optical and acoustic signals.	Acquire skills such as searching, evaluating, and processing information taken from various sources.

are not always carried out by the “in-class curriculum.” According to Gotovos, in school there is only “simple transmission of knowledge” which prepares the students for the final examinations to enter the university.¹⁴ Teaching in school still is subject-centered, while the type of schoolwork and the instruction is teacher-centered.¹⁵

Although the curriculum has been reviewed recently, there has not been any change in the textbooks or the teachers' syllabus for the last 15 years. Every-day educational practice still focuses on transmitting and acquiring fixed knowledge.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

According to the Pedagogic Institute, the language curriculum is structured as shown in Exhibit 2. There is a separation between the lower (A-B) and upper (C-F) grades of primary school.

In the last three grades of primary school, foreign language courses are introduced, primarily English. The curriculum time allotted is 3 hours

per week. In some schools, a second foreign language is introduced, usually French or German. Even when these subjects are taught in schools, many parents choose to send their children to *frontistiria* (a type of private tutorial school) to learn foreign languages.

Materials for Reading Instruction

Textbooks and extra aids form the basis of reading instruction. The structure of the textbook generally leaves opportunities for initiative and innovation on the part of the schoolteacher.

Texts from the textbooks can be replaced with others taken from the wider social environment of the student (articles, statements, letters, advertisements, literature, etc.). Suitable replacements include more current texts, texts that relate to the students' interests, and on which they may have an opinion, and texts helpful for the teaching of specific language phenomena. Obviously the teacher makes sure that the replacement texts have

appropriate language and content. Such texts cannot substitute for more than 25 percent of the textbooks' content.

The syllabus is concise and only contains information the teacher is not obliged to know. It directs the teacher and stimulates imagination and action. It contains a glossary for the teacher with the most basic terms of language instruction.

The grammar book is a concise, functional and methodical instructive tool that is used by students 9 to 12 years of age.

- It contains a limited but sufficient number of morpho-syntactic phenomena.
- It has a factual language approach.
- It emphasizes the syntax of small words (where, with, for, up to, as, etc.).
- Generally, it gives solutions to important syntactic, factual, and spelling rules of modern Greek, which initiate the students' first conscious contact with linguistic choices. It also emphasizes practical items of writing.

An *anthologio* (anthology) aims to bring the student in contact with a wide spectrum of suitable literary texts that play a major role in Greek literary heritage.

All the educational material is printed by a central agency run by the Ministry and is distributed free to students and teachers at the beginning of the school year.

This material is criticized however, for only superficially addressing the goals of the formal curriculum. Language is still taught as a subject far from students' needs to express their thoughts and feelings. Critics argue that the exercises in these books have no relevance to the language used in every day life. As a result, students just follow the examples given, filling in the questions mechanically. Often the texts are not related to students' interests and experiences and since each student must fill in the exercises individually, there is not enough time for the students to express themselves, resulting in student work that is short and contains mistakes.

Use of Technology

Although technology use is mentioned as part of instruction for the last two grades of primary school, every-day practice is different. Only a few public schools have and use computers for reading instruction, in contrast to private schools. The use of technology for reading instruction entails the following student objectives.

- Have basic knowledge of PC use in order to process and shape simple texts
- Analyze and compose given information
- Be familiar with PC use and educational software (CD-ROM) created specifically for students of this age: electronic dictionary, multimedia, CD for teaching of the Greek language, vocabulary, spelling game exercises, etc.
- Be familiar with computer language programs (e.g., Logo)
- Use simple word processing
- Demonstrate choice and storage of information on a PC
- Present information with additional visual material.

Instructional Time

Total instructional time in a regular school day (across all subjects) is usually 4 hours and 25 minutes. However, it is 15 minutes less for schools that function during the afternoon. In the lower grades of primary school (A, B and C), the instructional time is 3 hours and 40 minutes.

Language is the main subject taught in primary school, in terms of the amount of instructional time spent. In the first four grades, 9 instructional hours per week are dedicated to language and 8 hours per week to the remaining two upper grades.

Students usually begin school at 8:15 a.m. The younger students leave at 12:40 and the older students at 1:30. The afternoon shifts begin at 1:45 and finishes at 6:05 for the younger or 6:55 for older students. Teachers follow the same schedule.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Teachers are free to decide how to organize their classes, depending on the number of students and their abilities, the subject, and the method of teaching.

Class size is pre-determined, and is not supposed to exceed 30 students (apart from exceptional cases of 1 to 2 students). When there are more than 30 students, the class is divided in two. It is very common, especially in urban centers and cities, for classes to be divided in two even when the number of students is smaller than 30 (two classes are created even with 24-25 students).

There is no minimum number of students for classes. In certain isolated regions, there are schools that function even with one student per grade. In these cases, the classes are composite, or multi-grade, and have the same teacher.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

Reading specialists do not exist except in rare cases in private schools.

Second Language Reading Instruction

In order to support reading instruction for foreign students with insufficient knowledge of the Greek language, the following have been proposed (which should also be accompanied by instruction directives):

- Practice verbal exercises and use of other means, which are found in everyday speech, through dramatization, theatre in schools, songs, and other school events.
- Offer abundant phrasal structures for verbal processing.
- Give emphasis to the teaching of specific structural phenomena of the Greek language that present difficulties for foreigners, (e.g. the phonological and inflectional systems and accentuation).

Reading Disabilities

Public schools do not have reading specialists to evaluate students' language difficulties. The teachers are responsible for detecting such difficulties, using their professional judgement and experience. Usually if a student experiences

reading difficulties, the teacher informs the parents and they decide if they wish to consult a specialist and cover the expenses. In a few private schools, usually with a large number of students, there are reading specialists and psychologists that can help the student during class time.

The special needs of students are taken into consideration so students can profit from the linguistic activities of the class. For students with special needs, the teacher plans, with the collaboration of experts and parents, an individualized program of language teaching and uses various instructional means to achieve the learning objectives of the curriculum.

Literacy Programs



The education of adults was initiated for the first time in Greece in 1929. The Government of Eleftherios Venizelos sought to modernize education and established night schools to confront illiteracy. In 1982, a reorientation of objectives and new organizational provisions were attempted. The Secretariat of Popular Training was formed in the Ministry of Education, while a new regulation determined the operation of the Central Service and Prefectural Delegates of Popular Training (N.E.L.E.) at a local level. In 1994, these were included in local self-government.

These programs are aimed at the completion of basic education and illiteracy since, according to recent census data, 47.7 percent of the population 16 years of age and older has not completed compulsory education. The steps the L.E. are taking contribute to the reduction of the "educational shortage" that characterizes a large part of the workforce population because of illiteracy and a lack of basic skills and educational qualifications; problems that constitute a brake in the growth of human resources.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

According to the Ministry, evaluation constitutes an integral part of language teaching, showing the degree to which the objectives of the Program have been achieved and the corrective interventions that

have been imposed. The evaluation of students is the day-to-day job of the teacher. Methods of evaluation can include:

- Written tests that last from a few minutes up to an instructional hour
- Verbal or written comprehension questions of various types
- Topics for expansion to assess the ability to organize content in paragraphs and wider notional texts
- Short answers, verbal or written
- Topics of brief content, verbal or written
- Questions of judgment
- Tasks of combined creativity
- Closed or objective type questions to evaluate grammar, spelling, and vocabulary
- Text with verbal or written comprehension questions, which refer also to structure, style and vocabulary
- Topics for elaboration and layout of content
- Evaluation sheets
- Text of limited extent (copy), to check calligraphy or spelling
- Any text that a student produces or any action that is carried out in the students' own words.

The variety of linguistic expressions correspond to a wide spectrum of language types. This compels the student to adapt the form of speech to the "demands" of each text. The intention of texts requires, for example, layout in paragraphs, accuracy, brevity, clarity, rich vocabulary, and plot.

In summary, the main evaluation criterion is the effectiveness (proven or likely) of all kinds of speech for the goal that the student sets, which may be analyzed using individual criteria of evaluation, including the appropriateness of vocabulary and style, the correctness of syntax and

morphology, spelling, and the general picture of the text (written or verbal).

Errors are dealt with instructively as an indication of the level of the student's communication skills. Incorrect use of vocabulary; insufficient vocabulary, spelling and grammatical errors; and difficulty in using the subjunctive either in the adaptation of speech to circumstances or in the comprehension and use of exact speech, are used as a means of diagnosis that allows the teacher to plan a program of corrective interventions.

The main objective of the teacher is to have the students become responsible for their language, so that they can evaluate and correct themselves, and produce the most effective language for the intended result. Thus, students are introduced to the process of continually upgrading their language level.

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Language and Literacy



At the end of 2000, newspaper publication in Hong Kong included 32 Chinese-language dailies, five English-language dailies, and seven English-language newspapers published either 6 or 7 days a week. There were five bilingual dailies and six in other languages. Of the Chinese-language dailies, 23 covered mainly local and overseas general news, six specialized in finance, and the rest presented entertainment news. Hong Kong also has publications specifically produced for the territory, including the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, the *Financial Times*, *Asian Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *International Herald Tribune*, and the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*.¹

The Hong Kong government strives to provide quality cultural services commensurate with its status as a world-class city. The public library network is quite comprehensive, with 61 libraries and eight mobile libraries evenly spread throughout the territory. The construction of the Hong Kong Central Library in 2001 was an important landmark for the public library service. Equipped with a capacity of two million library items, state-of-the-art technology, and digital library facilities, it has a central reference library with six subject departments, a toy library, a young adult library, an exhibition gallery, and a lecture theater, in addition to standard library facilities and services.²

English and Chinese are Hong Kong's official languages and have equal status. Reports and publications of public interest issued by the government are available in both languages, while correspondence with the public is in the language appropriate to the recipients. Only in 1974 was Chinese accepted as an official language. Before then written communication was mainly in English, reflecting

the British colonial rule. English, the world's premier language of commerce, is still widely used for business transactions, although Chinese is gaining in popularity.

The Cantonese dialect of Chinese is the mother tongue of the majority of residents in Hong Kong. However, as with other regions in China having distinctive dialects, the written form of the language is Modern Standard Chinese. Putonghua, the national spoken language of Mainland China, has become more popular in Hong Kong since its return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997.

Government policy is to maintain a civil service that is proficient in written Chinese and English, and conversant in Cantonese, Putonghua, and English. While it is committed to promoting the wider use of Chinese, the Official Languages Agency is aware of the need to preserve and avoid the weakening of English standards within the civil service. Following the 1997 handover, the government implemented a mother tongue policy that required 329 secondary schools to use Chinese as the medium of instruction.³

Education System



Governance and Organization

Hong Kong's government provides nine years of free and universal basic education for all children from the age of 6 years. In 2000, about 19 percent of the total population was enrolled in full-time education. Approximately 18 percent of the relevant age cohort was enrolled in university education.⁴

Kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools in Hong Kong may be privately owned or public. In 2000, there were 789 kindergartens, 816 primary

Country Profile: Hong Kong, SAR

Geographical Location and Size

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), with its superb natural harbor on the China's southern coast, is one of the world's major commercial capitals. The total area of the HKSAR is 1,098 square kilometers.

Population and Health Statistics

According to the 2001 census, Hong Kong has a population of nearly 6.8 million. Some 95 percent of its residents are of Chinese descent, and the remainder come from various countries, including the Philippines, Indonesia, and the United States.⁵ Filipinos comprise the largest ethnic sub-group with more than 140,000 people. Hong Kong has a high degree of religious freedom. Although Buddhism and Taoism are the most widely practiced faiths, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Judaism are also practiced.

Hong Kong has three major territorial districts: Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories. Hong Kong's generally hilly landscape has pockets of high-density housing; the overall population density is 6,320 persons per square kilometer. Some 49.2 percent of the population resides in suburban areas in the New Territories, 20.2 percent on Hong Kong Island and 30.5 percent on the Kowloon Peninsula. Most urban areas have a mixture of residential and commercial land use, whereas the New Territories are mainly used for residences and manufacturing. Several outlying islands, whose inhabitants comprise only 0.1 percent of the total population, are popular tourist spots, known for their distinctive marine characteristics and customs.

The Hospital Authority was established in 1990 to manage all public hospitals. It provides medical treatment and rehabilitation services to patients through hospitals, specialist clinics, and outreach services. In December 2000, there were 10,130 registered doctors and 40,388 registered nurses, and 35,100 hospital beds available (some 5.1 beds per 1,000 people).⁶ There has been a diminishing birth rate over past decades and an expanding age group over 64. Hong Kong's infant mortality rate in 1998 was 3.2 live births per 1,000, and the average life expectancy in 2000 was 79.8 years.⁷



Political System

Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on July 1, 1997. The Basic Law, the constitutional document of the HKSAR, became effective on the same day. The Basic Law sets out the basic policies of the PRC regarding Hong Kong and the way in which the HKSAR is to be administered for the 50 years following 1997. Under the Basic Law, Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of autonomy except in the areas of defense and foreign affairs. Hong Kong also has executive (Executive Council), legislative (Legislative Council) and independent judicial power (the Judiciary), including that of final adjudication (the Court of Final Appeal). The Chief Executive, as the head of the HKSAR, is responsible for implementing the Basic Law, signing government bills and budgets passed by the Legislative Council, promulgating laws, making decisions on government policies and issuing executive orders. The Executive Council assists the Chief Executive in policy-making decisions.

Until 2047, Hong Kong will remain a free port, a separate customs territory and an international financial center. It will continue to maintain and develop relations, and conclude and implement its own agreements with foreign states and international organizations in the fields of economics, trade, financial and monetary dealings, shipping, communications, tourism, culture, and sports.

Economy and Employment

Strategically located as a doorway into the Chinese Mainland, and on the international time zone that bridges the time gap between Asia and Europe, Hong Kong has for years been a center for global trade, finance, business, and communications. It is now ranked the 10th largest trading entity in the world, operating the busiest container port in the world, and having one of the world's busiest airports. It also is the world's 10th largest banking center and has the 7th largest foreign exchange market. Its stock market is the 2nd largest in Asia in terms of market capitalization.⁸

Hong Kong is characterized by its high degree of internationalization of services as well as its business-friendly environment, efficient rule of law, free trade and the free flow of information, open and fair competition, well-established and comprehensive financial network, and superb transport network and communications infrastructure. In addition to its assets in the service sector are Hong Kong's substantial fiscal and foreign exchange reserves, its fully convertible and stable currency, and a simple, low rate tax system.

Over the past two decades, the Hong Kong economy has almost tripled in size, with GDP growing at an average annual rate of 5.4 percent in real terms. Per capita GDP in Hong Kong has more than doubled, making it equivalent to an average annual growth rate of 3.9 percent in real terms. In 2000, it reached US\$ 24,000 at current market prices, amongst the highest in Asia, and second only to that of Japan.⁹

The country's economic achievements persist despite the fact that Hong Kong has almost no natural resources other than its most treasured asset, its people. Foodstuffs and food products are mainly imported. Less than 0.8 percent of the labor force engages in primary production.

Of the people employed in Hong Kong, the majority (82.5%) are engaged in the service sectors; 33.1 percent in wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels; 23.8 percent in community, social and personal services; 14.2 percent in finance, insurance, real estate and business services; and 11.4 percent in transport, storage and communications. Only 7.1 percent work in the manufacturing sector.¹⁰

schools, and 525 secondary schools in Hong Kong. At the tertiary level, the University Grants Committee (UGC) funds eight institutions that offer suitably qualified students access to a variety of courses, both undergraduate and graduate. Nine campuses under the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education offer skill-oriented programs. The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts offers professional programs in music, drama, film and television, dance, and technical arts. The Open University of Hong Kong offers open and distance learning opportunities to adults.

Public expenditure on education has risen at a constant rate of 4.1 percent since 1998. In 2000-01, the total expenditure on education in Hong Kong was HK\$ 54,383 million, accounting for 18.9 percent of the total public expenditure and 4.1 percent of the GDP, respectively. Of the recurrent expenditure on education, secondary education absorbed the highest proportion (32.9%), closely followed by tertiary education (32.3%). The primary education sector accounted for 21.7 percent, and all other categories accounted for 13.1 percent.¹¹

Duration and Timing of the School Year

All children between the ages of 6 and 15 are legally bound to attend school. In the period of compulsory basic education, from Primary 1 (P1) to Secondary 3 (S3), there are 10 months of schooling in each academic year. A typical academic year begins in early September and ends in June. Usually, there are about 200 school days, excluding public holidays. Upper-secondary schools have greater flexibility, with some individual schools setting their own curriculum to cope with public examinations.¹²

Pre-primary Provision

Pre-primary education in Hong Kong takes the form of kindergarten and childcare provision. Kindergartens serve children from 3 to 6 years old, while childcare centers, including nurseries,

are for children aged 2 to 6 years. At present, most kindergartens operate on a half-day basis and offer nursery classes in addition to lower- and upper-kindergarten classes. Childcare centers provide both half-day and full-day service.

The Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum states that the curriculum aims to foster children's total development in terms of physical, intellectual, linguistic, aesthetic, social, and emotional growth. The goals of preschool are to provide a relaxed and pleasant learning environment for children, promote all-around growth, and cultivate an interest in learning. In September 2000, 160,900 children were enrolled in 789 kindergartens. Kindergartens vary a lot in their scale of operation, with the number of classrooms ranging from 1 to more than 10.¹³

All children in Hong Kong who have reached the age of 5 years 8 months or older are eligible to participate in the preschool program, provided that they have not already been allocated a place in a government or government-aided primary school. To help establish a culture of self-evaluation in kindergartens and provide a means for the public to compare kindergartens, the Hong Kong Education Department is currently developing performance indicators for kindergartens.

Primary Schools

The primary school sector provides free and universal schooling for every child aged 6 to 11, inclusive. Admission both to government and government-aided schools is granted through a centralized system, established to reduce the pressure on children caused by intense competition for entry to popular schools. In September 2000, 444,711 children were enrolled in 719 government or government-aided primary schools. About 9 percent of children attend private primary schools by parental choice.¹⁴

Due to a shortage of school buildings, many primary schools have two separate groups of pupils, with one cohort attending in the morning and another in the afternoon. The government hopes to have 60 percent of primary school pupils studying in whole-day schools by the 2002-03 school year. The Government is planning to build more primary schools beyond 2002 to enable virtually all pupils to study in whole-day school by the 2007-08 school year.

At the end of Primary 6, all pupils in schools participating in the government's Secondary School Places Allocation System are provided with free Secondary 1 placement. Allocation is based on parental choice and internal school assessments.

Secondary Schools

The government provides free and universal schooling for every child in the Secondary 1 to 3 levels. Five types of secondary curriculum are available: grammar, technical, prevocational, practical, and skills. The first three types of curriculum are offered in 5-year secondary courses that lead to the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Exam; different emphases cater to the differing needs of students. A two-year sixth-form course leads to the Hong Kong Advanced Level Exam, and is also available in some schools. In Sept 2000, secondary schools offering a grammar, technical, or prevocational curriculum had a total enrollment of 456,693. The government developed a special technical curriculum for prevocational and secondary technical schools to be implemented in 2000 in response to society's changing needs.¹⁵

Secondary 3 leavers are selected for subsidized places in Secondary 4 or basic craft courses, according to internal school assessments and parental preference. Starting with the 2002-03 school year, all Secondary 3 students from public-sector schools who have the ability and desire to continue with their study, will be given the opportunity to receive subsidized Secondary 4 education or vocational training.

Enrollment Data

In 2000, the total number of students enrolled in kindergarten, primary, and secondary education was slightly over one million. Of the total enrollment across all educational levels, 14.4 percent were in kindergartens, 44.1 percent in primary schools, and 40.7 percent in secondary schools.¹⁶

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

A total of 64,632 teachers work in Hong Kong's educational system, from kindergartens to tertiary establishments. Teachers are employed on either a full-time or part-time basis, with most working full-time.

Primary and secondary schools have the largest pool of teachers. In 1999, 37.8 percent teachers were working in secondary schools, 34.6 percent in primary schools, 14.1 percent in kindergartens, and 8.7 percent in tertiary institutions under UGC funding. The remaining 4.8 percent work in special schools and other institutes.¹⁷

Teacher Education

Pre-service and in-service teacher education programs, at both non-degree and degree levels, are provided by tertiary institutions funded through the UGC. Beginning in 2004-05, all new graduates from pre-service teacher training programs for primary and secondary school teachers will be degree holders.

Since 1994, the government has been upgrading many teaching posts in government and government-aided primary schools to graduate-level positions. It was anticipated that graduate teachers would fill a target level of 35 percent of primary school posts by 2001-02.¹⁸

As part of the Government's comprehensive strategy to enhance students' language proficiency, proficiency levels have been specified and benchmark requirements for English and Putonghua teachers have been established. From the 2004-05 school year, teachers who wish to teach English and/or Putonghua will be asked to demonstrate their level of basic language proficiency before taking up any teaching post.

Teacher In-service Education

In-service professional development courses for teachers are provided by the government's Education Department, universities, and other professional organizations. Training programs also are provided to enhance teachers' professional knowledge and their abilities to meet the special needs of students. Such programs also help teachers keep abreast of new teaching techniques and curriculum innovations.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Hong Kong takes very seriously the aim of having all children read for comprehension, learning, and pleasure. A principal goal of education reform is for all

students to develop the habit of reading independently in both official languages, Chinese and English. Kindergarten teachers make use of children's language skills and draw attention to the literacy opportunities in the children's daily life and the world around them. Lower-primary school pupils are expected to master basic skills of reading and writing and develop an interest in and a habit of reading. Upper-primary school pupils are expected to apply their reading and writing skills with increasing fluency, be able to communicate effectively both orally and in writing, and use their reading as a tool for learning. Secondary school students are expected to be able to use their reading as a learning tool, to reach beyond the written word to grasp the writer's intentions, and to interrogate text.¹⁹ The promotion of a reading culture has been identified as one of the key tasks for enhancing lifelong learning in the Curriculum Reform.²⁰

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Children in Hong Kong are taught reading formally when they are 6 years old, in Primary 1. However, many pupils began learning to read in kindergarten and some children learned to read at home before they entered primary school. Schools are encouraged to draw upon the support of parents and the community in promoting good reading habits and to encourage a culture of reading for the child at home.

The Curriculum Development Council (CDC) established clear reading goals for schools in 2000. The whole school is expected to be involved in the promotion of reading and to build a culture of reading within the school. Language teachers are expected to focus specifically on the teaching of reading strategies and skills, whereas other teachers are expected to broaden and strengthen children's reading ability by having students read for information and learning in every subject area. The librarian plays a crucial role in developing student information-seeking skills.

Schools can adjust the curriculum and timetable in order to meet to the literacy needs of their pupils. Innovative teaching strategies may be introduced in order to motivate students and to teach them to read with understanding. The effective use of reading schemes, reading programs, and the like will help to sustain students' interests and efforts in reading. At the same time, the availability of quality reading materials in both school

and public libraries is crucial for attracting students to reading in school and at home.

The CDC has set out the following aims of the Chinese reading curriculum for Primary 1 to Primary 3:^{21,22}

- Acquire basic reading abilities
- Be able to read different types of reading materials
- Acquire vocabulary and sentence structures
- Enhance basic knowledge of language
- Enhance understanding and knowledge of the Chinese culture
- Develop the reading habit and positive attitudes towards reading.

From Primary 4 to Primary 6, students should:

- Develop their basic reading abilities
- Read different types of reading materials
- Develop independent reading ability
- Acquire vocabulary and sentence structures
- Improve basic knowledge of language
- Improve understanding and knowledge of the Chinese culture
- Develop the reading habit and positive attitudes towards reading.

From Secondary S1 to S5 students should;

- Recognize and read Chinese characters
- Understand words, sentences, and paragraphs
- Identify the main theme of a passage and the thinking and feelings of the writer
- Analyze and summarize the writer's objectives, point of view and writing style

- Appreciate the beauty of language
- Appreciate literature
- Use different kinds of multi-media resources.

Students should learn the following reading strategies:^{23,24}

- Draw upon appropriate language knowledge and experiences as aids to understanding reading materials
- Identify and use key words, sentences, and paragraphs in specific language situations
- Raise expectations and ask appropriate questions to guide reading and use skills of inference and verification
- Select different reading strategies to suit different reading objectives.

Students should develop an interest in reading, positive attitudes and the habit of reading for pleasure:^{25,26}

- Be willing to read independently
- Be keen to read for information and for pleasure
- Be able independently to use reading to acquire knowledge
- Develop reading application and power and extend these to a range of reading materials.

Teaching Reading

The following are principles of good teaching of reading:²⁷

- Equal importance should be attached to the teaching of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- The abilities of reading, writing, listening, and speaking are inter-related and equally important.
- The reading process and reading strategies can be taught.

- Reading activities should be organized.
- Reading material encountered in the normal curriculum is not enough for extending students' reading.
- Teachers should fully utilize all the resources in the school and in public libraries to ensure that students read widely.
- Teachers need to design diverse learning activities to encourage student to read and share their ideas, rather than forcing students simply to write reading reports as the only reading activity.
- Although rote learning of reading material is in itself inappropriate for encouraging independent reading, it can help students understand the nature of text.
- Memorizing exemplary written material may be good for advancing linguistic ability.
- Teachers should select good passages for illustrating how different types of text are organized and encourage students to memorize key features.

Materials for Reading Education

Before the 2000 Education Reform Act, the focus of teaching was on prescribed texts, and most Chinese language teachers tended to rely on textbooks. About 6 to 7 periods per week were assigned for Chinese language teaching. Chinese teachers tended to use most of their class time explaining the text, such as providing background information about the author of the text, reviewing vocabulary, and discussing the theme of paragraphs and the text, and the use of rhetoric. Some scholars had noted that students did not have enough time to practice and use their language in the classroom, and one survey reported that 93 percent of teachers relied too heavily on textbooks.^{28,29}

Since 2000, the CDC has suggested the extension of teaching materials to include Web-based and audio/visual materials as appropriate print and non-print aids. However, online reading is not very popular with teachers.³⁰

Instructional Time

Although there is no clear policy for the amount of time allocated for reading instruction, Exhibits 1 and 2 present estimates based on analyses of timetables.^{31,32}

Classroom Organization and Class Size

The average class size in the primary school is about 36 students; in junior secondary schools it is about 40; and for senior secondary, it is about 20.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

Language teachers and teacher librarians are in charge of teaching reading. They receive special training during their teacher-training courses. Reading specialists play little or no role in the teaching of reading in schools.

Second Language Reading Instruction

In the education system developed by the British, most schools used English as the medium of instruction. English was learned both as a subject and through its use as the medium of instruction. Although Chinese was recognized as an official language in 1974, for many years after this date it was little more than an auxiliary language compared with the prestigious position of English in government circles. When Hong Kong became a SAR of the People's Republic of China in 1997, the government promoted mother-tongue teaching without weakening support for English language learning. Chinese is currently the medium of instruction in the vast majority of primary schools, with English taught as a core subject beginning in the first year of primary school. From 1998, Chinese has been adopted as the medium of instruction for junior-secondary sections of 329 schools, while 110 schools still use English as the medium of instruction. Heavy emphasis continues to be placed on teaching English in all schools, particularly in prestigious schools.³³

The general feeling among the public is that the use of the mother tongue in school is beneficial. However, due to the high status enjoyed by English in society and the belief that using English as the medium of instruction will enhance English language development, society at large in Hong Kong is caught in a dilemma. A compromise seems difficult in this case, since most parents, if asked, would probably opt to have English as the medium of instruction.

Exhibit 1: Instructional Time in Primary (P1 – P6) Schools

Key Learning Areas	Suggested Percentage of Lesson Time Allocation
Chinese Language Education	25-30
English Language Education	17-22
Mathematics Education	12-15
Science Education	12-15
Technology Education	
Personal, Social and Humanities Education	10-15
Arts Education	
Physical Education	5-8

The instructional time in whole-day primary schools was approximately 4,200 hours.

Exhibit 2: Instructional Time in Junior Secondary (S1 – S3) Schools

Key Learning Areas	Suggested Percentage of Lesson Time Allocation
Chinese Language Education	17-22
English Language Education	17-20
Mathematics Education	12-15
Science Education	8-15
Technology Education	8-15
Personal, Social, and Humanities Education	10-20
Arts Education	10-20
Physical Education	5-8

The instructional time allocated for language learning over the 3 years spent at the junior secondary level is about 2,700 hours.

In short, although schools have officially been encouraged to adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction, many are reluctant to move away from using English in case parents will object and move their children to schools that do use English.

Reading Disabilities

Early identification of special educational needs and reading disorders in children is important. The government provides assessment services to identify hearing, speech, and learning behavior problems among school-age children. Children with special educational needs are integrated into ordinary schools as much as possible. Special provisions and services are provided for the visually handicapped, hearing-impaired, mentally and physically handicapped, and maladjusted children. In-school support for “normal” children who find learning to read and write difficult is usually inadequate, and individual schools use their discretion in providing for pupils with reading disabilities.

Literacy Programs



To encourage good learning and reading habits among primary school pupils, the government provides, aside from class libraries, a central library in each primary school. A teacher-librarian is assigned to manage the school’s central library and to organize library activities for the pupils. The 1999-2000 Reading Award Scheme for Primary 5 and 6 classes attracted 67,000 pupils from 510 primary schools, and Secondary 1 to 5 classes attracted 60,000 pupils from 220 secondary schools.³⁴

The government also has implemented the Extensive Reading Scheme, aimed at improving students’ reading habits, skills, and techniques.³⁵ The Scheme has been implemented in schools with various degrees of success over the past two decades. The results of a pilot study in 1998 suggest that the scheme can be an effective means of enhancing students’ language proficiency (both Chinese and English).

There are no graded readers for Chinese. Graded English readers under the Edinburgh Scheme have been distributed to a number of secondary schools, and many schools have applied for additional funding from the Quality Education Fund to carry out reading projects. Most of these projects are for extensive reading in Chinese rather than English, and different schemes are running in parallel in some schools.³⁶

Assessment



Reading comprehension is tested as part of language instruction in the classroom. In terms of external examinations, the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination is a centralized public examination set for Secondary 5 graduates to test their eligibility for securing places in Secondary 6 and 7 upon matriculation. In 2001, 130,612 candidates entered the exam. These candidates were eligible to apply for subsidized Secondary 6 places, but only 23,814 subsidized Secondary 6 places were allocated in 2000-01.

The Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination is a public examination set for Secondary 7 graduates to test their eligibility for gaining places in tertiary education institutions. In 2001, 36,099 candidates took the examination.

Standardized Tests

The government is preparing three standardized tests: The Basic Competence Test, The English Language Proficiency Test, and the Chinese Language Proficiency Test.

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Language and Literacy



Nearly all Hungarians (98.2%) speak Hungarian, or Magyar. Most Hungarians also speak at least one other tongue, German and English being the most popular. The Hungarian Language originates from the Finnougric tribe but has been influenced by many other languages including German, Slavic, Turkish, Latin, and French.

Hungary has four major daily newspapers, numerous other dailies, and weekly magazines on a range of subjects. The daily newspaper circulation is 186 per 1,000 people.¹ Hungary has an extensive library system in the capital city and in the major cities. There are currently 1,344,000 registered library users for 3,518 public libraries.²

Education System



Structure of the Education System

Compulsory schooling in Hungary lasts from 6 to 16 years of age. The structure of the eight-grade primary school followed by the consecutive three or four years of secondary education was established in most European socialist countries after 1945. In 1989, the educational monopoly of the Hungarian state was abolished and the autonomy of the local and the institutional levels increased. This created a greater variety of schools (many opened or reopened by private persons, foundations, or denominations). As a result, students can enter a secondary school at various ages (at age 10, 12, or 14) but they stay at the primary school until they finish grade 8. The 1996 Amendment to the Public

Education Act increased the end of compulsory schooling to the age of 18, starting with those who entered primary school in the 1998-1999 school year. As shown in Exhibit 1, the Hungarian public education system has the three stages of primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

Primary Education

Basic schooling, lasting eight years, is provided by primary schools. Having finished this educational level, students can choose from three kinds of secondary schools.

Secondary Education

The academic secondary schools last four years (grades 9 to 12, ages 14 to 18). They prepare students primarily for tertiary education and end with a final (school-leaving) examination. The vocational secondary schools last for either four or five years. They provide vocational training along with academic instruction, and can end after the twelfth grade with a final examination including vocational subjects as well. By finishing an extra grade, students can qualify as different types of technicians. The short vocational training schools last only three years (grades 9 to 12, ages 14 to 17). These schools provide only a vocational qualification.

Country Profile: Hungary

Geographical Location and Size

Hungary is located in the central Danube Basin of Eastern Europe. It borders Slovakia, the Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Austria. The terrain consists of rolling foothills in the west, a hilly region north of Budapest, and great variety in the remainder of the country to the east and south. The area of the land is 92,103 square kilometers. Hungary has 19 counties, 169 towns and 2,904 villages. Budapest is the capital and the largest city, with 2 million inhabitants.³



Population and Health Statistics

The total population is 10.2 million (52.3% female).⁴ Sixty-four percent of the population lives in urban areas.⁵ The population density is 109 persons per square kilometer.⁶ The infant mortality rate is 8 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁷ The life expectancy for women is 75 years and for men 66.⁸

Political System

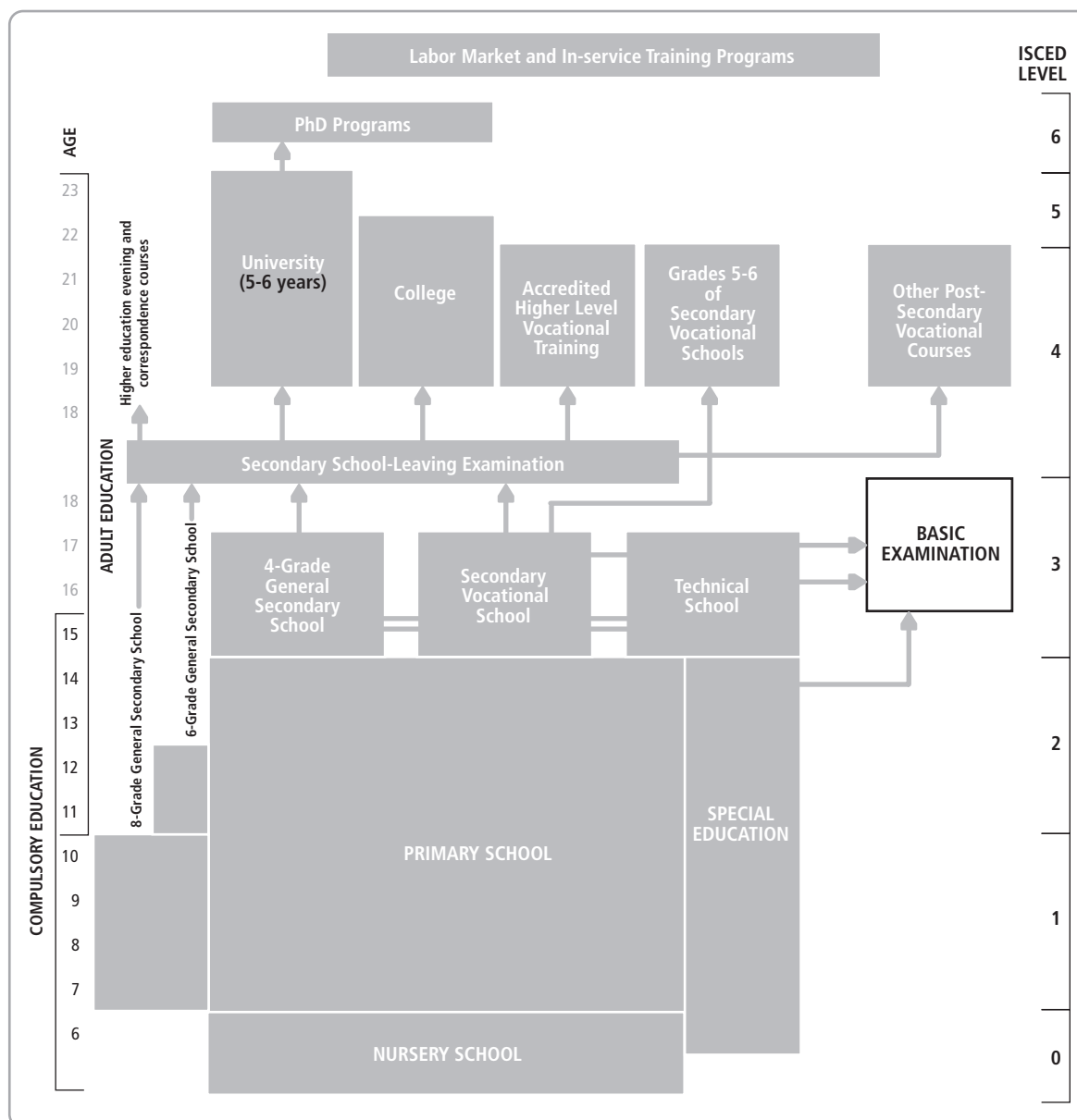
The Hungarian constitution, effective since 1949, has been revised twice, in 1972 and in 1989, ensuring more rights for individuals, limiting the authority of the prime minister, and establishing principles of parliamentary oversight. Hungary has a President – mainly a public figure, elected by the National Assembly, and a Prime Minister – a political figure.

Hungary has a unicameral National Assembly, consisting of 386 deputies elected by popular vote for four-year terms. The National Assembly, with input from the president, appoints members for the Council of Ministers, who serve as government agency heads. Hungary has a constitutional court, established in 1990.

Economy and Employment

The gross national product (GNP) per capita in 1999 was US\$ 4,640.⁹ Forty-four point seven percent of the workforce is comprised of women and 55.3 percent are men.¹⁰

Exhibit 1: Structure of the Educational System in Hungary



Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Women comprise the majority of the teaching force at the elementary level – 92 percent of all primary school teachers are female.¹¹

Teacher Education

In Hungary, those who wish to become teachers enroll in one of three programs:

- Teachers' colleges offer a three-year course for those who plan to teach grades 1 to 4

- Teachers' colleges offer a four-year program for those who plan to teach distinct subjects in grades 5 through 8.
- Secondary school teachers take a five-year program offered by universities.

Exhibit 2 shows the number of schools and teachers in Hungary.

Since 1990, the number of students in Hungarian schools has decreased by approximately 15 percent, the number of teachers by approximately 8 percent.¹²

The overall training for teachers is generally 600 hours. Future teachers are taught General

Exhibit 2: Number of Hungarian Schools and Teachers

School type	Primary school		Secondary school	
Academic year	1998-1999	1999-2000	1998-1999	1999-2000
The number of schools	3,732	3,696	1,036	1,054
The number of day-time students (thousand people)	1,003	1,000	509	508
The number of teachers	83,404	82,829	31,353	32,317

Pedagogy and Psychology (minimum 330 hours) and General or Subject Specific Methodology (minimum 120 hours). Teachers also have to have at least 150 hours of field practice.

Teacher In-service Education

A recent study showed that the teacher training courses offered in Hungary focused on the various subjects taught by the teacher, on assessing the pupils' knowledge, on acquiring better interpersonal skills, or on leadership issues. The courses varied in length. Usually they were financed in equal portions by the school or by the participants, but some courses were free.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The main task of *literacy education* is to make students fond of reading – to awaken and strengthen the joy of reading. The basis of literacy education is to work on textual and contextual exercises connected to reading and to learn basic literary theory. This improves responsiveness to the beauty and expressive nature of language. The content of literary works offers great opportunity to create a general approach towards the world. Engaging with a variety of texts enables students to appreciate national culture, develop moral and aesthetic values, and enrich their feelings. According to the National KERET Curriculum the objectives in reading by the end of grade 4 include:

- Developing reading – aloud or silent.
- Developing “sensitive” reading of fiction and non-fiction through reading, analysis, and explanation.

- Silent reading at a skilled level in order to understand the text.
- Reading out loud fluently and accurately in a speed and intonation close to real speech.
- Knowledge of pieces of literary work, such as folk poetry, tales, stories, short stories, extracts of novels from Hungarian and world literature, instructional and popular works, articles that are suitable for children, and children's literature.
- Using books and libraries, including familiarity with the content and form of books, periodicals, newspapers, and their place and arrangement in the library.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

The number of Hungarian language classes taught at the different grade levels is dictated by law. Students in grades 1 to 3 receive instruction in eight Hungarian language classes including reading, writing, grammar, and composition. In grade 4, seven classes are prescribed, and the content of an eighth class is determined at the school level.

After the fourth grade, reading is not an independent subject in the Hungarian system. Efforts have and are being made to help teachers, students, and schools understand the importance of continuing to teach reading as an integral part of all subjects. The latest national curriculum, the KERETTANTERV, is showing great promise in realizing this particular aspect of teaching reading. Through the use of this document, teachers are demanding higher levels of literacy that will be extremely helpful in promoting life-long learning.

Materials for Reading Instruction

In Hungary, teachers decide what kind of books or materials they wish to teach and what and how they will use other instructional tools. With the boom of textbook publishing in the early 1990s, it was not uncommon that teachers within schools used different textbooks or methods. From the mid 1990s, schools have had one single reading program based on their Local Reading Curriculum that they have to follow.

There is a wide variety of textbooks and reading programs in Hungary. After the

implementation of the national curriculum in 1978, the teaching of reading became hurried. The importance of reading out loud decreased and the time set aside for speech improvement also decreased. After 1989, however, reading programs reintroduced reading texts out loud, and are now focused on the connection of speech and reading.

Based on the list of textbooks available for Hungarian schools, the following describes a number of the major reading programs currently in use.

- *Reading out loud/analytical-syntetical program* by András Romankovics, Julia Romankovics-Tóth, and Ildikó Meixner. Introduced in 1978, teaching reading is based on pictograms and recognition of letters. Teaching reading is heavily based on stories, silent reading is a focus.
- *Global method/ Reading out loud, analyzing, and combining* by Róbert Ligeti, Katalin Kuti-Sahin-Tóth. Used since 1980, this program starts out with a set of 87 pictograms based on the vocabulary of 4 to 5-year-olds. Learning the pictograms is followed by phonic work, and teaching writing is delayed.
- *Linguistic, literary, and communications program* by Zsolnai. Available since 1985, this approach entails a combination of the synthetic and global methods. The program also focuses on thematic analyses of the texts. Teaching writing and reading is a parallel process.
- *Intensive-combined reading program* by Gabriella Lovász. This program was introduced in 1987. It is a combined method that teaches reading at a fast pace with the help of lines and pictograms.
- *Heuristic program* by Tolnai Gyuláné. Introduced in 1991, this program uses rhymes and stories to help pupils memorize letters. The main focus is on teaching reading through various games.

Other programs include the *Pronunciation, analytical, synthetic program* – by Zsuzsa Hernádi-Hámorszky; a program based on speech and pronunciation by Anna Adamik-Jászó and Mária Gósy; and a program based on linear elements by Istvánné Máдай and Gyuláné Kertész.

Instructional Time

The school day generally runs from 8 am to 1 or 2 pm with optional afternoon classes (NAPKÖZI).

The amount of time dedicated for reading and Hungarian language varies according to programs and local curriculum, but a minimum is set as requirement by the National (KERETTANTERV).

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Class sizes can range anywhere from 10 to 25 students. In elementary schools, one teacher teaches all subjects to a given class. A reading expert is available for consultation either at the local level, or at the Regional Pedagogical Institutes.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

In Hungary, reading specialists play an important role in improving and promoting literacy within regional pedagogical institutes. They serve as a liaison among researchers in higher education, regional experts, textbook authors, and school-teachers in shaping the local reading curriculum, and in informing teaching methods and classroom practices. They also provide direct instructional assistance within the school and additional curricular support through manuals and materials used in combination with textbooks.

Reading Disabilities

The instructional support offered to students with reading disabilities is a matter of degree. For example, students characterized as having minor reading difficulties receive extra hours of instruction from the classroom teacher. Accordingly, those students diagnosed with more severe disabilities receive instruction from a reading specialist either at school or at a designated institute.

Assessment



Nationwide student achievement assessments in Hungary have a 30-year history. The first studies were carried out with the coordination and guidance of IEA in 1970. The first independent study was conducted in 1980 by the National Institute of Education, Department of Curriculum Development.

The 1980 results generated interests in further student assessments, so the national Monitor Studies were created. The Monitor '86 project concentrated on assessment domains that were judged

to be important (such as literacy) and set the aim of repeating the tests at regular intervals. Later Monitor '91, Monitor '93, Monitor '95, Monitor '97, Monitor '99, and most recently Monitor 2001 were carried out to assess student achievement in Reading, Mathematics, and Science, along with gathering data on the students' cognitive skills and IT preparedness.

The Monitor studies play a significant part in educational planning in Hungary because they provide important empirical data about student outcomes and, thereby, indirectly about the effectiveness of the education system.

Hungary participated in international comparative studies, such as IEA's Reading Literacy Study in 1991, OECD's PISA project, the Adult Literacy Survey IALS, and, most recently, in IEA's PIRLS. Hungary and the Center for Evaluation Studies hope to benefit from the data, knowledge, and experiences gathered throughout these surveys.

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Language and Literacy



Icelandic, the country's official language, is spoken throughout the country and is also the language of instruction in Iceland's schools. It is a language that evolved from Old Norse, which belongs to the North Germanic group of languages. Icelandic has changed only slightly from the language of the early Scandinavian settlers. Other languages that are commonly understood in the country today are Danish and English, both of which are included in the foreign language curriculum that is taught in primary schools.

Iceland has a rich literary history that includes written poetry and prose dating back to the 9th century. The country has six daily newspapers, with a circulation of 535 per 1,000 inhabitants in 1996.¹ There is both a national and a public library system in Iceland. The public library system had a total of 190 service points with 72,000 registered users in 1996.² In 1996, the total number of volumes added to the collection was 71,000.

Education System



Governance and Organization

Until a few years ago, the Iceland education system was highly centralized. In 1995, the structure of the system was changed when the new Junior Schools Act was enacted. The main feature of the new structure was decentralization, entailing financial and professional independence for the schools, while the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture defines the aim of their work and monitors the outcome. Nevertheless, central control still exists to some extent in

various important areas of the school system, with centralized publication of textbooks being one of the most salient features.

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture's role in educational affairs is still crucial to the operations of the country's schools. The Ministry is responsible for overseeing the collection and distribution of statistical information, pupil enrollment, teaching staff, and other school operations. The Ministry also monitors the quality of the schools, supervises local school authorities, and conducts evaluations of the schools' self-evaluations. Another main function of the Ministry is to provide and maintain the National Curriculum Guide, which outlines the content and organization of the following core content areas of study: Icelandic/language arts, mathematics, foreign languages, arts and crafts, natural sciences, domestic science, physical education, social studies, and Christian instruction.

In 1998, Iceland's total public expenditure on education amounted to 5.8 percent of its total GDP.³ Of public expenditure in 1996, 5.1 was spent on the pre-primary level, while 30.8 percent was spent at the compulsory level, and the upper secondary level received 41.9 percent.⁴ Instructional materials that pupils are required to use in their studies while attending compulsory schools are, by law, supplied and paid for by the national government. The schools are obliged, for the most part, to purchase all their course materials and teaching aids from a state-run Center for Educational Materials.

Funding of all resources other than instructional materials for compulsory school is the responsibility of the local authorities of the individual schools, while the costs of upper secondary education are funded by the state.

Country Profile: Iceland

Geographical Location and Size

Iceland is an island located in the North Atlantic Ocean, 278 kilometers southeast of Greenland, 798 kilometers northwest of Scotland and 970 kilometers west of Norway. The area of the country is 103,000 square kilometers. Iceland has more than 4,800 kilometers of coastline. The country's capital, Reykjavik, is the world's northernmost capital. The Mid-Atlantic Rift, which runs through the middle of the country, is responsible for over 30 active volcanoes as well as the geologic activity that creates geothermal energy. Glaciers cover roughly one-tenth of the country's area.

Population and Health Statistics

Of the original settlers who arrived in the ninth and tenth centuries, most were from Norway. To this day, the population of Iceland remains homogeneous. Immigration, mostly from European countries, has not had a major effect on the structure of the population. The people of Iceland live mainly along the coastal belt of the island; over 80 percent of the island is uninhabited because of the terrain. In 2000, the population was 278,000, with a population density of approximately 3 inhabitants per square kilometer.⁵ The largest city is Reykjavik, with 60 percent of the country's total population living in the city and among its outlying communities.

Standards of public health in Iceland rank among the highest in the world. Both central and local government finance the medical and welfare systems. The country's infant mortality rate in 2000 was 3.1 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁶ The average life expectancy at birth in 2000 was 80 years.⁷ The Evangelical Lutheran Church, to which 93 percent of the population belong, is the official State church.



Political System

Iceland's political system is a parliamentary democracy and consists of the legislative branch, which is jointly governed by the president and the parliament, the executive branch of the cabinet, and the judicial branch which includes the Supreme Court and lower court system. The parliament, called the Althing, was founded in 930 AD and is the world's oldest existing national assembly. A coalition government runs the country since, of the five main political parties in the country, no single party holds an absolute majority in the parliament. Iceland is divided into eight administrative regions; elected council members within each region attend to local affairs such as education, municipal services, social affairs, and health services. The president, Althing, and local councils are elected every four years. Iceland is a charter member of the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Economy and Employment

The country's primary resources include fishing, agriculture, and geothermal energy. The GNP per capita in 2000 was US\$ 29,540.⁸ In 1998, the proportion of males aged 25 to 64 in the workforce was 95.6 percent; the proportion of females aged 25 to 64 in the workforce was 85 percent.⁹ The female labor force was 45 percent of the total labor force in 2000.¹⁰ The main types of employment are in services (wholesale, retail, hotels, restaurants, transportation, public administration, education, health services), industry (fish processing, manufacturing, construction), fishing, and agriculture.

Structure of the Education System

Iceland's education system consists of four major levels: pre-school, compulsory, upper secondary, and higher education. The compulsory level refers to grades 1 to 10; grades 1 to 7 are considered to be primary level and grades 8 to 10 are considered to be lower secondary level. Upper secondary school begins within the year that a student turns 16 years of age and is typically completed when the student is 20. Grade levels are not assigned to most upper secondary schools.

Iceland's policy on compulsory education has been in existence since 1908, when school attendance was mandatory for all children between the ages of 10 and 14. At present, the Compulsory School Act mandates that local authorities provide schooling for all children and youths between 6 and 16 years of age. Exceptions are made for those children who attend private schools, provided that the private schools meet the approval of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture.

Pre-primary Education

Pre-primary education in Iceland is non-compulsory, and includes preschools, play schools, nursery schools, and day-care centers. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture establishes the curriculum for pre-school education and sets out its educational and developmental role. The educational program at the preschool level deals with such areas as caring and daily routine; play and playing conditions; speech and speech stimulation; visual creativity and expression; music, sound and movement; nature; and society. Only a few preschool programs focus on beginning written language acquisition and reading. Children may attend pre-school from four to nine hours daily. There has been an increase in enrollment in pre-primary education over the past decade. During 2000, 91 percent of 3- to 5-year-olds were enrolled in pre-primary institutions; 41.3 percent for 4 to 6 hours per day and 49.6 percent for 7 to 8 hours per day.¹¹

Primary and Lower-secondary Education

Enrollment in the primary and lower-secondary levels is virtually 100 percent. As a rule, in rural areas all 10 grades are contained within one school. This is generally also the case for urban areas, although in some urban areas the primary and lower secondary levels are housed in separate

schools. The National Curriculum Guide contains content specifications for nine areas of study, which apply to all grades in the primary and lower secondary levels. All students in grades 1-10 receive instruction in Icelandic, mathematics, home economics, physical education, arts and crafts, natural sciences, and social and Christian studies. Reading and writing are taught as part of Icelandic. Training in reading and writing is continued throughout the primary and lower secondary levels (grades 1 to 10). Foreign language instruction begins in grade 5 (English) and grade 7 (Danish).

Upper-secondary Education

Upper-secondary education begins at the end of compulsory school when the pupil is 16 and extends up to university level. There are four main types of upper secondary schools in Iceland: grammar schools (academic courses only), industrial-vocational schools (vocational courses that prepare students for skilled trades), comprehensive schools (academic courses comparable to those offered by grammar schools and vocational training comparable to that offered by industrial-vocational schools), and specialized vocational schools (training for specific vocations).

Types of Schools

Almost all of Iceland's comprehensive schools (primary and lower-secondary schools), upper-secondary schools, and universities are state-run. Pupils studying in comprehensive schools do not pay any fees at all. Students in upper-secondary schools and universities only pay a minor registration fee. There are only a very small number of private schools in the country. About 4 percent of children attend privately run nursery schools and about 2 percent attend private schools for the 6-16 age range.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The Compulsory School Act requires a 9-month instructional year, between early September and the end of May, to include at least 170 days of instruction. Upper-secondary schools also adhere to a 9-month instructional year, but only have to include 150 days of instruction.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Local municipalities are responsible for the hiring of primary and lower-secondary school teachers. Teachers may be employed either part-time or full-time, although most work full time. Female teachers comprise about 75 percent of the total teaching force at the primary and lower secondary levels. The average age of female and male teachers at these levels is 42.

Thirty-six percent of teachers have completed a three-year university course and hold a B.Ed. degree from the Teachers' Training College. About 32 percent of teachers hold a teaching diploma from the college dating from the time when it was not a university-level institution. Before the Teachers' Training College was established at the university level, the diploma was the traditional way of qualifying as a teacher. About 8 percent of teachers working in primary and lower-secondary schools hold B.A., B.Sc. or Master's degrees, with or without teaching diplomas. Just over 11 percent of teachers in schools at this level hold only matriculation certificates with or without some further study in a special subject, or have completed only part of university-level teacher training.

Teacher Education

In order to qualify as a teacher at the primary or lower secondary levels, a three-year course at a teacher training college is required. Teacher education programs received university status by a law passed in 1971. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture oversees the institutes that provide teacher training; including the University College of Education, which was amalgamated into the Icelandic Teachers' Training College in 1998, and the University of Akureyri. Admission to either of these universities requires a matriculation examination.

A general teacher education course, leading to a B.Ed. degree, takes about three years to complete. A special two-year education program was introduced at the University College of Education in 1985. A certification program exists through the University of Iceland for students who already hold a BA or B.Sc. degree in another subject but wish to teach at the compulsory level. All universities and colleges offer postgraduate courses

leading to master's degrees for general and specialized teachers.

The curriculum for teacher training includes courses in educational theory, curriculum studies, and subject areas such as Icelandic and mathematics. Special education is incorporated into the general curriculum for general training of teachers. Practice teaching is an important part of the teacher education programs.

Teacher In-service Education

In-service education for teachers at the primary and lower secondary levels is not compulsory. However, the Icelandic Teachers' Training College is the national centre for in-service education, providing a variety of courses, seminars, and distance education opportunities. The University of Akureyri also offers in-service training courses for teachers at the compulsory level.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The National Curriculum Guide implements the provisions made in statutes and regulations for the curriculum and instruction at compulsory school level in Iceland. Icelandic, including reading and writing, is divided into four areas: general mother-tongue instruction, the teaching of immigrant children whose mother tongue is not Icelandic, Icelandic for the deaf, and sign language for the deaf. This reflects the general policy of the education authorities that good reading ability is essential for everyone to enable them to participate in a democratic society, and that literacy is the basis of general education.

The importance of reading fluency is also highlighted as a means of stimulating an interest in reading and enjoying literature, and as a means of enriching vocabulary and gaining a better command of the spoken language. Accordingly, the aim is that on completion of compulsory-level schooling (Grade 10), a pupil should:¹²

- Have acquired a good command of reading various types of text presented in various ways
- Have a knowledge of the necessary concepts and symbols regarding reading and a grasp of

various types of reading, (e.g., reading in depth, skimming, and searching)

- Be interested in reading and have a positive attitude towards practicing reading
- Realize the importance of all-round literacy in today's information-based society
- Be able to use reading skills to acquire information
- Be familiar with reading texts on a computer monitor and on the Internet
- Be able to read texts critically
- Be able to read texts from various historical periods.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

The formal teaching of reading to Icelandic children begins when they are 6, in Grade 1 of primary school. However, many children have started learning at home and some can already read when they begin school.

The National Curriculum Guide lays down clear reading and writing goals for all ten grades of the compulsory school system. There are three types of goals. First, there is the general goal, which states the overall aim of the reading curriculum in compulsory school. Second, there are goals for specific grade levels, which state the general reading standards expected of pupils after Grades 4, 7, and 10. These goals are worded in such a way that it is relatively easy to assess whether, or to what extent, they have been attained. These goals for specific stages form the basis for the compilation of the statutory national standardized examinations in Icelandic (including reading and writing) and Mathematics in Grades 4, 7, and 10. Third, sub-goals in reading and writing are set for the 10 grades of compulsory school. These are sub-divisions of the goals for the specific stages. The sub-goals are regarded as constituting a more detailed itemization of the goals for specific stages, and incorporate a gradual increase in requirements from the beginning to the end of compulsory school.

In the first four grades of primary school, the main emphasis is on basic training in reading and

writing. A substantial part of the 6 hours of language teaching each week is devoted to teaching pupils to form letters and recognize the direction of writing and to train their control of fine movements. Attempts are made to find suitable material for those pupils who are already able to read when they start school. The main aims in Grade 1 are that pupils should:¹³

- Work with their own stories in order to stimulate their reading
- Perform a variety of tasks that stimulate them to read
- Become acquainted with the concepts of rhyme and rhythm, letters, words and sentences
- Perform tasks that promote the acquisition of a broader vocabulary and linguistic understanding
- Have access to, and make use of, a varied range of books, both in the classroom and the school library
- Become familiar with the school library through project work
- Have the opportunity to develop their reading comprehension by working at a range of tasks appropriate to their ability
- Have the opportunity to read suitable books, chosen independently and set by the teacher
- Take a special diagnostic reading test that states whether there is a likelihood of their developing reading difficulties later, and thereafter to receive the appropriate training in reading and language use.

At the end of the fourth year of school, the aim is that pupils should:¹⁴

- Have mastered the basics of reading and be able to
 - Read aloud and silently at a reasonable speed
 - Read and understand simple stories and poems

- Be able to understand the main punctuation marks
- Be able to read Icelandic texts accompanying foreign pictorial material
- Be able to read texts for their benefit and information, including
 - Being able to read and understand texts appropriate for their level
 - Be able to use books to find information in connection with projects and tasks
 - Be able to read and follow simple instructions
- Have acquired a positive attitude towards reading, including
 - Having become immersed in books
 - Having read texts appropriate for their level for pleasure
 - Having read books of their own choice.

Reading is taught as an independent subject during the first four grades of primary school. In the upper grades of compulsory school, the teaching of reading and writing becomes increasingly integrated with the teaching of Icelandic.

Icelandic as a school subject is divided into a number of elements: reading, spoken language, listening and watching, reading, literature, and grammar. The emphasis is on the interrelationship of these elements, and on training pupils in Icelandic in all subjects taught in compulsory school. Priority is also given to practice in speech, reading and reading comprehension, and on writing, including orthography.

Materials for Reading Instruction

A wide variety of textbooks and educational materials are available for teaching reading. In addition to traditional reading books intended for teaching children to read at the various levels of school, workbooks accompanying particular reading books are used. Special textbooks are also published for

pupils who are slow in acquiring reading skills or who have specific reading problems. As reading education progresses, books containing sample passages of literature, both old and modern, are used. An important part of reading education in Iceland consists of providing pupils with the opportunity to choose books to read from school libraries and public libraries, with the encouragement and guidance of the teacher.

Information technology is utilized in general reading education, but only as a supplement to methods that have been in existence for long periods. Sound-based methods are generally used in the beginning stages of teaching reading.

Instructional Time

Under the Compulsory School Act, pupils in Grades 1 to 4 have the right to 30 teaching hours per week in all subjects over the nine months of the school year. Each lesson is 40 minutes. Pupils in Grades 5 to 7 are entitled to 35 lessons per week, and those in Grades 8 to 10, 37 lessons per week. The minimum number of school days per year in Icelandic schools is 170; thus the total length of teaching time per year should be 5,100 lessons (3,400 hours) in Grades 1 to 4, 5,950 lessons (3,967 hours) in Grades 5 to 7 and 6,290 lessons (4,193 hours) in Grades 8 to 10.

Pupils in Grades 1 to 4 should receive 6 lessons per week in reading and writing, that is, 1,020 lessons (680 hours) per year. Pupils in Grades 5 to 7 are supposed to receive 5 lessons per week in Icelandic (consisting of reading, speech and oral delivery, listening and watching, writing, literature and grammar), making a total of 850 lessons (567 hours) per year. Icelandic (consisting of reading, speech and oral delivery, listening and watching, writing, literature and grammar) (19 percent) and Mathematics (17 percent) should be allocated 36 percent of the total time available for teaching in Grades 1 to 10.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

According to the official educational policy, variety should prevail in teaching methods. Teachers bear professional responsibility for selecting the most effective methods for achieving the aims of the National Curriculum Guide and the school syllabus. In practice, the most common form of teaching is in undivided mixed-ability classes. On the other hand, it is not uncommon for classes to be divided into

smaller groups according to ability at the beginning of reading education in the first grades of primary school. Thus, there are reading “corners” within the class for those pupils who are able to read; they can read freely-chosen material while the others are being taught the basics of reading.

According to law, the maximum number of pupils in each class at compulsory school level is 30. In practice, the numbers are smallest in the youngest age ranges and larger when pupils are in their teens (secondary level). It is also generally the case that classes in schools in the rural areas are larger than those in urban areas. In Grades 4 and 7, the most common class size is about 20. In the secondary level, the most common class sizes range from 21 to 30 pupils.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

The general class teachers are in charge of teaching reading in the beginning stages. They receive training and practice in teaching reading during their teaching training courses. Reading specialists play little or no role in the teaching of reading in Icelandic schools. There are special teachers in most schools who take charge of special teaching of pupils with particular reading problems.

Second Language Instruction

Icelandic as a second language is a subject for those pupils who do not have a sufficient command of Icelandic to be able to pursue studies in Icelandic schools on the same basis as other pupils. This applies to pupils of both Icelandic and foreign origin. A special syllabus applies to these pupils, in which a final goal, goals for specific stages and sub-goals in reading and writing are defined.

Reading Disabilities

Icelandic pupils’ reading ability as compared with their peers is monitored by regular assessment by their teachers. Those who have reading difficulties are given support or special teaching for various lengths of time right from Grade 1 of primary school. When they fail to make normal progress while receiving such support, their reading difficulties are diagnosed by a special teacher and a psychologist. Pupils who are diagnosed as dyslexic then receive regular individual teaching, which generally continues throughout their schooling. The national standardized examinations in reading and orthography at the beginning of Grade 4

usually show which pupils have particular reading disabilities but have not been diagnosed or received special help.

Children with dyslexia are either taught by special teachers or else under their guidance. Usually guidance by special teachers takes the form of suggestions to classroom teachers as to how to instruct those pupils in their classes. In most cases, dyslexic children are given extra lessons during school hours. Children with dyslexia are generally given private lessons or are taught in small groups of 3 or 4 pupils in a separate room, not with the rest of their class.

Literacy Programs



Reading competitions are held in all Icelandic primary and lower-secondary schools. Whole classes and individual pupils enter the contests. Prizes are awarded for achievement, which may be assessed in terms of the number of pages the pupils in the class read in a specific period. Special competitions are also held in the recitation of poetry or other literary texts, the aim being to stimulate pupils’ reading ability and emphasize the importance of reading as a part of life.

As well as competitions, a special “Icelandic Language Day” is held once a year. All schools in the country are encouraged to devote the day to the Icelandic language. Pupils are often given theme projects to do, and attention is focused on the importance of Iceland’s literary heritage and of literacy as the key to its enjoyment.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Pupils in Grades 1 to 7 are given an oral reading test in the middle of the school year and at the end of the year. No special test in oral reading is given in Grades 8 to 10, but reading comprehension is tested as part of Icelandic. Grades are awarded on a scale from 1 to 10. In many schools, the pupils are not given grades; instead they receive an assessment which is based partly on their performance in examinations. The results of class examinations and informal reading tests are used as the basis for assessment of pupils’ academic performance in the

middle of the school year and at the end of the year. At the same time, teachers use pupils' performance as a guideline for their own teaching and an indication of which pupils need support and special teaching in reading.

National Examinations

Standardized national examinations are set for Grades 4, 7, and 10 of the compulsory school system. The subjects tested in Grades 4 and 7 are Icelandic (reading, spelling, writing, vocabulary comprehension, and grammar) and mathematics. In Grade 10 the subjects tested are Icelandic (including reading comprehension and spelling), mathematics, English, and Danish (or Swedish or Norwegian). Up to now, all pupils in the appropriate year-class have taken these examinations. This will continue to be the case in Grades 4 and 7, but beginning spring 2001, pupils will be able to choose whether or not they take the examinations in Grade 10. In spring 2002, standardized national examinations will be set for two more subjects – Natural Science and Social Studies. The average grades earned by pupils in these examinations in each school in Grades 4, 7, and 10 are published each year.

In Grades 4 and 7 the examinations are set at the beginning of the school year, while they are set at the end of the year in Grade 10, reflecting the different role of this examination. In Grades 4 and 7, the examinations are intended primarily to give information on where pupils stand compared to their peers and where individual schools stand in relation to each other. Pupils' grades do not determine whether they are allowed to go into the next grade or not. Within the schools, examination results are used to give pupils guidance, to determine which pupils need support or special teaching in reading, to inform parents about how their children are doing as compared to their peers, and to indicate to teachers which areas need more emphasis.

Pupils' grades and school averages are standardized. In addition to their averages, the schools receive information on progress made by the same groups of pupils over the three-year period. As the examinations are held in the autumn at the beginning of Grades 4 and 7, it is common for teachers to use them, and the standards accompanying them, to assess ability in reading, spelling, and writing at the end of Grades 3 and 6.

Standardized Tests

Very few standardized reading tests have been published in Iceland for children in compulsory school. A few such tests are in use, but they are of varying quality. These tests are used mainly for identifying reading difficulties, and are not taken by whole classes or year-classes.

Diagnostic Testing

A few diagnostic tests are in use for children of compulsory school age. They are used almost exclusively by special teachers to diagnose reading difficulties and identify areas of teaching emphasis for individual children with serious reading problems.

It is fairly common for children starting in Grade 1 of Icelandic schools to be given a general screening test to identify which of them are likely to have learning difficulties. Most of these tests are of foreign origin and none has been standardized or adapted specifically for use in Iceland. In 1998, the educational authorities decided to introduce general reading screening for all children at the beginning of their schooling experience in order to identify those who are likely to have reading problems.

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ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

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Language and Literacy



The official language of Iran is Farsi. This language is spoken also in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and certain parts of Uzbekistan.¹ Although the Farsi and Arabic alphabets may look similar, the languages themselves are very different from each other. There are other indigenous languages in Iran such as Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, and Lori, but they are not used in any national, official, or educational activity.

The educational system of Iran has been very successful in eradicating illiteracy, so that the rate of adult literacy has increased significantly. While the rate of literacy was 47.5 percent in 1979, it increased to 82.6 percent in 1994. This rate has been 94 percent for the urban areas and 75.1 percent for the rural ones. Moreover, the literacy rate among women increased to 78.1 percent.²

The number of public libraries has significantly increased from 362 in 1979 to 1,002 in 1999.³

Education System



Governance and Organization

The formal education system in the Islamic Republic of Iran is organized in two different ministries: the Ministry of Education which provides for education up to pre-university level, and the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology (formerly named Ministry of Culture and Higher Education), which supervises and coordinates the tertiary education programs.

The structure of decision-making in Iran is highly centralized, and this is true also for the Ministry of Education. All of the rules and decrees

related to the Ministry are approved by the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament), the cabinet, or the Higher Council of Education, which is composed of several ministers, deputy ministers, and other scholars, and organizes its meetings at the Ministry of Education. Schools in all provinces are required to follow the decrees and approvals that are directed by the Ministry of Education.

Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran is substantially funded by the government. The total budget of the Ministry of Education in 1996 was about 3.8 percent of the Gross National Product.⁴ In addition to the approved budget, there are some Acts that provide the Ministry of Education with new financial resources. These Acts mainly refer to the charges over the industrial payroll tax and municipalities revenue.

According to articles included in the Principles of the Education system, general education, which includes eight years of schooling, is compulsory and the government is compelled to take necessary measures to fulfill this obligation.

Although providing for education is a government responsibility, private schooling also has been established in the country. Private schools, which are conducted in the form of non-profit schools, are managed under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. The curriculum, textbooks, and examination regulations of non-profit schools conform to the general rules and criteria of the Ministry of Education and are the same as those for public schools.

Structure of the Education System

The education system in Iran consists of a one-year pre-primary, five-year primary, three-year lower secondary, three-year upper secondary, and one-year university preparation level. The regular

Country Profile: Islamic Republic of Iran

Geographical Location and Size

The Islamic Republic of Iran, with an area of 1,648,195 square kilometers, is situated in western Asia. It is a mountainous land with three different climatic conditions: humid, mountainous and semi-arid, and desert. The country is bounded by the Caspian Sea and the republics of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Russia on the North, Afghanistan and Pakistan on the East, the Oman Sea and Persian Gulf on the South, and Iraq and Turkey on the West.



Population and Health Statistics

According to the 2001 census, the population of Iran is about 63 million,⁵ with about 66 percent being of Persian origin, 25 percent Turkish, 5 percent Kurdish, and 4 percent Arab.⁶ About 63 percent of the population are urban dwellers and the rest live in rural areas.⁷ Most of the population is Muslim (99.4%), while less than 0.3% are Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, or members of other religious minorities.⁸

By launching several immunization, disease control, family planning, water supply, and health education programs, the country's health care system has improved health indicators, such as infant mortality rate and life expectancy. In 2001, the infant mortality rate had been reduced to about 26 per 1,000 live births per year, and the life expectancy had risen to 69.⁹

Political System

The Iranian government is founded on the basis of an Islamic Republic system. The government consists of three branches of power: legislative, executive, and judiciary. The Islamic Consultative Assembly is the Iranian Parliament. All political groups and religious minorities are represented in the Parliament. The highest-ranking official of the executive body is the president. The judiciary is headed by a Supreme Judiciary Council.

The hierarchical structure of decision-making in Iran is highly centralized. Almost all rules and program policies are decided at the ministerial levels in the capital city, while only a small portion of decision-making power is delegated to local authorities.

Economy and Employment

The Iranian economy is composed of public, private, and cooperative sectors. Despite efforts to boost non-petroleum exports, oil is the country's major economic source and is still the most important international commodity in Iran. Some other items that are exported are carpets, dried fruits, leather, caviar, cotton, and mineral ores. About 23 percent of the workforce is engaged in agriculture, 31 percent in industry, and 44.5 percent in other services.¹⁰

entrance ages for these education levels are 5, 6, 11, 14, and 17 years old, respectively.

Pre-primary Education

Pre-primary education is a one-year period in which five-year-old children are prepared for primary education. Also, Farsi will be taught in bilingual areas, where it is not children's mother tongue.

Primary Education

Primary education is the first stage of formal education, catering for children between 6 and 10 years of age. Enabling students to read and write are among the main objectives of this level of education.

Lower-secondary Education

For adolescents from 11 to 13 years old, this level of education takes three years of schooling. Students in this stage become familiar with the sciences to find their area of interest and to be able to choose their field at the upper-secondary level of schooling. The primary and lower-secondary education, totaling eight years of schooling, are considered as general education and do not offer different programs of study.

Upper-secondary Education

This level of education takes three years and offers three secondary branches, namely, theoretical, technical-vocational, and knowledge-skill.

University Preparation Level

University preparation is a one-year education program. Those students planning to participate in the university entrance examination need to pass this level of education.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The academic year in the Islamic Republic of Iran starts on September 22nd each year and ends the following June, with the specific day depending on the level of education and on the schedule of final examinations.

Schools are open six days a week. The weekly school schedules and the number of teaching hours vary according to the level of education.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

The total number of teachers and teacher educators engaged in educational affairs was more than nine hundred thousand in the academic year of 1998-99. Of the approximately four hundred thousand engaged at the primary level, 55 percent were female and 45 percent male.¹¹

Teacher Education

The Ministry of Education has two ways of training and recruiting teachers for primary education. Students who have a high school diploma, have passed the teacher-training entrance examination successfully, and have selected the Primary Education program are trained for two years and, upon completion, receive an associate degree. These teachers, who compose the majority of primary teachers, have completed 14 years of education.

The other way is to recruit associate degree, BA/BS, or MA/MS holders who are not the graduates of teacher education centers. These applicants should pass an entrance examination for the purpose of recruitment successfully.

It should be noted that, since primary education in Iran is considered as a general education program and there is only one teacher who teaches all the subjects at this level, there are no specific requirements to teach reading.

Teacher In-service Education

Teachers can participate in two kinds of in-service training program, long-term programs and short-term courses.

- Long-term in-service training programs for the primary teachers are those that lead to different levels of higher degrees such as associate degree, BA/BS. These programs are the ones that are regularly offered by universities, teacher training centers, and higher education in-service training centers. Universities and teacher training centers have considerable experience in pre-service and in-service programs. Apart from whether an applicant is a teacher or not, universities and teacher training centers select their students for different programs of study. However, those who are already teachers and are accepted in higher education

programs can enjoy the facilities that are provided by the Ministry of Education. In addition to these two kinds of institutes, the Ministry of Education recently has established higher education in-service centers. These centers hold courses especially for existing teachers to promote their studies. About seven percent of educational staff is trained annually through these programs.

- Short-term in-service training courses are career-oriented courses aimed at improving specific competencies of teachers. The courses may be offered as intensive courses during the summer, regular courses during the academic year, seminars, or educational meetings. Usually 10 percent of teachers and other educational staff take part in these courses annually. Participation in in-service training courses is compulsory at the beginning of employment and for teaching special courses. Beyond that, taking part in training courses is optional for teachers.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

In the education system of Iran, there is a “Farsi Language and Literature Curriculum for Primary Education” which is a five-year curriculum plan and includes all five grades of primary schooling.¹² A section of this curriculum plan is devoted to the reading curriculum. All the curricula in the education system of Iran, including the reading curriculum, are fully centralized. As it is described in the curriculum plan, the main objective of reading is to develop accuracy, reflection, reasoning, and judgment, so that children may benefit from their reading and extract and explore the most appropriate subjects according to their needs. According to the reading policy guidelines, by the end of the fifth grade of primary children should:

- Be able to read and understand simple Farsi texts
- Enjoy reading and recognize it as a way of acquiring knowledge and information

- Read consciously and have specific reading purposes
- Appreciate reading and whatever they learn through reading.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

As stipulated in the reading curriculum for primary grades, the objective of reading is not only skimming a text; paying attention to the meaning is also a major element in the definition of reading ability. Therefore, reading instruction begins when children have acquired readiness for reading. In view of the fact that pre-primary education in Iran is not compulsory and many children do not go to kindergarten, this readiness is established in the first months of the first grade of primary education. Following this short period of preparation, six-year-old children are ready to receive reading instruction.

The reading curriculum guidelines for the first grade of primary education are:

- Reading materials are composed of simple words and sentences on such subjects as family relations and family members, playing and toys, daily activities, body organs, nutrition and health, animals and pets, plants, God, the country, some cities of the country, religious teaching, rivers, mountains, earth and sky, moon and sun, and month and year.
- Literature includes short and simple children’s poetry.
- Grammar introduces words and sentences.

The reading guidelines for second and third grades of primary are:

- Reading materials are composed of simple stories about family life, animal life, real or imaginary stories about national, social, and historical events, simple scientific issues, patriotism, justice, duty, philanthropy topics, stories about the sea and lakes, rivers and mountains, different seasons, national and historical ceremonies, God, prophet, religious leaders, the country and large cities, and different jobs and occupations.

- Literature includes topics such as simple poetry about nature, animals, children, and school.
- Farsi grammar addresses principles of punctuation, sentences and verbs, different tenses, subjects and objects, singular and plural nouns, synonyms and antonyms, and adjectives.

The reading guidelines for grades four and five of primary are:

- Reading materials are composed of stories about natural and artificial objects, description of some inventions, family and society, human endeavors, rural life, national and religious festivals, stories of Iranian patriotism, polar, desert, and equatorial regions of the world, animal life, flying in the sky, diving in water, planting, life stories of some famous men and women and great inventors and discoverers, life stories of prophets and religious leaders, adventures of great explorers, stories about hygienic, religious and patriotic matters, moral stories, description of natural scenery, historical buildings, national industries and factories, employer and employees, knowledge of different parts of the country and other countries, stories composed by some famous poets, different seasons, animals, flowers, poetic and prose stories, translation of some foreign works and stories.
- Grammar addresses principles and rules of punctuation, realizing complete and incomplete sentences, informative and interrogative sentences, verbs and different tenses, intransitive and transitive verbs, nouns (singular and plural, common and proper), subjects and objects, adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns.

In the primary grades, reading is taught as a separate subject, although writing instruction also starts then. Reading, writing, and other language skills are integrated in instruction at the lower and upper levels of secondary education.

Materials for Reading Instruction

Textbooks are the most typical material used in teaching reading. However, the Ministry of Education publishes different magazines for different age groups as a supplemental instructional aid. Two

series of these magazines are specially designed and published for primary students.

Since technology is an effective means for facilitating the process of learning in general, and the development of language skills in particular, efforts have been made to prepare the following educational resources to supplement the textbook in the primary grades:

- A teacher's guide in the form of a videocassette, which provides necessary explanation about the instruction
- Videocassettes about teaching some exemplar lessons that can be used by students and their families
- Audiocassettes, along with songs and music, for teaching different concepts and developing students' listening skills
- Tables to be posted in the classroom, since continuing exposition will help establish and deepen language concepts.

All textbooks for the primary grades are published by the Ministry of Education and are distributed among students free of charge. Hence, there is no difficulty with availability of materials for reading.

Instructional Time

At the primary grades 1 to 5, the total instructional time for all subjects is 24 school hours (each school hour is 40-45 min.) per week. Of this total, 12 hours at the first, second, and third grades and 11 hours at the fourth and fifth grades are allocated to reading and other language skills. At the lower-secondary level, the total instructional time for all subjects is 28, 30, and 31 school hours per week, for grades 6, 7, and 8, respectively. At all three grades of lower secondary, 5 school hours (out of 28, 30, and 31) are allocated to language skills and literature.¹³

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Grouping is not a very common procedure for teaching in primary classes. In fact, there is a general policy which is based on mixed-ability and undivided classes. There are different teaching

methods that teachers could use to increase the efficiency of the teaching-learning process, but, whatever they use, would be commonly adopted for all students in the classroom.

The typical class size in urban primary schools in Iran is about 31 students and in rural schools is about 23 students.¹⁴

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

As previously mentioned, primary education is a general program where only one teacher teaches all the subjects. The majority of primary teachers have passed the two-year teacher training program, and have been trained to teach all subjects. The situation is different at the lower and upper levels of secondary education. At those levels, there are language and literature specialists who teach reading as well as other language skills.

Second Language Reading Instruction

There are some indigenous languages used along with the Farsi language in bilingual areas of the country. In these areas, children are taught the Farsi language during pre-primary education to prepare them for future studies. In fact, one of the objectives of pre-primary education is to promote the Farsi language, particularly in the provinces that have different native languages. There is no bilingual education at other levels of education, including primary education.

Reading Disabilities

To identify reading disabilities, there is diagnostic testing to measure children's abilities upon entering the first primary grade. Generally, children who are recognized as having any kind of disability, including a reading disability, will be guided and recommended to continue their studies in an exceptional education program.

Literacy Programs



There are several programs which promote literacy among both children and adults. These programs are developed and provided by Literacy Movement Organization, which is an organization affiliated with the Ministry of Education. The main tasks of the organization are (a) educating adults to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, (b) producing simple textbooks and reading mate-

rials for new literates, and (c) broadcasting the literacy programs through the mass media.

The major literacy program for adults consists of two preliminary and complementary stages requiring 180 and 288 hours, respectively. Upon completion of those stages, new literates receive a certificate. The organization also has responsibility for covering school-age children in remote and isolated areas, where children have no access to formal schooling. Therefore, in addition to literacy classes for adults, the organization convenes special literacy classes for 6- to 12-year-old children who are not covered by local formal schools.

Furthermore, in order to prevent relapse into illiteracy, the organization established another program to challenge this serious threat affecting a large percentage of the new literates. The main objective of this program to stabilize literacy is achieved through two different paths – conventional classes and open learning. Classes offer new literates the opportunity to either complete the upper grades of primary education or continue their studies through open/correspondence learning. In the open learning path, the new literates regularly receive books and other reading materials so they can develop the habit of studying. These materials, including newspaper, weekly leaflets, and magazine, are prepared according to the principles of basic reading and writing.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Educational assessment includes formative and summative evaluation.

Formative evaluations are usually implemented through school-based tests that are administered twice during a school year. Summative evaluation is implemented through final examinations at the end of each school year. These evaluations may include one or more types of the following:

- Written tests with a limited number of questions
- Oral questions

- Evaluation of educational activities, such as students' class presentations, homework, and projects
- Practical evaluation of skill subjects.

Written tests used for both formative and summative evaluations are administered during the school year. Tests also are administered at the end of grades 1 to 4 at the primary level, grades 6 and 7 at the lower-secondary level, and grades 9 and 10 at the upper-secondary level. All tests are school-based or district-level examinations.

National Examinations

At the terminal grade of each education level, that is, the 5th grade of primary, 8th grade of lower-secondary, and 11th grade of upper-secondary, the written tests for the final examinations are developed by the provincial or ministerial offices of examination to be administered at all schools at the provincial or national level, respectively.

The criteria for promotion is determined by a numerical scale (0-20). Students must earn at least a 10-point average on the two annual examinations in each subject, including reading, to be promoted to the next grade.

Standardized Tests

There is no standardized test for reading to be administered to children. There are a few foreign standardized tests which are sometimes used by teachers or researchers, but these are not considered as a formal testing service to be administered for measuring reading achievement.

Diagnostic Testing

As described before, there is one such testing which mainly identifies children's difficulties/disabilities prior to entering the first grade of primary school. This test is standardized for 6-year-old children and is administered at the time they are going to enter the first grade. The test is designed to examine children's readiness, not specifically in reading, but in all abilities to start learning at the primary level of education.

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Language and Literacy



Hebrew and Arabic are the two official languages in Israel, but the language situation is multifaceted. Hebrew is used by most Jews for all purposes including education, business, and culture, with English the major foreign language used for wider communication, and Arabic the third language (alternating with French or another language in some schools). For the Arab population, Arabic is the first language and the language of instruction in the school system, Hebrew is the second language, and English is the third language.

Israel is a country of immigration, and the home language of the Jewish population reflects recent arrival and ethnic language maintenance. During the last fifteen years, Israel has witnessed a large immigration wave of more than one million people from the former Soviet Union, making up almost 20 percent of the total population. Russian has, therefore, become a widely used language at the workplace, on the street and, of course, in many homes. Commercial advertising and signs reflect the spread of Russian. Instructions in official offices or businesses are often presented in four languages: Hebrew, English, Arabic, and Russian.

Publication in Israel is quite extensive. Eighteen daily newspapers are published, seven of which are in Hebrew. The circulation is 288 daily newspapers per 1000 people.¹ Of the population aged 14 and above, 76.4 percent (79.7% men and 73.3% women) read a daily newspaper at least once a week.²

The number of books published in Israel per year is 4,909, out of which 210 are children's books and youth literature.³ Of the books published in Israel, 65.8 percent are in Hebrew and 24.4 percent are in English.⁴ The number of

public libraries in Israel in 1998 was 967 (920 in Jewish localities and 47 in Arab localities).⁵ Nearly half the libraries (44.8%) are computerized and some (7.1%) have Internet connections.⁶

Education System



Governance and Organization

The Ministry of Education in Israel is responsible for the overall operation of the school system, the curriculum, the teacher force, national tests, funding, and research and development. The administrative structure of the Ministry points to a rather centralized system. The Minister of Education is usually a nominated political figure who operates through his own appointed director general. Responsibilities are shared among five divisions: pedagogical, teacher education, science and technology, religion and society, and youth administration. There are additional auxiliary units such as economic and budget administration, and computer communication and information administration. The system functions across seven districts, most of them geographical in nature. Policy decisions, which are made at the higher levels, are implemented at the district level.

The major educational goals receiving high priority in the year 2000-2001 by the Ministry of Education follow. These high-priority goals were to be implemented across the school curriculum.

- Reducing socioeconomic gaps by promoting disadvantaged sectors and peripheral communities.
- Increasing the number of students entitled to matriculation certificates.

Country Profile: Israel

Geographical Location and Size

Israel is situated along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean sea. It borders Lebanon and Syria on the North, Jordan in the East, Egypt (the Sinai peninsula) on the South, and the Mediterranean coastline on the West.⁷ The country's capital is Jerusalem, which is located in the Judean Hills. The climate is moderate with hot and humid summers along the coast, drier weather in the Northern Galilee and the hills of Jerusalem, and an arid climate in the South.

Population and Health Statistics

The population of Israel today is 6.37 million with a density of 288 persons per square kilometer.^{8,9} Ninety-one percent of the total population can be considered urban.¹⁰ Most of the population lives along the coastal plain, while the southern region is much less populous, with only 63 people per square kilometer.¹¹ Approximately 78 percent (4.96 million) of the total population is Jewish, 18 percent (.97 million) is Muslim, 2 percent (.135 million) is Christian, and 1.6 percent (.104 million) is Druze.¹² Most of the non-Jewish population speaks Arabic as the mother tongue.

The average life expectancy in Israel is 76.6 years.¹³ It varies by sex and ethnicity as follows: 80.7 and 77.1 years for Jewish women and men, respectively; 78.1 and 74.9 years for Arab women and men, respectively.¹⁴ Infant mortality is 5.6 deaths per 1,000 live births.¹⁵

Political System

Israel was established as a Jewish state and a parliamentary democracy in 1948. The legislative branch is the parliament called the Knesset. It consists of 120 parliament members. Elections are usually held at least every four years. Since no party has ever had an absolute majority, generally, the head of the largest party is called upon by the President of the state to be the Prime Minister and create a coalition government. The government, the executive branch, consists of 20 to 25 ministers who are chosen from among the parties of the coalition. Local councils for municipalities (urban, rural, and district) are elected every five years by the members of the pertinent community. The judicial branch, the Supreme Court consists of 13 judges (2000), elected for life.



Economy and Employment

Israel is a country poor in natural resources. The gross domestic product (GDP) in the year 2000 was about US\$ 114.3 billion,¹⁶ of which 23.4 percent comes from finance and business services, 18 percent comes from manufacturing, 11.4 percent from commerce, restaurants, and hotels, 52 percent from construction, 7.5 percent from transportation, and 1.7 percent from agriculture.¹⁷ The gross national product (GNP) per capita is US\$ 16,310 (US\$ 18,070 PPP Intl.).¹⁸ The total export (2000) is US\$ 31.4 billion.¹⁹ The main exports are manufactured goods, machinery, and transport equipment, each responsible for approximately US\$ 11.1 billion, chemicals and related products US\$ 4.02 billion, and miscellaneous manufactured articles US\$ 3.2 billion; food and live animals, crude materials, mineral fuel and lubricants, and commodities and transactions total approximately US\$ 1.6 billion.²⁰

- Implementing a five-year affirmative action plan with regard to Arab education.
- Reducing violence and preventing drug use.
- Promoting science and technology education (Harrari report).
- Implementing the recommendations of two national reports for strengthening democratic and Jewish values.
- Promoting special education within the regular school system.
- A reduction in the number of subject areas studied simultaneously
- An increase in student autonomy, enabling students to develop independent study skills and allowing them to pursue personal areas of interest
- Alternative means of evaluation in a variety of areas: critical thinking, creativity, originality, ethical consideration, and taking a stand with reference to others in society
- The centrality of the educational role of the homeroom teacher and a focus on the subject matter teacher as an educator.

The program of educational studies is managed and organized in three separate departments, each with its own specific goals, priorities, and programs in addition to those overall goals. The three departments are preprimary education (kindergarten, which is part of the compulsory education), primary education (grades 1 to 6), and secondary education (grades 7 to 12).

The preprimary program aims to consolidate life skills, language skills, and cognitive skills through its curriculum by using a variety of educational techniques suited for this age group and thus preparing the children for school.

Primary education is viewed as offering the child a supportive educational environment, which enables each student to progress along the educational and learning continuum. The main task of primary education is to develop literacy skills to allow each member of society to use written and spoken language for everyday functions, for active citizenship, and for aesthetics and emotional enjoyment.

The lower- (grades 7 to 9) and upper-secondary (grades 10 to 12) educational system has been implementing a process of reorganization and program development. The new structure emerging from this process features the following:

- A comprehensive concept of secondary education, which presents an educational continuum of six years from grades 7 to 12
- An increase in school autonomy, expanding freedom of choice within the school and by the school

Pupils and Students in the Education System

The number of pupils and students enrolled in the Israeli education system, from preprimary through higher education was almost 1,900,000 in the 2000-01 school year.²¹ Of the total pupil population in 2000-01, approximately 78 percent was enrolled in Hebrew education and 22 percent in Arab education.²²

The number of pupils by level of education (2000-01) was 297,000 (77% in the Hebrew sector) in the preprimary, 750,000 (75% in the Hebrew sector), in the primary, and 310,000 (84% in the Hebrew sector) in the upper-secondary. There were 235,000 students in universities, colleges and other post-secondary institutions, and 45,000 in other institutions.

Of the proportions of students finishing upper-secondary school that went to post-secondary education (universities, academic colleges, and teacher colleges) between 1991 and 1998, 44.8 percent were in the Hebrew sector, and 25.5 percent in the Arab education sector.²³

Pupils in the Hebrew sector are split among three educational streams monitored by three different administrative bodies: the state general education stream, the state religious stream, and other ultra-orthodox (independent) streams. In 1999-2000 at the primary education level, the percentages of students in each stream were 60.8 percent, 19.2 percent, and 20 percent, respectively.²⁴ At the secondary level, the figures were 74.6 percent, 18.2 percent, and 7.2 percent, respectively.²⁵

Structure of the Education System

The Israeli education system includes both formal and informal educational frameworks.

- The formal education system includes five levels: pre-primary, primary, secondary (lower and upper), post-secondary, and higher education (see Exhibits 1 and 2).
- The informal education system includes social and youth activities and adult education.

Pre-primary education in Israel consists of a network of preschools and kindergartens. In 1999, it involved 354,000 children ranging from the age of two to six attending municipal, public, and private kindergartens and day care institutes.²⁶ Of the total, 270,000 were enrolled in public kindergartens.²⁷ Compulsory education starts at the age of five, but the system is gradually moving toward the age of four. To facilitate this, in the year 2000 the government subsidized free education for 56,000 students from disadvantaged families. In 2001 the number exceeded 78,000.²⁸

A massive school reform was initiated in 1968, restructuring the system from an eight-year primary school and a four-year secondary school to a new arrangement with six primary grades, three lower-secondary grades, and three higher-secondary grades. This reform has been implemented mainly in the formal education system. In the year 2000, about 75 percent of the students in grades 7 to 9 were studying in the lower-secondary school, while the remaining 25 percent were still following the old structure.²⁹ The reform also included the extension of the compulsory education law from grade 8 to grade 10, bringing the total period of free and compulsory education to 11 years (from kindergarten to the end of the 10th grade). This latter change took effect in 1978.

Academic institutions of higher education include: universities, academic colleges, and teacher education colleges, which offered academic programs to 250,000 students in 1999-2000.³⁰ About half of those students enrolled in higher education institutions attended universities.

Exhibit 1: Structure of the Israeli Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education System 2000-2001

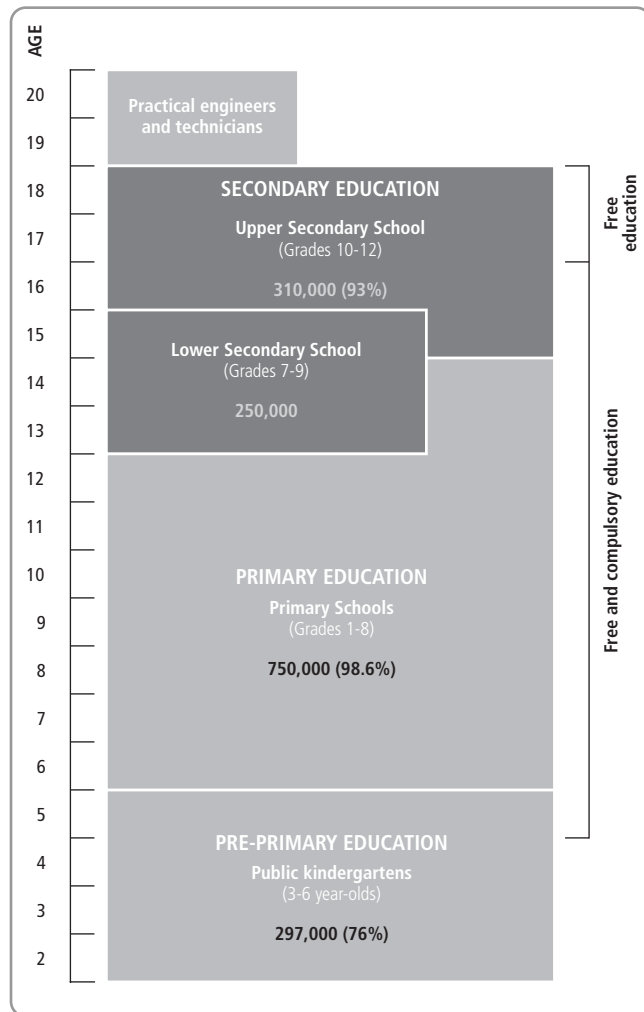
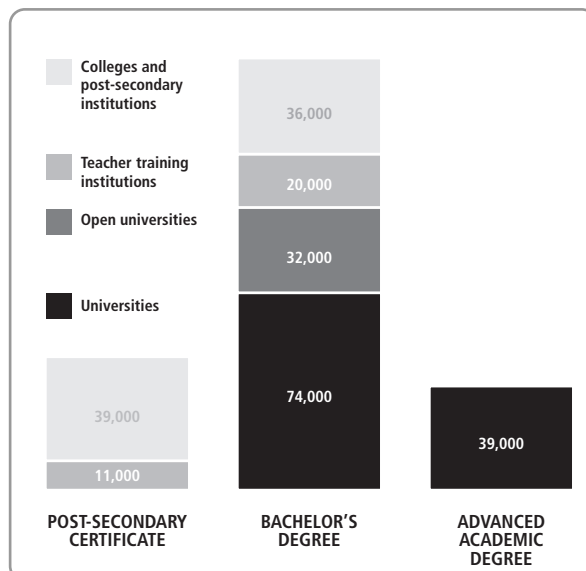


Exhibit 2: Structure of the Post-secondary and Higher Education System 1999-2000



Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force (1997-98)

In 1997-98, there were 102,468 teachers in primary and post-primary education: 53,936 in primary schools, 19,523 in lower-secondary school, and 35,651 in upper-secondary schools.³¹ In the Hebrew-speaking sector of the educational system, there were 86,270 teachers of whom 80.5 percent were women.³² In the Arabic-speaking sector, there were 16,186 teachers of whom 8,556 (52.8%) were women. The percentage of women compared to men decreases as the level of education increases from primary to secondary education. The average age of teachers was 41.2 in the Hebrew-speaking sector and 36.1 in the Arabic-speaking sector.³³

Teacher Education

Pre-service education takes place in two types of higher education institutions: teacher education colleges and universities. The teacher colleges train teachers to teach from kindergarten to the ninth grade (inclusive) and universities train teacher for lower-secondary and upper-secondary education. Teacher colleges provide their student-teachers with a four-year integrated program (combining subject area studies with pedagogical studies) leading towards a B.Ed. degree. Universities train subject-area student-teachers who have received a B.A. degree in their discipline and complete an additional two-year program of pedagogical training. Certification is granted upon completion of these pre-service programs and a teacher's license is given after an induction year in teaching.

Teacher In-service Education

An auxiliary unit in the Ministry of Education is in charge of in-service training and guidance. There are pedagogical centers and teacher centers at the regional and national level that provide a variety of in-service training programs. Universities offer some in-service programs as well. Teachers are encouraged to participate in in-service training and receive bonuses towards an increase in their salaries based on such participation.

In the last decade, considerable professional development has been carried out within the schools. For a short period of time such within-school professional development was compulsory, but now it is a matter of school choice. School

autonomy often leads to an extension for professional development within the school.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Hebrew and Arabic, two Semitic languages with alphabetic writing systems based on root-morphology, employ consonants with vowel diacritics. In both languages, children learn to read by relying on explicit marking of both consonants and vowels and gradually the vowel marking is reduced, since meaning associated with the written word can be partially derived from the consistent morphological rules. Thus, by fourth grade, most children can read without vowel diacritics (except for unusual or borrowed words, which still require diacritic marking). Speakers of Arabic face some difficulty due to the pronounced diglossia in this language: first graders come to school having mastered the local dialect and have to acquire the written (literate) Arabic version, while learning to read. It is therefore important that speakers of Arabic master both their spoken dialect and the literary dialect common to all speakers of Arabic. The reading policy and the recommended approach presented by the Ministry of Education applies to both languages, Hebrew and Arabic, when acquired as first, native languages.

Reading Policy

The Reading Curriculum in Israel is part of the Language Education Curriculum in the mother tongue, either Hebrew or Arabic. In March 2000, the Director General of the Ministry of Education published basic guidelines for curriculum implementation in the school system in Israel, placing special emphasis on the development of "language and literacy skills which will enable every student to use these skills in spoken interaction as well as in reading and writing, in order to derive meaning, interpretation and critical thinking in all subject areas".³⁴ The guidelines present the teaching of the mother tongue, Hebrew and Arabic, as a core program within the basic curriculum, to be studied from grades 1 through 6 of the elementary school.

Language proficiency and literacy are perceived as the multi-lingual accumulative ability gained by the student throughout his or her education while learning the mother tongue, English

as a foreign language, and Hebrew or Arabic as the second language.

During the nineties, reading policy in Israel was focused on the teaching of *language as a whole* and much effort was invested in developing a variety of teaching methods compatible with this approach. *Literacy* was defined as “an individual’s ability to use the written language of his or her culture, in a variety of functions.” The development of competence in literacy was viewed as a result of the learner interacting with a variety of text types, while promoting the skills to read, understand, interpret, criticize, and evaluate, as well as produce ideas in writing. According to this premise, the process of reading and writing in primary school goes beyond the technical skill and stretches across the whole curriculum of the six years.

The Ministry of Education invested effort and funding in teacher training and in the development of a variety of literacy projects in order to promote this approach to reading instruction. However, in the last three years, the educational system in Israel has been torn by an intensive public debate concerning the most effective approach to teaching reading. This debate raised the conflict between the proponents of the “whole language” approach, mostly representing the Ministry of Education, and the proponents of the analytic-phonetic approach, mostly representing the academic community and researchers in the field of reading acquisition. The public debate resulted in a National Committee, appointed in October 2000, to examine and reevaluate the teaching of reading in Israel and present its findings and recommendations to the Israeli Parliament and the Ministry of Education.

The report of the National Committee headed by Prof. Rina Shapira was released in the summer of 2001 with the following recommendations.

- A literacy-rich environment is needed in order to encourage and promote reading and writing in all grades of primary school. All reading methods employed to teach reading in school should comprise the following elements: decoding ability, accuracy in word identification, reading fluency, the use of diacritics, language development, and reading comprehension. All teaching methods used in the school system should be accompanied by an objective assessment program.

Schools and educational practitioners are encouraged to develop their own reading methods, but they all need to include the above elements of reading instruction. Furthermore, schools need to develop their libraries and ensure access to a wide variety of literature, in order to ensure that all children are exposed not only to didactic texts but also to literary texts. Special funding and support are to be provided to various populations at risk, such as speakers of Arabic, new immigrants, low socio-economic groups and special education.

- Evaluation instruments need to be developed in order to serve assessment within the school system and at the national level. An ongoing evaluation process needs to be set up in order to provide the educational system with up-to-date, continuous information that will enable schools to reevaluate their work and the Ministry to develop its policy. This process should be open, transparent, and available to the public. Such an approach will lead to a general improvement of the school system.
- Funding and resources need to be made available for the development of materials, training programs, evaluation processes, etc., in order to implement the recommendations presented by the committee.

In August 2001, a committee established to recommend principles for the promotion of the written and spoken language in kindergarten, in preparation for reading and writing, published its recommendations. The underlying premise of this report is the following: “The acquisition of reading is not an easy and natural development of exposure to a literacy environment, and requires the mediation of parents and educators”. Reading is presented as one aspect of literacy, the latter being a more global term related to language use.

The following recommendations were made by the committee for kindergarten literacy.

- A literacy basis for the acquisition of reading and writing needs to be developed starting from kindergarten.

- The literacy basis will be developed within the typical kindergarten activities that ensure adaptation to the needs of the individual child.
- The kindergarten teacher will be free to develop his or her own materials and method of working as long as they adhere to the basic recommendations.
- A balanced approach to reading in kindergarten should include the following: knowledge of the letters of the alphabet, phonological awareness, morphological and syntactic awareness, vocabulary knowledge, decoding written words, familiarity with textual features and connectives, and exposure to text varieties.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

At the end of the kindergarten year and prior to the beginning of the first grade, a child should have knowledge of the following:

- Familiarity with the letters of the alphabet
- Phonemic awareness
- Familiarity with the features of Semitic scripts (in the child's first language)
- Exposure to children's literature and expository type texts
- Knowledge of the basic structure of narratives.

A number of recommendations aim to facilitate implementation:

- the promotion of language and literacy in general activities in the kindergarten such as drawing, music, and drama
- close cooperation with the parents through a flow of information
- research and review of various existing methods of preparing kindergarten children for reading and writing
- training and professional development.

Based on the recommendations of the two national committees, the Director General of the Ministry of Education sent a letter with implementation guidelines to all school principals throughout the country in October 2001. In the opening paragraph, the letter points to the following: "In order to avoid any misunderstanding, it should be clear that any prior preference for teaching reading according to the whole language approach is hereby canceled". Instead, the new recommendations presented by the Shapira committee must be implemented by all schools, kindergartens and all new teaching programs. Some of the practical guidelines stated in the letter are as follows:

- Decoding – knowledge of the letters, the grapheme-phoneme correspondences, recognition of syllables and words, and effective and automatic decoding – is a prerequisite of reading comprehension
- Students should read with diacritics and understand how they represent the vowels in Hebrew (or Arabic)
- Students should display accuracy in word recognition without relying on guessing, and in reading of whole sentences with understanding
- Writing development, including correct spelling, should be part of the program
- Language development is necessary while learning to read: this includes the expansion of the vocabulary stock, understanding how morphology works and how spelling represents this morphology
- A literacy environment should encourage students to read and write through all elementary grades
- Every school should have a rich library with literary works as well as encyclopedic and reference materials
- The weaker students who are at risk as a result of coming from a background with less literacy, should receive direct instruction in all the above skills to strengthen their overall literacy.

The letter also specifies a time table for teaching reading. By the end of the kindergarten (the obligatory preschool year) students will exhibit phonological awareness, familiarity with the letters of the alphabet, and will be able to write phonetically new words. At the same time, they will familiarize themselves with books and basic story structure. By spring of the first grade and by the end of the grade at the very latest, all first graders will be able to decode effectively while using diacritics and will read with fluency. A special committee, including academic experts and ministry personnel, will be appointed to follow the implementation of the recommendations. Teachers will continue to be regarded as the key factors in the successful teaching of reading.

Revising the Reading Curriculum

A new language curriculum based on the recommendations, research findings and experience in the field is being designed at the moment by a group of experts.

The curriculum refers to the teaching of the mother tongue, with reading viewed as an integral part of this curriculum. Since the new curriculum and the standards are still in the process of being finalized by national committees, we will present here some of the main elements that underlie the new curriculum (to be published by the end of 2002).

Standards will be defined in the new curriculum, according to expected abilities in the areas of oral production, reading, writing, and listening, and acquired language and meta-linguistic knowledge. The definition of reading is to focus on "reading as a communication process between the reader and the text during which the reader creates meaning relying on his or her linguistic, textual, and pragmatic knowledge and prior experience."

The new curriculum and the specification of expected standards will relate to the following reading areas:

- reading a variety of text types (different genres) from different subject areas, with the aim of gaining knowledge;
 - reading literature from different periods and developing emotional and appreciative attitudes towards the material;
 - reading historical, biblical, and other heritage texts.
- For each of the above areas standards will be defined for second, fourth and sixth grades of the elementary school with regard to the following abilities:
- Make use of text types
 - Read accurately and fluently
 - Understand text and make inferences
 - Evaluate critically
 - Employ reading strategies compatible with the text and the aim of reading.
- The emphasis will be on differential needs and progress rates among students, which require the development of awareness, measurements, and ways to cater for the individual.

Materials for Reading Instruction

According to the official educational policy in Israel, a variety of teaching materials can be used in the school system, and new initiatives for developing teaching materials are encouraged, as long as they adhere to the principles specified in the general policy. The materials in use today reflect the principles promoted during the nineties. New materials will be developed as a result of recommendations made by the committees described above and the principles to be presented in the new curriculum and standards.

Instructional Time

Since reading is viewed as part of the whole language curriculum, special information about reading time relates to reading books and magazines of individual choice within the school day. The survey carried out by the Ministry of Education in 1998 and published in 2000 indicated that 92 percent of the surveyed schools reported that students chose reading material for at least one hour a week.³⁵ Most schools had reading corners or shelves with a variety of books and magazines, and 10-15 minutes a day were devoted to silent, individual reading. Such activities were more common in the lower grades and gradually

decreased in the higher grades. Non-religious schools devoted more time to “free reading” than religious schools.

The reading survey also investigated the time allotted to various reading activities across the curriculum. These activities included the following: reading comprehension, reading strategies, writing activities, and reflective writing and language skills. Most schools had reading comprehension activities 4 to 5 times a week and language skills about 3 times a week. The other activities were used fewer than 3 times a week. About 10 hours per week were devoted to reading and literature out of a total of about 26 hours.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

The average class size in the Israeli school system is 27 students, yet many classes are much larger, ranging between 33 to 36 students.³⁶ The student population is varied in background and scholastic ability and instruction is a combination of teacher-led, group, and individual activities.

Reading instruction in the first grade used to be the same for all students in the same class, but in the last decade there has been an increasing awareness of the fact that students require individual treatment in this area. Most classes now try to accommodate the pace and methods of work to individual needs.

Reading Specialists

At the primary level, classroom teachers generally teach all subject areas including reading. Teachers receive in-service training in reading methods, approaches to the teaching of reading, and changes that take place in the curriculum or the policy of the ministry. Some schools have a smaller group of teachers that plan activities and teaching method for literacy purposes.

Reading specialists, specially trained and authorized for the purpose, are involved mainly in diagnosing reading difficulties.

Second Language Reading Instruction

Israel is a country of immigration and therefore Hebrew as a second language plays an important role in the educational system. Furthermore, Hebrew is also taught as a second language in Arab schools, starting from third grade.

The teaching of Hebrew to new immigrants is envisaged as having three main phases. Phase one

focuses on a basic beginners’ level in which newcomers tend to have lessons in Hebrew as a second language for a period of several weeks to several months. Phase two focuses on bridging between the knowledge of the student in Hebrew and the need to participate in the regular school program in the various subject areas. Phase three focuses on specialization and, where possible, working with an individual tutor.

Reading Disabilities

Considerable attention has been directed in the last two decades to the identification and diagnosis of students with reading disabilities. Tests and diagnostic reading instruments have been developed by reading experts and the “Nitzan,” a special association of psychologists that has been authorized to train reading specialists in diagnosis. In 1997, a committee headed by Oren Lam presented the Minister of Education with special recommendations for enforcing the diagnostic process and for finding suitable treatment and intervention programs.

Literacy Programs



The Ministry of Education encourages individual initiatives in developing literacy programs and allows schools to make their own choices within the school budget. As a result, there are many institutions, such as teacher training colleges, that have developed special reading and literacy centers, which produced a variety of programs. In addition, private groups and individuals have developed educational intervention programs focused on literacy. In recent years, some of these programs involve the use of advanced technology, computers, and the Internet.

Assessment



In general, assessment practices and policies are developed by the schools for their internal purposes. Records of reading performance and development are an integral part of the teaching process, and teachers develop their own techniques and instruments. The Ministry has provided schools with samples of tests and batteries of items from which teachers and schools can choose or use as models.

The objective specified by the ministry is for teachers to develop a variety of alternative methods of assessment to be used for diagnostic purposes and for the improvement of the teaching and learning process.

In addition to the internal evaluation process within the school, the testing and evaluation department of the Ministry of Education developed an evaluation process based on school achievements to provide schools with reliable information that can help them in their policy and school-based curriculum development. The evaluation process is known as “meitzav” – the measurement of school efficacy and school growth. The results are presented to schools so that they can develop their own goals and standards.

National Assessment

In 1991, the first national assessment process was carried out in Israel, with the aim of collecting data on achievements in primary and in lower-secondary schools. Among the subjects selected for testing, mother tongue (Hebrew and Arabic) proficiency held a central place. The assessment was carried out in fourth and eighth grades. Assessment instruments were developed and piloted by a group of experts in the various fields and in testing and evaluation techniques. The objective was to provide the educational system with reliable information about student achievement and the implementation of the curriculum. A 10-percent student sample represented the various populations in Israel and their geographical distribution. Reading assessment included the following: comprehension of texts of different genres, writing ability (three types of tasks: informational, argumentative, and narrative), and language structure (syntax and register). The questions included both open-ended and multiple-choice item formats.

The national assessment was repeated in 1996, and again in 2001. The results from the last assessment have not yet been made available.

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- 30 Sprinzak, D. et al. *Ministry of Education Facts and Figures*. Section D. Development of education: Facts and figures.
- 31 Central Bureau of Statistics. *Statistical abstract of Israel 2001: No. 52*. Table 8.27. Teachers in primary and post-primary education by level of education, sex, age, and employment characteristics.
- 32 Central Bureau of Statistics. *Statistical abstract of Israel 2001: No. 52*. Table 8.27. Teachers in primary and post-primary education by level of education, sex, age, and employment characteristics.
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Language and Literacy



Italy's literary history traces directly back to the 12th century and ancient Latin culture. For centuries, books were available in convents, universities, and the libraries of noble homes. The introduction of the printing press in the 15th century further promoted the circulation of books, although still on a relatively limited scale.

The present public library system comprises state and municipal libraries. The Central Institute for the Union Catalog of Italian Libraries and for Bibliographic Information (*ICCU – Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico delle Biblioteche Italiane*), set up by the Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage in 1975, has created a network of 800 State, Regional, and University libraries. The network, known as the National Library Service (*SBN – Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale*), aims to improve knowledge about bibliographic collections, to simplify access for users and to ensure that services of the same level are developed throughout the national territory. In 1999, there were 2,155 public libraries, reporting a total of 274,425,000 visits within the year.¹

There are 126 different daily newspaper titles in the country; six of the main national papers with the highest circulation include a financial section.² National papers with very high circulation also include 12 political and 4 sports papers. The remaining dailies are local papers with more limited circulation. In 1998, the 126 daily newspapers had a circulation of 104 newspapers per 1,000 inhabitants.³

Italian, the official language of the country, is used in administrative and legal contexts, and as the language of instruction in schools. Twelve other languages are also spoken by minority groups

of century-old settlements, corresponding to 5.7 percent of the total population. Only four of these – French, German, Latin, and Slovenian – enjoy juridical recognition, and are thus used in public life, education, and administration, in bilingual and sometimes trilingual contexts. Minority groups of recent immigration, mainly from North African, Eastern European, and Asian countries, use their mother tongues in private contexts, although recently schools have made provision for their rapid integration into the Italian context.

Education System



Governance and Organization

Over the past few years, the Italian education system has been undergoing a structural reform. In 1997, a reform of the Public Administration initiated a process of decentralization aimed at simplifying administrative procedures. This shifted power from the central to the peripheral authorities – the Regions and the Municipalities – and to the schools. The local authorities are responsible for vocational education, programming the school network on the basis of provincial plans, funding vocational schools, and establishing and amalgamating schools. The schools have autonomy in teaching, administration, research activities, experimentation, and development. The Ministry of Education is responsible for defining criteria and parameters for the organization of the school system and its evaluation, for allocating financial resources, and for assigning staff to schools. In particular, the Ministry establishes the general objectives of the educational process, specific learning objectives, the minimum subjects of the national curriculum

Country Profile: Italy

Geographical Location and Size

Italy is a peninsula located in the southern part of Europe, dividing the Mediterranean Sea into smaller seas – Adriatic, Tirrenian, Ionic, and Ligurian. Its land area measures 301,338 square kilometers, extending from north to south for a maximum length of 1,200 kilometers. The coastline of Italy measures 7,375 kilometers, which includes the two major islands of Sicily (1,484 kilometers) and Sardinia (1,731 kilometers), besides a number of minor islands in its archipelagos. The geography of the country has quite diverse features. The mountain masses cover nearly one-third of the total territory, and the widespread hill masses by far exceed the plains and lowlands. Two mountain chains cross the national territory, the Apennines along its length from North to South and the Alps along its width in the North. The Alps contain Mont Blanc (4,810 meters above sea level), the highest mountain peak in Italy and Europe. Two major volcanoes, still active, rise in southern Italy, Mt. Vesuvius close to Naples and Mt. Etna in Sicily. A number of lakes, mainly located in the north, are of volcanic origin and contribute to the variety of the territory and the fertility of the soil.

Population and Health Statistics

Owing to its geographic position, as early as the Bronze Age the peninsula became a center of attraction for successive waves of peoples from northern and western Eurasia and from Africa, who integrated with the indigenous populations – the Etruscans and other Italic peoples – through a long and often dramatic conflictual process. The progressive Latinization of the peninsula, which started in the Republican period of ancient Rome and spread steadily over the European continent up to the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century AD, promoted the economic and cultural encounter of otherwise deeply diverse human groups, tribes, and populations. The process of encounter continued throughout the centuries, including the experience of the “*liberi comuni*” – the medieval free Municipalities – and the highly sophisticated and individualistic principalities of the Renaissance times, but failed to create internal integration and national cohesion, so that Italy attained unification only centuries after the main European nation states had reached political unity and national identity. After being under the foreign rule of the Spanish, the French, and the Austrians as well as under the temporal rule of the Church of Rome, Italy became



united in 1861, as the result of independence wars known as the *Risorgimento* (the Resurgence) and the subsequent incorporation of smaller states into one independent country.

Despite its heterogeneous origins, the present Italian population is fairly homogeneous. In December 2000, the overall population was 57,844,017⁴ with a population density of approximately 196 inhabitants per square kilometer, with greater densities in the highly industrialized Northwest and in major cities.

The present population is aging. The aging ratio is 122.2⁵ and the life expectancy at birth increased from 67.2 for males and 72.3 for females in 1961 to 75.8 for males and 82.0 for females in 1999.⁶ The infant mortality rate in 1997 was 5.6 per 1,000 live births.⁷ In January 2000, immigrants with regular permits of stay represented 2.2 percent of the total population.⁸ The majority of the population belongs to the Roman Catholic Church.

Political System

Italy is a parliamentary democracy based on the 1948 written Constitution, worked out by a Constituent Assembly after the end of World War II. It consists of three independent branches: the legislative, executive, and judiciary. The President of the Republic is elected by a college comprising both members of Parliament and representatives from all the Italian regions. The legislative branch consists of a bicameral Parliament – the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The executive branch is represented by the Government, which comprises the Council of Ministers and the President of the Council of Ministers. The judiciary branch comprises a series of Courts – the Constitutional Court, the Superior Council of the Judiciary, the Court of Cassation – and a body of magistrates. The Constitution stresses the principle that the judiciary must be independent of the legislature and the executive, and appoints the Constitutional Court to uphold and watch over its independence. In 1993, a referendum passed to replace the representational system in the political and administrative elections with a majority system. That change represents the first stage in a reform process, begun in the early 1990s, aiming at a radical structural change of the political institutions in the country.

Economy and Employment

The main industries in Italy include agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and tourism. In trade, the main exports of commodities are to EU countries, the United States, eastern European countries, and Asian countries. The sectors include chemical products, refined petroleum products, high fashion, leather, wood products, textiles, food products, products from the automobile industry, and high technology. The main sources for employment in Italy are the primary industry sectors – especially manufacturing and construction – as well as the sector of services – to businesses, construction, and trade – and to households. In 2000, the proportion of males⁹ in the workforce was 61.5 percent, and the proportion of females was 38.5 percent. In 1999, the GNP per capita was US\$ 20,170 (US\$ 22,000 PPP Intl.).¹⁰

and their annual instructional hours, the total annual timetable, the standards for service quality, and the general criteria for student assessment.

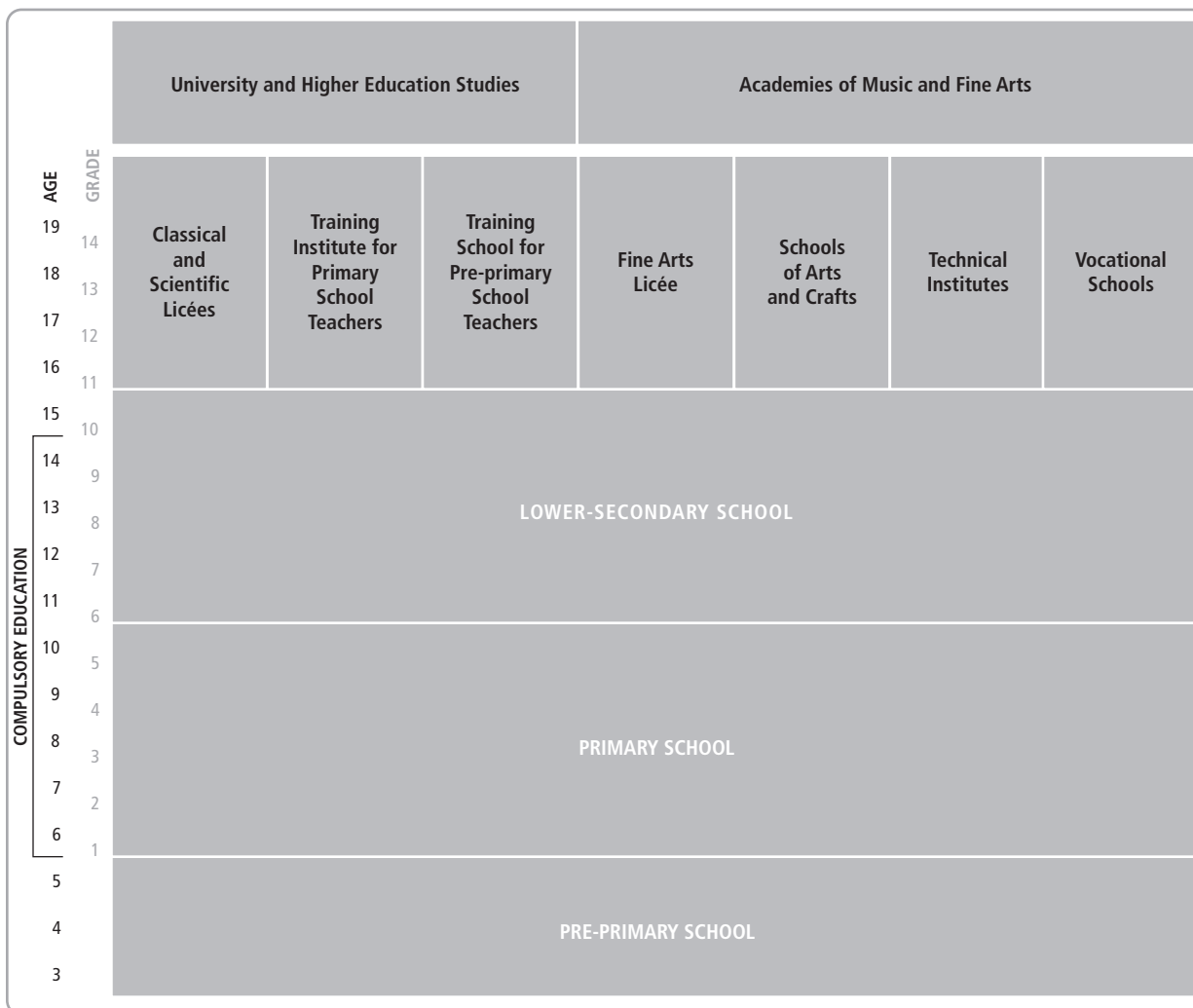
In 1996, Italy's total public expenditure on education amounted to 4.9 percent of its total GNP.¹¹ In the same year, the current expenditure per pupil in pre-primary and primary education was 19 percent of GNP per capita, whereas the current expenditure per student in secondary education was 29 percent of GNP per capita.¹² Compulsory education – currently limited to 9 years but foreseen to rise to 12 years when the reform is fully implemented – is free for everybody. Also, some additional services are free for low-income families, including textbooks, transport, canteen services, and social and health assistance. In upper secondary-education, discounts on the costs of public transport, meals and books are available to very low-income students, depending on their school performance.

Structure of the Education System

In 2001, the newly elected Government designed a plan to reorganize school levels. The reform process has focused specially on restructuring the “school cycles”, i.e., the main school levels. The following describes the current structure of the Italian education system, mentioning the areas most likely to be modified when the new education order is approved of by Parliament.

As shown in Exhibit 1, the Italian education system consists of four main levels: pre-primary (for children 3 to 6 years of age), compulsory, upper secondary, and higher education. Grades 1 through 9 are compulsory, including five years of elementary school, three years of lower-secondary school, and the first year of upper-secondary school. Upper-secondary school consists of four main groups: the *licées*, including the classical, scientific and pedagogical *licées*; art education institutes; technical institutes; and vocational schools.

Exhibit 1: Structure of the Italian Educational System 2001/02



The eight-year basic cycle – 5 years of elementary school and 3 years of middle school – will include national assessment of students at the end of every school year, with class repetition unless national standards are reached. School leaving examinations at the end of the second cycle will be implemented by an examination board consisting of the class teachers and one external member appointed by the Ministry of Education as the chair to the board.

Pre-primary Education

Pre-primary school – *Scuola dell’Infanzia* – is the only type of pre-primary educational institution. Although not compulsory, it represents the first level of the Italian schooling system. In the 1999-2000 school year, the school enrollment rate in state and non-state pre-primary schools was 98.9.¹³ For children 3 to 6 years of age, pre-primary school lasts

three years. Varying from 4 to 8 hours daily, its aim is to enhance children’s learning potential, creativity, and independence, and to assure equal educational opportunities. The curriculum in these schools integrates educational aims (identity, autonomy, and competence) with developmental dimensions and symbolic-cultural systems. Pre-school education includes body and movement; speech and words; space, order, and measure; things, time, and nature; messages, forms, and media; and self and others. Teachers can choose their teaching methods, provided they are based on the use of games, exploration and research, as well as social life. Some schools, mostly private, are based on established methods, such as those of Montessori and Agazzi. Pupils’ development is assessed, but no official records are given to the families.

Primary Education

For children 6 to 11 years of age, primary education is compulsory. There are a variety of institutions and establishments, differing by the timetable adopted or by school structure. There are schools adopting modules of 27 or 30 hours per week, or full time modules of 40 hours per week; and there are establishments comprising pre-primary, primary, and lower-secondary – *istituti comprensivi* – that are schools entrusted to one school manager – the *Dirigente scolastico*. According to the module structure adopted, primary education has two organizations: schools with three teachers for 2 classes or four teachers for 3 classes, and schools with two teachers for 1 class in the full modules of 40 hours per week.

School attendance rate in state and non-state schools is practically 100 percent in both elementary and lower-secondary schools.¹⁴ In the first two years of primary education – first cycle – teaching is pre-disciplinary. In the second cycle – grades 3 through 5, differentiation starts among the following subjects: Italian, foreign language, mathematics, sciences, history, geography, social studies, education to art, sound and music, physical education, and religion (this subject may be substituted upon parents' request). For each of these subjects, the curriculum indicate the content goals, teaching methods and possible links between various subject areas. No guidelines are given, however, on lesson times for the individual subjects.

Lower-secondary Education

The National Curricula for lower-secondary education, meant for pupils from 11 to 14 years of age, states the following general aims:

- Educate young people to become citizens for life according to the principles of the Constitution, and
- Promote guidance to help young people choose their careers.

The curriculum also sets out the core subjects: Italian; history and civic education; and geography; foreign languages; mathematics, physics, and natural sciences; technical education; art; music; physical education; and religion (this subject may be substituted upon parents' request). The National

Curriculum is implemented by individual schools through a program established at the beginning of the school year by each Class Council. The program is approved by the Teachers' Assembly, who periodically review it for educational and organizational issues. The lower-secondary school leaving examination includes three written tests – mathematics, Italian, and a foreign language – and an interdisciplinary interview on all the curriculum subjects. The result is recorded on the lower-secondary school leaving certificate.

Upper-secondary Education

Young people may enter upper-secondary education after obtaining the lower-secondary leaving examination certificate. Compulsory education ends after the first year of upper-secondary school. Upper-secondary education is broken down into main groups: classical, art, technical, and vocational. The classical group includes Classical, Scientific, and Pedagogical *licées*, whereas the art group includes Art *licées*, the Schools for Applied Arts and for Music. The technical group comprises Technical Schools for various sectors, including commerce, mechanical industry, electronics, chemistry, graphic design, surveying, agriculture, nautical, tourism, and social studies. The vocational group provides for specialization in agriculture, industry, and crafts, and for specialization in the service sector. Whereas most upper-secondary institutes are divided into a first two-year course, attended by students 14 to 16 years of age, and a three-year course, attended by students 17 to 19 years of age, the curricula of vocational school courses include a three-year qualification cycle and a subsequent two-year post-qualification cycle.

Types of Schools

A law was issued in March 2000 concerning equality between public and private education, especially in terms of financial support to non-state schools. The majority of Italian schools are state-run, and the majority of non-state schools are Catholic. The highest percentage of pupils attending non-state schools is found in nursery (0 to 3 years of age) and pre-primary schools (up to 6 years of age). Both types of schools must comply with the regulations, standards, and curricula described above. schools specifically for the deaf and the blind were established in 1923, and they are still the essential core of special education. In

1992, a law provided assistance and social integration for the disabled, also granting the right to education in ordinary classes at every level. Programs were introduced with health, social, cultural, and welfare services, and with the local authorities and specialized pedagogical centers to offer assistance to pupils with physical and sensory handicaps. Support teachers with special training are assigned to the individual schools. They are full members of the staff who take part in the school program and work alongside the class teachers in classes with handicapped children.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

Upon the Ministry of Education's advice, the Regional Educational Authorities determine the dates of the beginning and the end of the school year, but each school is responsible for adapting the school calendar to the requirements of its educational planning. Educational activities must take place between September 1st and June 30th, and include 210 days of instruction. Each day provides an average of 5 to 7 hours of instruction, and each week includes five or six school-days, depending on the individual schools.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Since the decentralization process in the 1990s, the Provincial Directorates of Education have been responsible for hiring school personnel and appointing teachers for the pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools. Female teachers represent 93.3 percent of the total teaching force in primary schools. This percentage decreases to 70.6 at the lower-secondary school level, and 56.1% at the higher secondary school level. The average age of female and male teachers at the primary level is 42.9, increasing to 48.2 at the lower-secondary level. The average age of upper-secondary school teachers is 45.5.¹⁵ From a survey carried out in 1999, 35.4 percent of primary school teachers had a university degree, in addition to the training course diploma required to be a primary school teacher.

Teacher Education

Prior to 1990, pre-primary and primary teachers qualified by simply attending upper-secondary

courses in Teacher Training Schools and Teacher Training Institutes, respectively. A law issued in November 1990 established that teaching in pre-primary and primary schools required a university degree in primary education sciences, but it was not implemented until 1995. The degree course lasts four years and consists of a common two-year course and two branches, one for pre-primary school and one for primary school. Admission to the degree courses is obtained through an entrance examination. Specific activities and apprenticeships are offered to specialize in special education for the school integration of handicapped pupils.

Secondary-school teachers obtain their qualification in two-year Specialization Schools run by the Universities. To enroll in the Specialization Schools, a degree diploma is required. The curricula, courses of study, and specialization of upper-secondary school teachers are provided by the degree courses offered by the universities.

Teacher In-service Education

Since in-service education is considered to be a right, the school administration considers it a duty to provide a comprehensive system of high quality educational opportunities. A good proportion of funds are allotted to support updating activities directly in the schools, where teachers' assemblies decide their own in-service education plans. The plans may include collaborations with the Regional Institutes for Educational Research, the Universities, professional associations, public and private agencies, or entities appropriately credited.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction

Reading Policy



The 1985 National Curriculum for primary education states that the main aim of elementary school is to "promote initial cultural literacy, which is attained through the acquisition of all the fundamental types of language, in motivating situations and in different contexts of experience, and the basic acquisition of the concepts, abilities and techniques necessary to understand the natural, artificial and human world". Reading ability is the main component of cultural literacy, and is meant to be closely integrated with the other language skills and different types of language. Reading and interpreting images,

music, and movement – considered as languages to which children are particularly accustomed – may also help children in learning more complex aspects of language and mathematics.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

The concept of reading ability and the specifications for the reading curriculum in primary school are contained in the National Curriculum for Primary Education. They are presented either in conjunction with other language skills, or referred to in the General Preamble and in the sections devoted to specific objectives and methodological approaches. This apparently unsystematic presentation reflects the underlying concepts that reading must always be related to – and learned and taught with – the other language skills, and that the various disciplinary areas – science, mathematics, the arts – all need and make use of language and reading.

Formal reading instruction starts at age 6, at the beginning of primary school, although children may have started reading informally at home or even in private pre-primary schools. The National Curriculum states the general goals for language skills, and then indicates more specific goals, distinguishing between two phases – the skills to be learned in the first year of schooling and those to be developed through the whole course of the primary school. The following reports the goals for literacy acquisition and competence. Some goals directly refer to reading, others focus on writing, which is however always closely connected to the reading skill.

- Primary school must pursue the goal of having children achieve competence in written language (reading and writing) – there are mental activities that need this ability and are greatly advantaged by its use.
- Children must be able to read, that is, to understand the meaning of written texts for different purposes; they must be able to look for and draw information from written texts, follow a description, a report, a story and be able to catch its main point; they must be able to appreciate the effective and expressive use of language.
- Children must be able to write, that is communicate with different interlocutors, record and

organize data and instructions, convey impressions and evaluations, and produce texts of descriptive, narrative, and argumentative types. All these abilities converge on the ability to write texts – paraphrases, scripts, adaptations for different contexts, re-ordering of topics – all activities allowing the children to express the originality and imagination that are an integral part of rationality.

Within the aims just stated, care must be taken that all children attain the following objectives:

- Read and understand the essential meaning and different communicative functions of texts in everyday use, at least in relation to the most common needs and situations
- Read simple texts of literary type, capable of activating interpretative processes
- Write simple texts of pragmatic-communicative type for personal use (take down notes, make entries) or for keeping contacts with others
- Write simple texts that provide an initial personal elaboration.

The National Curriculum avoids a rigid internal distinction of goals per school grade since, it explains, it is the teachers' task to choose specific goals on the basis of their pupils' need. The Curriculum, however, provides indications and guidelines with respect to: a) skills to activate in the first year and b) skills to develop through the whole course of the primary school.

Skills to activate in grade 1 are:

- Read and write at least at the instrumental level
- Read short and simple texts fluently and express one's own ideas in writing, respecting the basic orthographic conventions.

Skills to develop through the whole course of primary school are:

- Be able to understand and repeat what the child has heard, or read, or said

- Read silently texts of various types, appropriately chosen and graded, and give evidence that their content has been understood, to a degree that gradually approaches the communicative intention of the text
- Acquire a basic vocabulary and gradually increase it, using the opportunities offered by the other disciplines
- Pay attention to the correspondence between Italian words and dialect words, in order to avoid unconscious interference between the two language systems.

In particular, starting from grade 3, the following abilities should be developed:

- Read aloud known and unknown texts giving evidence, through the appropriate use of pauses and intonation, of understanding their meaning
- Read simple literary texts, suitable for activating in the child elementary processes of interpretation and developing his/her aesthetic sense
- Reflect on the meaning of words and on their relations (of similarity and difference, of meaning gradation, of transition from the general to the specific and vice-versa, etc.)
- Determine the meaning of a simple unknown word, using the context in which it is set
- Perceive within a context some elementary commonalities between words, and gradually organize them in morphological schemes (flexion, modifications, etc.)
- Exploit the natural curiosity for words to reconstruct the story of words, especially as regards their change in meaning, also in the case of foreign words.

A section of the National Curriculum includes methodological indications for each component of language education that center on the following points.

- Motivate children to read. Since the child's first experience in reading is listening to adults

reading, that is listening to their oral "performance" of texts of various types (not only tales, poems, literary texts, but also short news from newspapers, letters, school documents etc),...by witnessing her/his dedication to reading, the teacher stimulates and increases the child's motivation to read... and accurately chooses the texts for the children, from the narrative and informational types, to children's monographic series and encyclopedias.

- Verify if and to what extent reading is a significant experience at the cognitive level – how the experience of a specific reading integrates with the organic whole of already possessed ideas – at the emotional level and at the level of behavior.
- Encourage children to read by fostering the habit of using the school library, stimulating their interest in out-of-school reading, asking them to point out books and periodicals they are particularly interested in, and giving them the time to devote to personal reading.
- Identify any lack of interest by children in reading as early as possible.

Materials for Reading Instruction

The editorial market providing primary education textbooks is highly specialized and competitive, so a great variety of reading books of excellent quality are available to teachers. There are two types of books – textbooks presenting the entire range of subjects, including reading, in an interdisciplinary way and thematically organized, and books approaching reading as a separate subject. Both types of books are graded in difficulty.

A supplement of visual aids and materials also are part of the instructional equipment of schools. These materials include information technology based materials. It is also part of a tradition in Italian elementary schools to create visual materials for reading with the children, and set up exhibitions at class and school levels for their shared use.

Instructional Time

The National Curriculum prescribes the total amount of instructional time as 27 hours of instruction per week, for a total amount of about 5,400 hours per year, in grades 1 and 2, and as 30 hours

of instruction per week, amounting to about 6,000 hours per year, in grades 3 through 5. At the parents' request, additional school activities may be organized in school, which may cause the timetable to exceed the 30 hours per week. Two organizational variants are offered in primary education: a) schools with classes based on a module design (*classi a modulo*) assigning three teachers to two classes or four teachers to three classes, with a weekly timetable of 27 hours in grades 1 and 2, and 30 hours in grades 3 through 5; and b) schools with full time classes (*classi a tempo pieno*) assigning two teachers to one class with a weekly timetable of 40 hours. Each school determines its organizational structure, in compliance with the general objectives of the national education system and with the requirements of the school: the number of pupils, including handicapped children, the number of classes, the weekly timetable, the foreign languages taught, special requirements from the families, socio-cultural and territorial characteristics, innovation activities, and experimentation.

Subjects are grouped in three related areas – the language education area (Italian language, foreign language), the logic-mathematical area (mathematics, science); and the anthropological area (history, geography, and social studies). Additional activities, named *educazioni*, are linked to the three areas: education to sound and music, education to movement, and education to vision and visual arts. One teacher is assigned to each area. The total weekly hours may vary from a minimum of two hours – for the sciences and the arts – to a maximum of 10 hours for language education. An average of 7 hours per week is assigned to the Italian language, amounting to 1,400 hours of instruction per year.¹⁶ It is not possible to estimate how much time is specifically devoted to reading instruction within Italian as a subject. Italian consists of reading and speech delivery, writing, listening, grammar, and text appreciation. There is special emphasis on reading and writing in grades 1 and 2, so children in these grades are therefore supposed to receive formal reading instruction for at least three hours per week. The proportion of time gradually decreases in grades 4 through 5. It must be noted, however, that teachers responsible for the other areas practice reading instruction as an indispensable component of their specific subjects.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Classes in primary schools usually range from 10 to 25 pupils, except for classes with handicapped children that by rule cannot exceed 20 pupils. The class model in the Italian system is the whole class, to which a number of teachers are assigned. Multiclassrooms do exist, but they are rare and limited to geographical areas with sparse population. Since the 1997 law granting school autonomy, and the ensuing greater flexibility in the administration and the management of schools, teachers have been allowed to organize groups of pupils from the same class or from different classes as well as from courses of different years into modules. In addition, subjects can be grouped by subject areas. Instead of indicating a rigid weekly timetable, specifying the hours to be devoted to each subject, the National Curriculum indicates minimum thresholds as a reference for the organization of the school time, and it is the teachers' responsibility to determine the subdivision of the individual subjects and the time allotted to each of them.

Second Language Reading Instruction

Immigration has been steadily increasing in Italy over the past ten years, and provisions have been made to help the immigrants' children integrate in school and the local context. Upon request to the local educational authorities, schools with immigrant children are authorized to increase the number of teaching hours and the number of specialized teachers to set up integrative courses of Italian language and culture. The main aim is to help children reach adequate levels of command of Italian to be fully integrated in the ordinary classes. A number of schools, especially in the big cities, have set up literacy projects for immigrant pupils. Specific "Literacy projects" also have been organized to promote acquisition of Italian and language shift, while preventing mother tongue loss by favoring maintenance of the language of origin in the pupils from immigrant families.

Reading Disabilities

Children with reading difficulties receive special attention from their class teachers. If they are diagnosed as having a serious reading disability, they are supported by special teachers, who operate in more than one class in the same school.

Dyslexic children also are treated in special units, depending either on hospital departments or on local health centers.

Literacy Programs



In the 1990s, national and international surveys showed, to the surprise of many observers and experts in education and the social sciences, unsatisfactory standards in reading competence and skills and, above all, a widespread lack of interest in reading. Several initiatives were taken by the educational authorities at the central as well as the local levels to promote reading among children and the young. In March 1995, the National Plan for the promotion of reading was set up by the Italian Ministry of Education. The National Plan framework stated that “reading should go beyond its status of language skill, overcome the specific boundaries of language education, and become, instead, a formative objective, aiming to provide all pupils, as future citizens, with the ability to master an autonomous and conscious relationship with their own cultural aspirations, as well as with the domain of information”. Since reading is “a continuous process encompassing a lifetime experience, education for reading is to be initiated as early as the primary school, especially in current times when media – television, telecommunications, informatics – seem to have exhausted every need for knowledge in children”. Education for reading is favored by the use of appropriately devised strategies, such as “involv[ing] children in the continuity of the narrative discourse...by establishing an interaction between what is read and the children’s families, social and imaginative experiences, and by choosing texts appropriate to their age and taste”.

The design of the *Plan* included a survey of already existing activities and projects on reading in schools, the promotion of pilot experimental projects to be monitored at the regional and provincial levels, and the generalization and dissemination of the pilot projects. Two types of projects were implemented: projects to train teachers to become reading specialists and facilitators; and projects to make children and young people acquire a reading habit for life. The initial pilot projects and the projects which ensued in the following years mostly were coordinated by specialized teachers who operated in close collaboration with external institutions

– public libraries, bookshops, editorial houses, newspaper companies, TV, and cinema studios. Some of the *Plan* projects were started by the direct initiative of the schools, others were promoted by the local educational authorities – regional and provincial – or by the *Regional Institutes for Educational Research*. To exemplify the typology of activities, between 1995 and 2000, in one province from southern Italy, about 63 *Circoli Didattici*, 48 lower-secondary schools and 3 comprehensive schools participated in Seminars for teachers and for students, set up exhibitions at the end of reading paths, and participated in public events connected with reading, screen-writing, and play staging.

One year later, the Provincial education authority of Padova, in northern Italy, launched a two-year project, aimed to promote newspaper reading and writing in the class. In addition, the Provincial education authority of Torino, also in northern Italy, has regularly been organizing activities and meetings to search for new ways of promoting reading, exploring the pedagogical, socio-cultural, psychological, and methodological foundations of reading, and to make an analysis of resources in order to monitor all the projects in the province.

As a follow-up to the *Plan*, in March 2000 the Ministry of Education issued a circular proposing the dissemination of children’s books and the improvement of reading among primary children. Schools and groups of schools established agreements with associations and foundations – *Galassia Gutenberg*, *Fondazione Maria Bellonci*, *Fondazione AIDA*, *Associazione Italiana Biblioteche*, *Centro per la Salute del Bambino*, and others – and set up projects that have since involved thousands of children and their families. The main focus is on reading aloud as an interactive activity between children and their parents, and generally between children and adults. One of the projects, “*Nati per leggere*” (Born to read), involves children 6 months to six years of age and uses action research techniques focusing on reading both as an educational activity preparing children to begin school and as a therapeutic activity.

Assessment



Classroom and School Assessment

Educational assessment in Italy has received special attention and emphasis in recent years. This evaluation culture promotes integrating traditional forms of assessment based on teacher's judgement with more objective forms of assessment. In primary education, organizing assessment activities is the responsibility of the Teachers' Assembly. Assessment reports are given to pupils and families every three or four months. In addition to these reports, at the end of the school year pupils receive their "documents of evaluation" reporting synthetic appraisals (excellent, very good, sufficient, insufficient) attained in all subjects, and highlighting the progress obtained in relation to entry levels, interests shown, and aptitudes that have been encouraged. The distance between pupils' attainment and the goal set by the teacher also may be indicated. The pupil's "document of evaluation" is used by teachers as a guideline for their planning and teaching strategies, and as a diagnostic instrument for possible reading difficulties.

At the end of grade 5, pupils sit for the primary school leaving examination that allows them to enter lower-secondary school. The examination board is made up of the class teachers and two teachers nominated by the Teachers' Assembly and appointed by the School Manager. The examination consists of two written tests – language and expression, and logic and mathematics – and an oral test. The final certificate does not report the assessment of the individual subjects, but highlights overall achievement taking the pupil's potential into account.

Standardized Tests

Creating a national evaluation system is a significant part of the current process of innovation in the Italian school system. CEDE's participation in international evaluation projects, especially those promoted by IEA and more recently by OECD, greatly contributed to help initiate and develop an evaluation culture formerly restricted to a limited number of specialists in University departments. A 1997 legislative decree, which preceded CEDE's development into the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System in 1999, marked the institutionalized adoption of an evaluation design

including all levels and types of schooling. The achievement survey service (SERIS) set up in the same year envisaged the yearly surveying of subjects in six grades of schooling – grades 2 and 4 in primary school, grades 6 and 8 in lower-secondary school, and grades 10 and 13 in upper-secondary school. In 1999, national surveys were carried out for grades 6, 8, 10, and 13. The 9- to 10-year-old children in grade 4 were first surveyed in 2000. The national sample included 3,477 children who were assessed in reading comprehension, mathematics, and science. The instruments used were partly original and partly adapted from instruments used in international studies. Grade 2 pupils were not included in the 2000 assessment since the construction of instruments still required exploration and agreement from specialists in terms of conceptual design and concrete definition of tasks.¹⁷ The SERIS surveys aimed to produce standardized tests to use in surveys on representative samples of the target population and on the whole population at the regional level.

In January 2002, the new government approved a draft law¹⁸ presented by the Minister of Education, including an evaluation design, which foresees assessment of students' levels of performance every two years, starting from grade 2 up to the last year of schooling. The nature, type, and contents of the testing are still to be defined.

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Language and Literacy



There are seven daily newspapers distributed in Kuwait, five in Arabic and two in English. There are also weekly and monthly publications. The daily newspaper circulation in 2001 was 50 newspapers per 1,000 inhabitants. Administered and funded through the Ministry of Education, the public library system includes 27 public libraries. The number of registered users of the public libraries in the year 2000 was 132,848.¹

Arabic is the official language in Kuwait. English, however, also is widely spoken especially in business areas, and is taught as a second language throughout school.

Education System



Governance and Organization

Kuwait's six provinces each have an educational district that ensures the implementation of Ministry policy. The Board of Under-Secretaries, which reports to the central Ministry of Education, determines all educational policy.

The framework for the curriculum in Kuwait specifies six broad learning areas – religion, languages, mathematics, science, social studies, and arts. All decisions concerning curriculum and textbook selection are made centrally by special committees consisting of representatives from Kuwait University, the Public Authority for Applied Education, general supervision, teachers, and the Curriculum Unit.

The Kuwaiti constitution states that all citizens have a right to an education provided by the state. The government funds the costs of education at all

stages. In 1998, spending on education totaled US\$ 1.14 billion, or 6 percent of total GNP.² Public expenditure per student in primary education increased from 13.2 percent to 21.5 percent of the GNP per capita between 1990 and 1997.³

Structure of the Education System

As shown in Exhibit 1, Kuwait's educational system is structured according to a 4-4-4 model – four years each of primary, intermediate, and secondary schooling preceded by two years of kindergarten. Education is compulsory for all children from the beginning of primary school to the end of ninth grade.

To keep pace with modern educational developments, the Ministry of Education adopted the unit-credit system for secondary schools in 1978-79. The

Exhibit 1: Stages in the Kuwaiti Educational System

Stage	Age	Duration (years)
Kindergarten	4-5	2
Primary	6-9	4
Intermediate	10-13	4
Secondary	14-17	4

two-term system was introduced in 1984-85. There are also Special Education Schools for students with physical and mental disabilities.

Private Education

Private schools (non-governmental schools that charge fees for enrollment) are of two types – Arabic schools and foreign schools. Constituting 16 percent of all schools in Kuwait, Arabic schools follow the curriculum set by the Ministry of Education. Like public-school students, students attending Arabic schools must write the General Secondary School Certificate examinations.

Country Profile: Kuwait

Geographical Location and Size

Kuwait is located northwest of the Arabian Gulf, bordering the Republic of Iraq on the north and northwest and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the south and southwest. The area of Kuwait is 17,820 square kilometers, with 499 kilometers of coastline. The terrain can be described as a flat to slightly undulating desert plain. Because of the limited natural fresh water resources, Kuwait has installed some of world's largest and most sophisticated desalination facilities. The country is divided into six provinces: the Capital (Kuwait), Hawally, Farwaniya, Al-Ahmadi, Al-Jahra, and Mubarak Al-Kabeer.



Population and Health Statistics

Kuwait's total population is approximately 2 million people, about half of which are foreign nationals.⁴ The population density is about 108 inhabitants per square kilometer.⁵ People from all around the world come to Kuwait seeking job opportunities. The main ethnic groups are from other Arab countries (35%), South Asia (9%), Iran (4%), and other countries (12%).⁶

The average life expectancy is 74 years for men and 80 years for women.⁷ The infant mortality rate in 2000 was 11 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁸

Political System

In Kuwait the monarch is hereditary. The "Amir" is the chief of state, and the crown prince as Prime Minister is the head of government. The cabinet consists of a council of ministers that are appointed by the Prime Minister and approved by the monarch. A unicameral National Assembly (Majlis al-Umma) represents the legislative branch. All 50 members of the National Assembly are elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms. The High Court of Appeal represents the judicial branch.

Economy and Employment

Kuwait is a small, relatively open economy with crude oil reserves of about 94 billion barrels – 10 percent of the world's reserves. The main types of employment are in services (public administration, education, and health), and the petroleum industry. Petroleum accounts for nearly half of GDP, 90 percent of export revenues, and 75 percent of government income.⁹ The GNP per capita in 2000 was US\$ 18,030.¹⁰ Kuwait lacks water and has practically no arable land, thus preventing development of agriculture. With the exception of fish, it depends almost wholly on food imports. The female labor force was 31 percent of the total labor force in 1999.¹¹

Approximately 15 percent of Kuwaiti schools are designated as foreign schools.¹² Foreign schools follow their own curriculum with some supervision of the Ministry of Education. The most commonly used syllabi are English, American, French, Indian, Pakistani, and Iranian. There are also several foreign embassy schools for the children of the diplomatic corps based in Kuwait, including a German and a Japanese school.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

For public primary schools, the school year begins in mid-September, and ends mid-May, lasting approximately 185 instructional days. Intermediate- and secondary-school-years are slightly longer. Schools are closed for 14 holy days during the school year.

Students attend school for five days per week, from Saturday to Wednesday. The school week is 30 hours, six hours per day from 7:30 in the morning to 1:30 in the afternoon.

Exhibit 2: Distribution of Teachers by Gender

Stage	Teachers				Total
	Male	%	Female	%	
Kindergarten	-	-	3012	100	3012
Primary	2292	29.3	5525	70.7	7817
Intermediate	3628	47.0	4078	53.0	7706
Secondary	4033	45.8	4777	54.2	8810

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Exhibit 2 shows the distribution (number and percentages) of teachers by gender for the different educational stages as of January 2001.

In the scholastic year 1999-2000, about 76.4 percent of primary teachers were between 25 and 39 years of age, 19.3 percent were between 40 and 49 years, and about 4.3 percent were 50 years of age and over.

Teacher Education

Teachers in Kuwait must follow one of two certificate programs: a four-year university course, completing a Bachelor of Arts or Science in Education degree; or a four-year college course, completing a Bachelor of Education.

Two educational establishments provide pre-service preparation, the College of Basic Education and Kuwait University. The College of Basic Education is part of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training. Pre-service teachers study for four years, with a curricular concentration on the theory and practical aspects of becoming a competent, qualified teacher. Many elementary school teachers are prepared at the college.

Pre-service teachers enrolled in Kuwait University study for four years, and upon graduation may teach at the level for which they have been trained (primary, intermediate, or secondary school).

Teacher In-service Education

Two establishments provide in-service education and upgrading of qualifications – The Ministry of Education's training center and Kuwait University. The training center offers programs for newly recruited teachers; teachers transferring from stage to stage; teachers applying a new syllabus, new developments, or changes in a syllabus; and teachers teaching a new subject or course.

Teachers wishing to obtain a Diploma of Education or other academic qualification may apply for a study leave and take courses at Kuwait University. Both theoretical and practical aspects of education may be studied.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

According to the National Curriculum Guide, the general objective, of teaching reading in the state of Kuwait are:¹³

- Strengthen ties with the Book of Allah Almighty and the source of the language, including some chosen sayings of the Prophet and masterpieces from Arabic.
- Acquire knowledge and culture, developing language and self-education
- Know the Islamic civilization, its achievements and supremacy in the fields of innovation and creativity

- Reinforce the relationship between the society and its heritage
- Develop the ability to read correctly in order to accurately and fluently express ideas and comprehend them
- Develop silent reading ability of suitable speed
- Develop oral reading ability and correct pronunciation of words
- Motivate the learner to read freely, developing the mind and making the tongue and pen fluent.
- Read intelligibly and meaningfully
- Give due attention to punctuation marks while reading
- Read correctly different types of texts (message, telegram, news, story, dialogue, etc.)
- Start reading correctly, fluently, and comprehensively different prescribed topics in the reading textbook and the like
- Read correctly Suras from the Holy Quora'n, and honored sayings of the Prophet.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

The ability to read means being able to transform with suitable speed written symbols into correctly-voiced sounds in the form of correct words and intelligible sentences.

Some reading activity is taught in the kindergarten stage, but the formal teaching of reading begins at the age of six, the first year of primary schooling. The objectives of teaching reading at the primary stage are to enable the learner to do the following:

- Read aloud a suitable paragraph using the rules of Arabic fluently, with suitable speed and good performance
- Read the alphabet phonetically in a correct way
- Read correctly letters with similar sounds
- Read correctly words with light and heavy letters
- Read correctly without addition to or deletion from the word
- Read correctly without changing the emphasis on the letters of a word
- Read correctly without substituting letters of a word
- Read in a clear voice
- Read a paragraph fluently

Reading is taught as a part of the Arabic language curriculum. Arabic language is taught as an integrated curriculum to assure the unity of the language, and achieve balance between its skills.¹⁴

Materials for Reading Instruction

Schoolbooks, stories, newspapers, and magazines are aids used in teaching reading. Schoolbooks, wall sheets, cards, chosen groups of stories, tape recorders, and televisions are available in all schools. Also, a few schools have language labs, and some have computers available. There is a National Committee that works to provide computers in all primary schools.¹⁵

Instructional Time

The total time assigned for teaching all school subjects is about 32 teaching hours per week. The time assigned for teaching the Arabic language and its related activity ranges from 9 to 10 teaching hours per week. Reading is taught in light of the linguistic integrity among the four skills of Arabic: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The teacher of Arabic Language tries to achieve a balance between these skills, and thus the time assigned for reading ranges from 15 to 20 minutes each teaching hour.¹⁶

Class Organization and Class Size

The teacher of Arabic language does not teach any other subject. Being responsible for training the learners to master the reading skill, this teacher must be specialized in the field of reading instruction. The average class size is 32 students per class. They are taught as one group.

Reading Disabilities

The impeded learner is one who is hindered in performing the reading activities that he was trained to perform correctly. Impediment problems can be addressed by:¹⁷

- Diagnosing the learner's impediment in oral reading skills
- Providing suitable opportunities for intensive training to help the learner acquire skills in a meaningful way
- Training the learner to master silent reading, which precedes oral reading
- Choosing suitable reading passages (in count and length) for the learner
- Encouraging the learners, preparing them psychologically to avoid shyness and reinforcing their ability to face any difficulties
- Modeling reading for the learner, always presenting a correct reading model for the learner to imitate
- Refraining from interrupting the readers to correct their pronunciation or vowel mistakes
- Transferring the impeded learners to specialists in cases where physical problems are causing the problems.

Assessment



There is no national examination in the primary school. Students are tested by an oral reading test assigned by the school.¹⁸

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Language and Literacy



Latvian is the country's official language. At the start of 1999, the ethnic distribution of Latvia's population was 55.7 percent Latvians, 32.3 percent Russians, 3.9 percent Belarussians, 2.9 percent Ukrainians, 2.2 percent Poles, 1.3 percent Lithuanians, and 1.7 percent other ethnic groups.¹ The Russian population is mostly concentrated in Riga and other major urban areas, as well as in southeastern Latvia. This ethnic distribution does not correspond exactly with linguistic groupings. There is a significant proportion of Latvians whose first language is Russian, for example, and vice versa. About 120,000 people use both languages at home.²

The daily newspaper circulation in Latvia is 247 per 1,000 people. The public library system has 998 main points of service, with about 508,000 registered users.³

Education System



Governance and Organization

Within the overall policy structure of Parliament and the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Education and Science is the central executive for education in the Republic of Latvia. Parliament enacts all laws and amendments on education, and all laws that affect education. The Cabinet of Ministers issues all important normative education acts or regulations. The Ministry of Education and Science has authority to draft normative acts and their amendments. Latvia first adopted a Law on Education in 1991. A 1995 Latvian Concept of Education provided the foundation for subsequent changes in the major laws related to education.⁴ A new Law of Education,

enacted in November 1998, serves as the framework for laws related to each of the major education sectors, regulating the education system as a whole, the types and levels of education, and the educational institutions. In June 1999, Parliament passed a new Law on General Education, and a new Law on Vocational and Professional Education. There is also a strategic program for education development – 'Education 1998-2003' – developed by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The municipalities, both cities and districts, are responsible for most of the public schools that provide general education through the primary and secondary education levels. The state government pays for teacher salaries and social insurance while the municipalities are responsible for maintenance, capital, and other supporting costs. Local governments within districts cover the salaries of pedagogical staff of pre-primary schools.

The state government is directly responsible for most public special schools and most public vocational and secondary professional schools. The state provides most of the funding and the schools are under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Science, or other ministries, such as Agriculture, Culture, and Welfare. Higher education institutions have substantial autonomy in governance and financing, with public funding coming from the state budget.

In 1998, expenditures from the general government budget for education totaled 246.5 million lats, or 15.6 percent of the total budget.⁵ Education expenditures were 6.5 percent of the GDP in 1998.⁶

Structure of the Education System

Latvia's education system consists of four major levels: pre-primary education, primary education

Country Profile: Latvia

Geographical Location and Size

Located in northern Europe, with a territory of 64,000 square kilometers, Latvia lies on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, sharing borders with Estonia in the North, Russia and Belarus in the East, and Lithuania in the South. Across the Baltic Sea are the countries of Sweden, Germany, and Denmark. Less than half of the country is arable; woodlands cover 44 percent of the territory.

There are 26 regions and seven major cities in Latvia. The country is divided into four historic regions – Kurzeme, Vidzeme, Zemgale, and Latgale – although these regions are not used as sub-national governmental jurisdictions.



Population and Health Statistics

At the start of 1999, Latvia's population was over 2.4 million. Between 1990 and 1992, approximately 111,000 people emigrated from Latvia. This migration continues at a slower pace, but a declining birth rate has become the underlying demographic trend. By 1997, the death rate had exceeded the birth rate in all towns and regions.⁷ In 2001, the infant mortality rate was 14 deaths per 1,000 live births. The average life expectancy is 76 years for females and 64 years for males.⁸

Latvia's population density is 39 inhabitants per square kilometer.⁹ Inhabitants of urban areas represent about 69 percent of the total population. One-third of Latvia's population is located in Riga – the country's capital and largest city. An additional 27 percent of the population lives in the other six relatively large cities, which have between 40,000 to 120,000 inhabitants.¹⁰

Political System

Latvia is a democratic parliamentary republic. The constitution, first adopted in 1922, was reinstated in 1993 after the country's independence was reestablished in 1991. The Head of State in Latvia is the president, elected by the Saeima (Parliament) for a four-year term. The highest legislative body in Latvia is the one-chamber Saeima, composed of 100 deputies elected for four-year terms in direct, proportional elections by citizens 18 years of age and over. A political party must receive at least 5 percent of the national vote to gain seats in the Saeima. The president designates the Prime Minister, who then appoints the ministers to the Cabinet of Ministers, the executive branch of government.

Economy and Employment

Until the late 1980's, Latvia had a pure command economy, without a significant private sector. After independence in 1991, Latvia's gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 50 percent from 1990 to 1993. In subsequent years, the economic situation stabilized. Latvia has made steady progress in the transition from a command to a market economy, while re-establishing the institutions of an independent state. The structure of the economy continues to evolve quickly, particularly in those sectors associated with the previous command economy and trade with the Russian Federation. Agriculture and heavy industry continue to decline, as the service sector grows rapidly. From 1995 to 1998, agriculture, and hunting and forestry decreased from 10.4 percent to 4.1 percent of the GDP. Manufacturing decreased from 22.4 percent to 17.9 percent of the GDP. In the same period, services increased from 56.0 percent to 65.4 percent of the GDP. The most significant increases were in wholesale and retail trades from 11.3 percent to 16.8 percent of GDP. Transport, storage, and communications increased from 16.0 percent to 16.7 percent of GDP.¹¹ The GNP per capita in 1999 was US\$ 2,430.¹²

In May 1999, Latvia had an employed population of 1.16 million,¹³ with females representing 50.4 percent of the total labor force.¹⁴ The largest proportions of employment were in agriculture, hunting and forestry, manufacturing, and retail and wholesale trade.

(grades 1 to 4 of primary education and grades 5 to 9 of basic secondary education), secondary education (grades 10 to 12 of general secondary education, vocational education, and professional education), and higher education.

Pre-primary Education

Formal education in Latvia begins with preschool education. In 2000, 47 percent of all 1- to 6-year-olds were enrolled in pre-primary education.¹⁵ The state provides support to families for childcare by administering material aid and providing partial costs to place children in kindergartens. The role of kindergartens is to encourage children's mental, physical, and social development; enhance curiosity; strengthen health; and prepare them for learning in school. The main focus is on developing self-confidence and nurturing individuality, and the main activities involve play. Parents who care for their children at home can take their children to playgroups for a few hours a day. There, under the supervision of experienced teachers, children are psychologically prepared for learning at school in the company of their peers.

Primary Education

Primary education, consisting of grades 1 to 4, commences at age 7. Primary education is the first stage of basic education. There are three main school types at the primary education level: schools with grades 1 to 4, schools with grades 1 to 9, and schools with grades 1 to 12. The basic subjects in primary education are native language, first foreign language (at grades 3 and 4), mathematics, natural sciences, sports, and arts (music, visual arts, and manual training).

Basic Secondary Education

Basic secondary education, the second stage of basic education, consists of grades 5 to 9 (11- to 16-year-olds). The main subjects in basic secondary education are native language, literature, first foreign language, second foreign language (starting in grade 6), mathematics, computer sciences (at grade 7), biology, physics, chemistry, geography, history, ethics, civics (at grade 9), health education, domestic science, sports, and arts (music and visual arts). If a student is unable to complete basic secondary education, he or she is still expected to attend school until the mandatory age of 18.

Secondary Education

Latvia has three different types of secondary education – general secondary education, vocational education, and secondary professional education. General secondary education typically lasts three years, from grades 10 to 12 (16- to 19-year-olds). Individuals who have passed the age of compulsory education and who wish to work while continuing their education may attend evening schools and correspondence school. The main subjects in all types of secondary education are native language, literature, first and second foreign languages, mathematics, computer sciences (informatics), basic business, history, and sports. Other subjects are chosen depending on the type of secondary education.

Types of Schools

Almost all schools in Latvia are state schools. Of the 552 pre-primary schools in 2001, only 12 were private schools. There are very few private secondary schools.¹⁶ Only one percent of students is enrolled in private primary schools and the same proportion is enrolled in private secondary schools.¹⁷ There are also schools for minorities – 175 Russian schools, 149 combined Latvian and Russian schools, 5 Polish schools, 1 Ukrainian school, 1 Belarussian school, and 1 Lithuanian school.¹⁸ Separate schools exist for children with special needs.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The school year in Latvia begins September 1st and ends at the beginning of June. Grades 9 and 12 are allocated extra time in June for final examinations, corresponding to the end of their respective education levels. Holiday periods include two weeks at Christmas, one week in October, and another week in March. The school week is from Monday to Friday.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

The state finances the salaries and social insurance costs of teachers, according to policies and norms set by the Cabinet of Ministers. Provision also is made within the salary fund for accredited private schools. In 2001, there were 1,739 schools, 462,065 students, and 42,417 teachers. There were 8,157 pre-primary

schoolteachers, 28,819 basic secondary and general secondary schoolteachers, and 5,439 vocational and secondary professional schoolteachers.¹⁹ Approximately 95 percent of primary school teachers are female.²⁰

Teacher Education

According to the standards set by the Ministry of Education and Science, beginning September 1, 2002,²¹ pre-primary education teachers in Latvia must have a professional degree in education, with an emphasis in pre-primary education. Primary and basic secondary education teachers also must have a professional degree in education, with specific training at the appropriate educational level and in the subjects they teach. Secondary education teachers must have either a professional degree in education, with specific training at the appropriate educational level and in their subjects, or a bachelor's degree in the appropriate field of science and teacher certification.

Several independent teacher-training institutes in Latvia offer a variety of pre-service and in-service programs. The University of Latvia has two parallel departments – the Faculty of Education and Psychology and the Institute for Pedagogy and Psychology, providing similar training programs for teacher candidates. Many teachers are upgrading their initial degrees to master's degrees.²² There also are other comparable higher education pedagogical institutes in Latvia – like the Daugavpils Pedagogical University, the Liepaja Pedagogical Higher School, the Latvian Academy of Sports Education, and the Riga Pedagogical Higher School.

Teacher In-service Education

The new Law on Education proposes that each teacher be entitled to 36 days of paid in-service training every five years. Since 1994, there have been three main teacher in-service education institutions: the Teacher Training Support Center, the Curriculum Development and Examination Center, and the Center for Professional and Vocational Education.²³

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

All levels of the education system highlight the importance of reading competencies and knowledge of the language in order to participate in a democratic society. Reading and writing skills are integrated into general mother-tongue instruction in Latvian, the official language, and in other minority language groups. Basic education also guarantees instruction in at least one foreign language.

The formal teaching of reading in Latvia begins at age 7, when children enter the first grade of primary school. Some children are already able to read prior to formal schooling, but there is no requirement that children be able to read or write when entering school.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

The basic education standard, issued by the Ministry of Education and Science on December 5, 2000, specifies the subjects and the main tasks that must be taught. The native language standard for developing language competencies includes understanding spoken and written text and being able to express ideas and thoughts in both spoken and written language. It also includes acquiring basic knowledge of language structure, its regularity as well as its peculiarities.

At the primary school level, native language education is the dominant subject, and reading is an integral part. Thus, the main emphasis in the first four years of education is on basic training in reading and writing. In basic secondary education, as well as in secondary education, native language and literature become two separate subjects. The basic goals are to emphasize language as part of the culture and to develop positive attitudes toward language.

At the end of grade 3, students must pass a state exam covering all subjects, including reading. At the end of grade 6, students must pass a state exam covering native language education. At the end of grade 9, students must pass state examinations covering native language education, literature, and first foreign language. Students in non-Latvian schools must also pass state examinations on Latvian language education at all three levels.

Materials for Reading Education

There are various native language texts, reading books, and other instructional materials available for teaching reading skills. The Ministry of Education and Science approves all books developed for instructional use in schools. There are also special instructional books for Latvian language education and for students from schools with other languages of instruction.

Instructional Time

Students receive between 20 and 26 instructional periods (40-minute lessons) per week in primary education, 28 to 34 instructional periods in basic secondary education, and up to 40 in secondary education. Breaks between lessons are 10 to 20 minutes long. The number of lessons per day is limited to no more than five for grades 1 to 3, six for grades 4 and 5, seven for grades 6 and 7, and eight for grades 8 and 9. In grades 1 to 4, students have seven to nine lessons per week for native language education and reading. In grades 5 to 9, they have three or four native language lessons and two or three literature lessons per week. The secondary school students have 15 native language and literature lessons per week.²⁴

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Classes are not organized on the basis of reading ability or language skills. Teachers are responsible for choosing the most effective teaching methods and time allotment for everyone in the class. According to the 1991 IEA Reading Literacy Study, class size in Latvia averaged 19 students.²⁵ Class size in Latvia can vary considerably (from 3 to 36 students), depending on school location. As might be anticipated, there are larger classes in cities and smaller ones in rural areas.

Second Language Reading Instruction

Latvia guarantees the right to education in the official language. Residents whose native language is not Latvian also have the right to instruction in their mother tongue and to receive other assurances under the Law on State Language. A network of state-provided general education schools created during the years of Soviet occupation still exists in which Russian is the basic language of instruction.²⁶ According to the Law on Education, institutions with instruction in a language other than Latvian were to implement programs for national

minorities and begin the transition to instruction in Latvian on September 1, 1999. After September 1, 2004, Latvian instruction must start in grade 10 for all state and municipal general secondary institutions, and in the first year for all state and municipal vocational schools. In accordance with the law, schools with non-Latvian instruction must choose either to gradually switch over to Latvian as the language of instruction, or to implement minority education programs.²⁷

Reading Disabilities

There are no special methods to identify reading disabilities in Latvia's school system. Reading ability is usually assessed against pupils in the same class and school. It is the teachers' responsibility to notice language and reading problems and to adapt the instructional time. Usually, the approach used is to give more time and attention to problem students. There are language specialists (*logopedes*) available for students with specific language problems (pronunciation).

Literacy Programs



Schools organize language days or competitions between classes or, sometimes regionally between schools.

There are no official state-organized language or reading programs, but there are various project weeks designated for different subjects, including one week annually devoted to language and reading.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

In carrying out formative assessments of student progress, teachers are guided by national education standards for all subjects. These standards set the learning outcomes expected of students completing grades 3, 6, 9, and 12.

Students in grades 1 to 3 do not receive marks. Teachers provide oral and written reports describing each child's progress in knowledge, skills, attitudes, development, and class participation. At grade 4, teachers begin using a grading scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest possible score. This 10-point scoring system is used for mathematics

and language. At grades 5 to 9, the 10-point system is used for all the subjects except social studies.²⁸ All teachers are responsible for determining the type of classroom assessment and its duration.

National Examinations and Diagnostic Testing

At the end of grade 3, there is a state examination in general learning and native language. Children in non-Latvian schools also must undergo a state examination in Latvian language. At the end of grade 6, there is a second set of state examinations in mathematics and native language. Again, students in non-Latvian schools must undergo a state examination in Latvian language. At the end of grade 9, there are formal state examinations in mathematics, native language, and Latvian (for students in non-Latvian schools). There are also compulsory tests in four subjects; two of which are announced to the schools at the start of the academic year and the other two no later than April of that same academic year. Grade 9 graduates receive a basic education certificate. Examinations at the end of grade 12 are set at two levels, basic and profile. Students must take examinations in at least five subjects, plus any specialized subjects related to the type of school, or their intended course of study.

The Ministry of Education and the Science Curriculum Development and Examinations Center set all state examinations. In addition, state examinations used for diagnostic purposes, also called state control papers, may be given in any subject at any grade level, to give an overview of student achievement. These are not examinations which students can pass or fail, but diagnostic tools to assess problems or achievement in a given subject.²⁹

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Language and Literacy



Lithuania's official state language is Lithuanian, which together with Latvian forms the Baltic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. It is considered to be one of the world's oldest living languages, having remarkably similar grammatical structures to Sanskrit. The main language minorities include Russian and Polish. There are a considerable number of schools that use a language of instruction other than Lithuanian – mainly Russian or Polish. Russian also is taught as one of the four most popular foreign languages, together with English, German, and French.

In 1999, the circulation of newspapers in Lithuania was 93 per 1,000 inhabitants.¹ In the same year, the system of public libraries had a total of 1,478 service points with 779,000 registered users.²

Education System



The Lithuanian education system has been undergoing considerable change during the last decade, changes that include the governance of education, the curriculum of all subjects, and the assessment system. The educational system is regarded as being "in transition," therefore, some of its features are still at the level of projects or drafts, including some of the policy documents such as the Standards of General Education.

Governance and Organization

The Parliament defines the basic principles, structure, and objectives of education in Lithuania, while the Ministry of Education and Science devises and implements education policy. The Ministry of Education and Science plays an

extremely important role in the educational system. It defines the curriculum to be used throughout the country, determines teachers' salaries, and assigns educational staff. The ministry also is directly responsible for the administration and financing of vocational and special schools. However, the administration and financing of general education schools is the responsibility of the local municipalities.

In 1998, the Lithuania's public expenditure on pre-primary, primary, and secondary education amounted to approximately 28 percent of its total national budget expenditure.³

Structure of the Education System

Pre-primary Education

Pre-primary education in Lithuania, intended for children aged 1 to 6, is not compulsory. At present, it consists of public and some private kindergartens but is not a very popular option with only about 40 percent of the relevant age group attending.⁴

Primary and Lower-secondary Education

Primary school consists of Grades 1 to 4. Lower-secondary school, also called "basic" education, consists of Grades 5 to 10. Education is compulsory for all students up to the age of 16. Parents are allowed to choose whether their children begin Grade 1 at age 6 or 7. Although the suggested age for starting primary education is six, increasingly parents wait until their child is seven years old before letting him or her attend school. Less than 12 percent of the first-grade students at the beginning of the school year in 2001 were 6-year olds, about 79 percent were 7-year-olds, and about 9 percent were 8- or 9-year-olds.⁵ Enrollment in primary school is 98 percent of the total age group.⁶

Country Profile: Lithuania

Geographical Location and Size

Lithuania is in northern Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea, Latvia, Poland, Russia, and Belarus. It is the largest of the three Baltic states, with an area of about 65,000 square kilometers.⁷ Lithuania is mainly lowland; the highest point, Juozapines Hill, being just 293 meters above the sea level.⁸ There also are several small scattered lakes, marshes, and a complex sandy coastline.

Population and Health Statistics

About 3.7 million people currently live in Lithuania. The capital is Vilnius, which has a population of 575,000. Although between the World Wars Lithuania was regarded as primarily an agricultural country, about 68 percent of its people now live in urban areas.⁹ The population density is 57 persons per square kilometer.¹⁰ Lithuania's ethnic composition is relatively homogeneous; Lithuanians comprise 81 percent of the population, Russians 8 percent, and Poles 7 percent.¹¹ The infant mortality rate is approximately 9 deaths per 1,000 live births.¹² Life expectancy for females is 77 years and for males 67 years.¹³

Political System

Lithuania's political system is a parliamentary democracy. Government consists of the executive branch governed by the President and Cabinet of Ministers, the legislative branch governed by the parliament, and the judicial branch including the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and the lower court system. The President is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The unicameral parliament is elected for a four-year term (141 seats; 70 members are elected by proportional representation, 71 directly elected by popular vote). Lithuania is divided into ten administrative districts (counties) as well as smaller regions.



Economy and Employment

About half of the total employment is in services – about 30 percent in industry and 20 percent in agriculture.¹⁴ Machinery and equipment, mineral products, chemicals, and textiles are the country's major export commodities. The main agricultural products include grain, potatoes, sugar, beets, vegetables, beef, dairy products, and fish. The female labor force represented 48% of the total labor force in 2001.¹⁵ The GNP per capita in 2001 was US\$ 2,640.¹⁶

The curriculum in primary and basic schools allows for little variation, and includes mother tongue (mainly Lithuanian, but in some schools also Russian, Polish, or Belarussian), mathematics, foreign languages, history, geography, sciences, civil education, music, art, physical training, crafts, informatics, and moral education (either religion or ethics). In addition, schools for the language minorities also teach Lithuanian as a state language. Reading and writing are taught as part of the mother tongue.

Upper-secondary Education

The upper-secondary school consists of Grades 11 and 12. Education in gymnasiums lasts four years and corresponds to Grades 9 to 12 of the secondary school. Gymnasiums offer general education at a more advanced level than ordinary secondary schools. From the year 2000, the system of “profiles” was introduced in upper-secondary schools. This means that all upper-grade students are free to choose one of four “profiles” for their studies: humanities, mathematics and science, technology, or art. The curriculum then is arranged in the following pattern: the main body of the curriculum that is the same for all students – 50 percent; compulsory curriculum for the particular profile – 25 percent; curriculum that is related to the particular profile (may vary from school to school) – 15 percent, curriculum that is elected by students depending on the availability of courses in their school – 10 percent.

Types of Schools

In 1991 the Education Law authorized the creation of privately owned educational institutions. However, the number of private schools is still minimal (less than 1 percent), and the number of private primary schools has decreased over the last few years.¹⁷

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The school year in Lithuania begins on the 1st of September and ends the 31st of May in the primary schools and around the middle of June in the lower- and upper-secondary schools. In the 2001-02 school year, there were 170 school days for Grades 1 to 5 and 195 school days for Grades 6 to 9 and 11. Grades 10 and 12 have a shorter school year because of examination sessions. The school year is divided into three three-month terms or

two four- or five-month semesters. Schools close for a week at the beginning of November, for two weeks at the end of December, and for one week in March or April.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Approximately 85 percent of those teaching general education are female,¹⁸ and at the primary school level the percentage is even higher, reaching 92.¹⁹

The majority of the teachers in general education schools (about 87 percent) have university-level education, about 9 percent have college-level pedagogical degrees, and about 4 percent have college-level non-pedagogical or secondary-level degrees.²⁰

Teacher Education

Primary school teachers are trained at one of three pedagogical universities (previously called pedagogical institutes) or at one of two teacher training colleges. University training lasts four years and in teacher training colleges three years. The courses include training in the subjects that are taught at primary level as well as general courses in pedagogy and psychology.

Teacher In-service Education

The Teachers’ Professional Development Center and in-service training centers provide additional qualifications and further education for teachers. Since 1993, professional development for teachers in Lithuania is encouraged through the assignment of qualification categories: junior teacher, teacher, senior teacher, teacher-methodologist, and teacher-expert. Teachers’ salaries mainly depend on their qualification category and length of service. Teachers must be recertified every five years, either to confirm their present classification or to receive a higher one. In 2001, about three-fourths of all the general education schoolteachers had received their qualification classification. So far, the majority of teachers have received the classification of senior teacher, but only about one percent have achieved the highest classification of teacher-expert.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The need to preserve and foster cultural traditions is very much emphasized at all levels of education. The official reading policy is reflected in the *General Curriculum for Lithuanian Secondary School*²¹ and the *Standards of General Education*.²² Currently, the Standards still are not formally approved, and serve only as a “project,” but they are very widely used and constitute the most valid indicator of policy related to subject-area content.

The main primary school goals for language instruction related to reading are:

- Develop skills of reading with fluency and understanding to enable pupils to use written sources in their daily lives
- Help children understand symbolic language used in texts, and experience the pleasure and joy of reading
- Acquaint pupils with scientific literature, journalism, and other informative texts that are appropriate for them
- Help pupils understand that reading opens the way to knowledge of the world and to an active life in society.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Teaching reading in the primary school is part of mother-tongue teaching.

The *Standards of General Education* for the primary school refer to “minimal” and “basic” attainment levels expected of students.

At the end of primary school, the “minimal” level requires students to be able to:

- Distinguish between the written and spoken language
- read with understanding at their own pace
- Read or recite literary text with the help of a teacher

- Recite, improvise, and play on the themes of written works
- Distinguish between facts and artistic devices
- Read informative texts (from the textbooks, reference books, and children’s encyclopedias) identifying and understanding important elements, and remembering events; and understanding the conventional signs, maps, photographs, drawings and schemes that are used in textbooks
- Read time schedules, programs, and road maps
- Find needed information with the help of a teacher
- Locate parts of a book, such as the title and author; and locate the key text using the content
- Read children’s literature consecutively until the end
- While reading a text, distinguish between the most important statements and the ones that are not so important
- Answer questions about the text, including its theme and main idea.

In addition, the “basic” or “main” level requires that at the end of the primary school students are able to:

- Read various texts consciously, fluently, and at the right pace
- Prepare themselves to read expository text, conveying its meaning through the right intonation
- Independently find required information in various publications (dictionaries, encyclopedias, and science-popularization books)
- Read children’s newspapers and magazines to find an article with an interesting topic, and express an opinion about it

- Locate parts of information about a book (cover, content, text, illustrations, name, author, artist/designer, publishing company, year, and place of the issue).

Materials for Reading Instruction

In the primary and lower-secondary school, students mainly use textbooks that include children's stories and excerpts, as well as various exercises in reading comprehension. Independent reading also is prevalent in Lithuanian schools: students read books of their own choice and then present what they have read either orally or in writing. In the higher grades, the textbooks include reading theory, information on the authors, etc., and the readers provide plain texts (excerpts) from the various literature works.

So far, information technology has not been used for teaching reading. No computer programs are available in Lithuanian for this purpose.

Instructional Time

Generally schools in Lithuania use a 5-day working week. The instructional time is usually divided into subject lessons, each lesson lasting 45 minutes (can be a bit shorter in the primary school). The maximum number of compulsory lessons per week varies from 22 lessons in Grade 1 to 32 lessons in Grades 9-12. This does not include additional lessons that students are free to choose depending on availability at their school. The number of compulsory lessons does not change much during the primary school: it increases by one in Grade 2 and then stays the same (23) until the end of the primary school (Grade 4). The number of lessons allocated for the mother tongue instruction in the primary school is 8 at Grade 1 then 7 or 8 at the subsequent grades, and later dropping to 5-6.²³

Although the subject of instruction is called mother tongue, in most schools it is still the practice to divide these lessons into lessons for language (writing, grammar) and for literature (or reading in a primary school). However, the exact amount of lessons time allocated for reading instruction depends on the teacher.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

The recommended class size for the primary school is 24 students but classes may have up to 30 students in the upper-grades. In reality, class size is usually

considerably smaller in rural areas, and is about the recommended size or even higher in the urban areas. The average class size in Lithuania varies from about 15 students in the primary school up to about 24 to 27 students in the upper-secondary school.²⁴

In primary school classrooms, teachers usually teach all or most subjects to the class. Although sometimes music, art, and physical training might have separate subject teachers, the "main" subjects like mother tongue (including reading) and mathematics are taught by the same teacher. Training in teaching reading is included in the overall education of the primary school teachers. There are no "reading specialists" in the schools.

As in any subject, teachers are encouraged to use a variety of teaching methods while teaching reading. It is taught as a whole-class, small group, or individual activity.

Second Language Reading Instruction

All schools with the language of instruction other than Lithuanian (mainly Russian, Polish, and some Belarussian) teach Lithuanian as a state language in addition to the mother tongue. The syllabus for Lithuanian as a state language differs from that for Lithuanian as mother tongue. However, it includes a wide range of aims for speaking, writing, and reading in Lithuanian.

Reading Disabilities

Unfortunately, there is virtually no special attention paid to the students' reading disabilities in Lithuania. There are no diagnostic measures developed to identify students with major problems in reading, nor are there any special materials or programs that would help them reach the desired level of reading. Some modified programs are offered to students whose overall level of understanding and ability is considerably lower than the average, but there is none that would be specifically related to reading problems.

Literacy Programs



At the moment there are no nationwide special literacy programs. However, schools use various means to encourage students' reading skills. For example, competitions in the recitation of various literary texts (both prose and poetry) continue to be a relatively popular activity.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Pupils in the primary school (Grades 1-4) receive written detailed explanations of their achievements based on their teachers' observations rather than marks. This is a relatively new practice, since previously children in the primary school were assessed with marks. From Grade 5 onwards, marks 1 to 10 are used to measure students' attainment, with 4 being the minimal "pass" mark and 10 being the "excellent" mark. There are general directions on which mark should be assigned for a particular attainment level, but usually marks are largely determined by the professional opinion of a teacher. Students' achievements in reading are assessed as part of their overall assessment in their mother tongue.

National Examinations

There are no national examinations at the primary level. Students go through examinations at the end of Basic school (Grade 10) and at the end of Secondary school (Grade 12). There are two examinations at the end of Basic school: mother tongue and mathematics. In addition, students of the language-minority schools also go through the Lithuanian language examination. Part of the language examination is related to reading understanding. The examinations at the end of Basic school are not high-stake examinations, since the results are not used for selection purposes. The pupils who do not pass the examinations still get their Basic school leaving certificates, provided their school marks are "positive."

At the end of secondary school (Grade 12), the range of final examinations, known as *Matura* or *Brandos* examinations, is much wider. Lithuanian language, either as a mother tongue or as a second language, is the only compulsory examination. Students are free to choose other examinations from a large list, including mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, geography, history, foreign languages, art, music, informatics, and mother tongue (for the language minorities). In order to receive the secondary school leaving (*Matura*) certificate, students have to pass at least four examinations. Most examinations can be taken as "state" or "school" examinations.

The tests and marking instructions for school examinations are prepared centrally by the National Examinations Center, but are marked at school, using the marks from 4 to 10 and "not-passed." The tests for the state examinations are prepared and marked centrally. The state examinations are norm-based and use marks from 1 to 100 (corresponding to the student's place in the whole population of students who have passed the examination) and "not-passed." The secondary-school leaving examinations have high-stakes attached, as their results are used for selection purposes by the higher-level educational institutions. The state examinations that usually are the more difficult ones and are marked centrally are trusted more and their results get priority over the results of the school examinations. The secondary school leaving examination in Lithuanian language includes a series of items on reading comprehension.

Standardized Tests and Diagnostic Testing

The area of standardized tests in Lithuania is yet undeveloped. At the moment, there are virtually no standardized tests used for assessing reading achievement.

Diagnostic testing is not currently used in Lithuania. Tests are used to identify children with mental disabilities or very gifted ones, but not for the general body of children.

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REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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Language and Literacy



Macedonian is the country's official language, and in some local communities the language of the national minorities as well. All minorities of the Republic of Macedonia have the right to be educated in their mother tongue in elementary and secondary education. They also can ask for this right in higher educational institutions, such as pedagogical and philological faculties.

Many privately published newspapers and magazines as well as electronic media sources are available in the Republic of Macedonia, including a circulation of 21 daily newspapers per 1,000 people.¹ The country has 122 public libraries with 1 million registered users.²

Education System



Governance and Organization

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for national education policy. In addition to arranging educational financing, the Ministry is responsible for overseeing administration of the state institutions, and for establishing and monitoring educational laws and regulations.

Within the Ministry of Education and Science, several entities carry out the duties of the ministry. The Bureau for Development of Education is in charge of curriculum development, professional supervision of the schools, and teacher training. Recently, the Bureau for Development of Education took over responsibility for external assessment of pupil achievement in elementary and secondary education. The State Educational Inspectorate provides inspectorial supervision of legal and

regulatory matters at all levels of education. The Pedagogical Service inspects and approves the curricula, schoolbooks, and projects implemented in elementary and secondary education.

In the Republic of Macedonia, education is equally accessible to everyone. The new Constitution gives citizens rights to establish private educational institutions at all levels of education, except in elementary education.

In the past decade, Macedonia established a new way of organizing, financing, and administering the educational system. As a result, depending on their role and type, some educational institutions became more like public institutions. In 1999, expenditure on education was 5.1 percent of the GNP.³

Structure of the Education System

The educational system in Macedonia is comprised of preschool, elementary, secondary, and higher education.

Preschool Education

Not compulsory, preschool education is organized for children from the ages of 9 months to 7 years. In 2000, 26 percent of 1- to 5-year-olds were enrolled in kindergarten,⁴ and 80.9 percent of 6-years-olds.⁵

Education in kindergarten is conducted in the mother tongue of the children – typically Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, or Serbian. preschool institutions are either state-run (public) or private. The Bureau for Development of Education prepares the curriculum for the public kindergartens. Private kindergartens may develop their own curriculum, however the Ministry of Education and Science must approve these curricula.

Particularly in state kindergartens, children are provided with care and meals, and engage in

Country Profile: Republic of Macedonia

Geographical Location and Size

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is located in the southeastern part of Europe, and covers an area of 26,000 square kilometers. It is a landlocked country, with its capital, Skopje, in the center of the Balkan Peninsula. Macedonia borders four countries: Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Albania. The country's highest mountain peak is 2,753 meters high. Natural lakes cover 2.6 percent of the country, the largest of which are Ohrid Lake, Prespa Lake, and Dojran Lake.



Population and Health Statistics

Of the two million inhabitants, 62 percent live in urban settlements. The average population density is 79 persons per square kilometer.⁶ Life expectancy for men and women is 71 and 75, respectively.⁷ The average annual population growth rate is 1.4 percent, and infant mortality is 16 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁸ Sixty-six percent of the population is Macedonian, 23 percent Albanian, and 10 percent are Turks, Roma, Serbs, and other minorities.⁹

Political System

A decade ago, the Republic of Macedonia declared independence after separating from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Since establishing its independence, the country has based its development on the western European model, including the values of a civic society, a parliamentary democracy, and a labor market economy. The Prime Minister and the Cabinet have executive authority, the Assembly controls the legislative branch, and the Supreme Court the judicial branch. The President, the Assembly, and the local authority representatives are elected every four years.

Similar to many other eastern European countries, Macedonia is facing political, economic, and security problems during its period of transition. In response to recent domestic conflict, new political structures have been established. Recently, changes have been made to the Constitution, and a new law enacted for local self-government. This law, in line with European standards, aims to further democratize the society and promote the rights of the various nationalities.

Economy and Employment

Macedonia's recent political crises have resulted in a decline in the GDP by about 4 percent, and an increase in the rate of inflation. The GNP per capita is US\$ 1,660.¹⁰ Around 300,000 people are employed in agriculture, industry, and services. Of those people in the workforce, 41.5 percent are women and 58.5 percent are men.¹¹

play activities, development of oral expression, creative expression in music, drawing, gymnastics, and activities related to introduction of the sciences and social studies.

Children enrolled in preschool institutions are organized into homogenous groups, according to their age. These institutions offer either whole-day (6 to 9 hours) or half-day (4 to 6 hours) programs. Usually, the parents' needs are met if their children have concentrated educational activities from one to two hours daily.

Elementary Education

Elementary education is compulsory from the ages of 7 to 15 years. It is divided into two cycles with each cycle lasting four years: classroom teaching from Grades 1 to 4, and subject teaching from Grades 5 to 8.

In general, one classroom teacher is responsible for teaching all subjects in Grades 1 to 4, while individual teachers are responsible for teaching one or two related subjects in Grades 5 to 8. However, in Grade 4, certain teachers are responsible for teaching the first foreign language (English, French, German, or Russian) when pupils start learning a second language.

Teaching in elementary education is carried out according to the state curriculum for particular subjects. From Grades 1 to 4, pupils receive instruction in six subjects: mother tongue, mathematics, science and social studies, music, gymnastics, and drawing. Reading and writing are taught as part of the mother-tongue instruction from Grades 1 to 8. The subjects taught in Grades 1 to 4 are taught also in Grades 5 to 8, except that science is divided into separate subject areas, and students learn history instead of social studies. Ninety-nine percent of children are enrolled in elementary education in the Republic of Macedonia.¹²

Secondary Education

The institutions for secondary education include gymnasiums and three- and four-year vocational schools. Students who take gymnasium classes usually continue their education at the university, but students from four-year vocational schools also tend to continue their education.

Types of School

In the Republic of Macedonia, most schools are state schools. In state schools, students do not pay

tuition, but parents provide them with school-books at the beginning of the school year. The Constitution does not permit private elementary schools, because education at this level is compulsory. Private kindergartens have increased in number in recent years, but there are still only 3 private secondary schools in Macedonia. There also are two religious secondary schools that are preparing Orthodox and Muslim priests.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The school year in the Republic of Macedonia starts on September 1 and lasts until June 10. Students have three holidays during the school year: winter, spring, and summer holidays. The school year lasts 180 working days except the final years of elementary and secondary education where it lasts 165 days.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

School principals are in charge of hiring teachers upon the recommendation of school committee members. In elementary schools, 54 percent of teachers are women, and 46 percent men.¹³ There has been a trend towards an increasing number of women teachers in elementary and secondary education in the last 20 years.

Teacher Education

According to the Law for Elementary Education, teachers who have completed the Pedagogical Academy, a Pedagogical Faculty, or Institute of Pedagogy at the Philosophical Faculty may become classroom teachers. However, the Pedagogical Academy, a two-year program, was set aside five years ago and the Pedagogical Faculties were established to provide four-year programs. Teachers preparing to teach Grades 1 to 4 take courses in reading and children's literature. In the third and fourth year, they have compulsory practice in the schools.

For the higher grades, a teacher who has obtained a diploma from the university in a scientific discipline can do in-subject teaching. Those teachers, who concentrate on gaining professional knowledge in their disciplines, also attend courses in pedagogy, psychology, and

teaching methodology. Practical teaching of lessons in the school also is compulsory.

Teacher In-service Education

Professional development of teachers is extremely important to improve the quality of teaching, and teachers are encouraged to participate in organized seminars. Training in curriculum development and lesson planning are compulsory. Other training is not compulsory, such as that related to implementing innovations in teaching, integrating evaluation with instruction, or developing some specific teaching skills.

The Bureau for Development of Education is primarily responsible for in-service training, but according to the law, all faculties that educate teachers have the right to offer such training. To encourage teachers to participate in workshops, teachers are awarded a certificate of attendance after completing a series of seminars. Successful teachers are encouraged to attend mentor-training seminars. Upon completion of these seminars, they are promoted to mentor teachers who assist the leaders of the seminars.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Within the mother-tongue curriculum (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, and Serbian) for elementary education, the area of 'reading and literature' is key. In the mother-tongue curriculum from Grades 1 to 4 it is stated that the area of 'reading and literature' has a central place in mother-tongue instruction, and is realized through reading and analyzing both popular and informative texts. Reading literacy is considered a crucial skill for successful achievement in other subjects, as well as a precondition for lifelong learning. According to the mother-tongue curriculum for Grade 1, it is expected that pupils will be able to read independently and accurately (see below).

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Formal reading instruction begins in Grade 1, when the pupils are between the ages of 6 and 7 years old, although often parents enroll their children earlier in the school.

In Grade 1 emphasis is placed on exercises for recognizing the sound symbols and their connection to words, and reading aloud sentences and short texts. The reading objectives that pupils should achieve by the end of Grade 1 are to:¹⁴

- Read aloud 20 to 50 words per minute
- Read silently
- Read with inflection, paying attention to punctuation and adjusting the voice according to the nature of texts
- Be able to describe the events, characters, and the characteristics of the written text, and to determine the main idea.

In Grades 2 to 4, greater emphasis is given to developing reading habits, introducing children to works by national and world authors, and increasing the ability to interpret text.

At the end of Grade 4, pupils should achieve the reading objectives of one of three standards: minimum, sufficient, or high.¹⁵

Minimum standard:

- Recognize given messages explicitly in a written text
- Recognize and differentiate the strophe, verse, and rhyme
- Recognize cause-and-effect relationships when they are explicitly stated in the text.

Sufficient standard:

- Recognize cause-and-effect relationships among elements of the text
- Organize the content elements (characters, events, places, objects) by their appearance in the text
- Recognize information in the informative text given by symbols, maps, or tables.

High standard:

- See features in common across different textual elements
- Interpret parts of the text
- Draw conclusions on the basis of explicit messages in the text
- Explain the title of the text.

The objectives of mother tongue curriculum in elementary education are achieved through reading, grammar, expression and creation, and cultural media. The need to integrate all these areas of mother-tongue learning has been emphasized in the past decade. More often, however, the text becomes the basis for instruction in oral and written expression. The media are used to encourage pupils to develop good reading habits and obtain information from various sources.

Materials for Reading Education

For each grade in elementary education, there are two or three reading books from which teachers can choose the texts that will be read and interpreted. The books are collections of prose and poetry by national and world authors. Worksheets are available for the teachers and pupils that follow the contents of the reading books and provide practice in text analysis. For each elementary grade, there is a list of 8 to 10 literature works that each pupil must read and analyze throughout the school year. In addition, pupils are encouraged to read children's magazines and books from the school library.

Instructional Time

According to the curriculum, pupils in Grades 1 to 4 receive 18 to 22 hours of instruction per week. A single lesson lasts 45 minutes. For instruction in mother tongue, pupils have 5 lessons per week. From the total of 180 teaching lessons for mother tongue, 100 teaching lessons are dedicated to teaching reading, making it the most emphasized in the curriculum.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Teachers are obliged to implement the state curriculum, but they are free to choose teaching

methods and various activities for students. In the past decade, individual approaches to teaching have been emphasized, encouraging group work and the use of interactive approaches. Teachers either work directly with individual pupils, or they group pupils according to their interests or skills, depending on the objectives that teacher wants to achieve.

According to the Law for Elementary Education, classes can have no more than 35 pupils and no fewer than 24. The largest classes are typically around 30 pupils, mostly in urban areas; the smallest are less than 20, and are found in some rural areas.

Second Language Reading Instructions

Students from other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia receive instruction in their mother tongue. However, they also are required to learn the Macedonian language. According to the curriculum, they begin learning Macedonian as a second language in Grade 3 with two lessons per week. Macedonian language teachers teach this curriculum.

Reading Disabilities

Teachers or psychologists usually identify pupils in Grade 1 that have difficulties in the process of literacy, using tests for speed and accuracy. The assessment lasts one minute while the examiner notes both the number and the type of mistakes made by each pupil. The results are given to the teachers who are responsible for making individualized plans to assist pupils with their reading difficulties. If the reading difficulties continue, the teacher organizes additional lessons for the pupil, at least once a week. Unfortunately, within the schools, there are no reading specialists or material geared towards pupils with special reading needs. If dyslexia is discovered, the pupil works with a specialist in the specialized institutions.

Literacy Programs



Reading in the classroom is encouraged by having additional activities for students after lessons, and by choosing the best reader in the school. Also, pupils can attend additional literature classes on their own initiative. For these literature classes, the responsible teacher prepares an annual

program in which pupils analyze works that are not included in regular lessons, recite poetry, or create their own works independently.

In the Republic of Macedonia, there are literacy programs for adults, especially for mothers that have not completed their education. UNICEF and the Institute for an Open Society, supported financially by the country, send trained educators to educate mothers in their own homes.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Assessing pupils' achievement is the teacher's responsibility. There are no standardized tests used to measure pupils' progress in any area that is part of mother-tongue instruction. During the school year, teachers collect information about pupils' performance through observations, interviews, completed student work, and school-wide tests. Using information from the pupil's portfolio, teachers inform parents of their child's achievement at least four times per year. Numbers from 1 to 5 (1 = basic; 5 = excellent) are the most commonly used summative marks, but there are teachers who choose to communicate their evaluations through written comments. Every year for the past five years, the Bureau for Development of Education has organized seminars for teachers to learn about both more qualitative and more objective assessment.

National Examinations

National examinations or assessments did not exist until two years ago, when for the first time national assessments of Macedonian language, Albanian language, and mathematics were established at the end of Grade 4.¹⁶ The aim of the national assessments is to provide the educational administration and professional institutions with valid data about pupil attainments that can be used to inform educational policy and give the schools and teachers information to improve teaching and learning.

Assessment is on a four-year cycle, with one subject assessed each year, and repeated every four years. The assessment is conducted on representative samples of schools and pupils. In mother tongue, pupil's achievements are measured in the following areas: grammar, vocabulary,

reading informative and literary texts, and written expression.

Unfortunately, the Republic of Macedonia still does not have a specialized institution for preparing diagnostic and standardized tests.

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Language and Literacy



Moldova's state language is Moldavan, which is equivalent with the Romanian language. Russian also is spoken, as are English, French, and German.

Moldova has 3,200 public libraries that lent readers 21,080,000 books and journals in 1999.¹ Mass media is represented by 13 private radio stations, 53 private television studios, 294 newspapers and magazines (71 in the counties and 223 in the capital), and 10 independent press agencies.²

According to guidelines formulated by UNESCO, Moldova meets minimal communication standards, having 250 television sets and 550 radios per 1,000 people (compared to the 20 television sets and 50 radios required).³ While urban centers have access to the Internet, rural areas remain technologically underdeveloped primarily due to frequent disconnections in electricity.

Education System



Governance and Organization

The education system is centralized. The Ministry of Education assumes the basic responsibility for operating the system, including implementing educational policy, defining the national curriculum, providing manuals and instructional materials, and appointing (in collaboration with the local public administration) school administrators. The local public administration is responsible for financing the schools' activities.

The education system is in the process of reformation, diversification, and adjustment to Western standards. The World Bank and the Gov-

ernment of Moldova are providing funding for the reform.

At present, there are 1,558 schools (643,131 pupils) in Moldova. The language of instruction is Romanian in 1,150 of the schools (470,520 pupils), Russian in 275 (116,783 pupils), and both in 118 (48,788 pupils). Additionally, a few schools have instruction in other languages: five schools (4,010 pupils) teach in Ukrainian and Russian, 4 schools (2,665 pupils) in Bulgarian, and 2 schools are Jewish. In some schools students can study Ukrainian (71 schools), Bulgarian (27 schools), or Gagauzian (49).⁴ At present, pedagogical staff for schools and kindergartens receive instruction and education in the languages of ethnic minorities. Part of the teaching staff (only for the national minority) is prepared in the Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Romania.

Structure of the Education System

Pre-primary Education

Pre-primary education includes crèches and kindergartens, which enroll 33 percent of children 1 to 6 years old.⁵ The main activities of the preschool education program are drawing, music, dance, learning poems, performances, and modeling. In the final years of preschool education, the child is prepared for school by learning the alphabet, simple mathematics, and the beginnings of a foreign language (as a rule English). At present, because of the economic crisis, only 52 percent of 5- to 6-year-olds attend preparatory classes for school.⁶

Preschool education has been affected considerably by the transition to independence. Between 1992 and 1999, 38 percent of preschool institutions were closed, student enrollment

Country Profile: Moldova

Geographical Location and Size

The Republic of Moldova, one of the republics of the former Soviet Union, is situated in southeastern Europe. It borders Romania to the west and the Ukraine to the east. The area is 33,700 square kilometers.⁷

Population and Health Statistics

As of January 2000, the population of Moldova was 4,281,500.⁸ Of this population, 1,968,500 (46%) persons lived in urban areas and 2,313,000 (54%) live in rural areas.⁹ The population density is 130.1 inhabitants per square kilometer with an annual rate of population increase of .3 percent.¹⁰ The birth rate is 10.6 per 1000 inhabitants and the mortality rate is 11.3 per 1000 people.¹¹ The infant mortality rate is 18.2 per 1000 live births.¹² Average life expectancy is 70 years for women and 63 years for men.¹³ Retirement age is 60 years for women and 65 years for men.¹⁴

As evidence that the demographic profile and the population's health is drastically decreasing, Moldova went from 75th to 102nd internationally on the Human Development Index between 1994 and 2000.¹⁵

Moldova is a polyethnic state (representatives of 120 ethnicities live there). About two-thirds of the population (64.5%) have their roots in the Latin-Romanian nation. About one-third (35.3%), however, speak another language. These national minorities include Ukrainians (13.8%), Russians (13%), Gagauzes (Orthodox Turk) (3.5%), Bulgarians (2%), Jews (1.5%), and several other nationalities such as Belarussians, Poles, Germans, and Roma.¹⁶ There are 8 confessions and 12 religious associations officially recognized by the state.¹⁷

Political System

Proclaiming its independence March 2, 1992, the Republic of Moldova has a spiritual richness manifested through secular traditions, hospitality, and friendship. Its culture is rich with folklore, music, drama, and dances. Archaeological excavations from paleolithic to the medieval epoch have unearthed a wealth of information, and the country has many fortresses, churches, monasteries, architectural monuments, and museums.

The capital of Moldova is Chișinău, a city of 663,400 inhabitants. It offers visitors professional art of high



quality, concerts of symphonic music, opera, ballet performances, dramatic theater, the circus, and fine arts expositions.¹⁸ Other places of interest are museums, a botanic garden, and parks.

The system of government is centralized. Parliament, the legislative body, comprises 101 deputies elected for 4 years. The Parliament elects the president of the Republic and names the members of the government (11 ministries). The administrative-territorial organization consists of 10 counties and 2 territorial units – the autonomous unit Gagauzia and the separatist Transnistria.

Economy and Employment

The country's economy is industrial-agrarian, based mainly on light industry, mechanical engineering, and the food industry. Wines, carpets, underground pumps, and several other products are well known internationally. The gross national product in 1999 was estimated at 12,204 million lei (US\$ 1 = 13 lei). The GNP per capita is US\$ 410.¹⁹

The work force represents 1,495,000 people – 51 percent are women. Forty-eight percent of the work-force is in agriculture with the remainder in industry (10.7%), construction (2.9%), and services (37.6%).²⁰

The rate of unemployment is 11.1 percent (22.3% of which are young people).²¹ About 600,000 citizens are working abroad. During the last 10 years, a number of specialists have left the country, including 2,378 teachers and 415 scientific workers in various domains (medicine, industry, culture, and agriculture).²²

decreased by 53 percent, and the teaching force was reduced by 57 percent.²³

In accordance with newly adopted legislation, a mother has the right to a 3-year maternity leave, during which she benefits by an indemnity for the child until he or she reaches the age of one and a half. Her place of work during this time is preserved.

Primary Education

In general, children begin school at the age of 7. Compulsory education includes 9 grades. Primary education includes (grades 1 to 4). Approximately 252,000 pupils attend primary schools, 96 percent of the children of this age.²⁴

Primary schools can be independent institutions or, depending on local circumstances, part of a gymnasium or a lyceum. In the latter case, one of the assistant directors of the institution takes charge of instruction in primary classes.

Secondary General Education

Secondary general education includes grades 5 to 9. Approximately 393,000 pupils, 90 percent of the age group, attend this second phase of compulsory education.²⁵

In the transition period, there are a range of institutions providing secondary general education: secondary schools (grades 5 to 9) – 1,445 (19 private); secondary schools (grades 5 to 11) – 601 (1 private); gymnasiums (grades 5 to 9) – 650 (6 private); lyceums (grades 10 to 12) – 153 (12 private); schools for children with learning disabilities – 41. At the same time, there are secondary vocational schools that offer both a secondary education and professional training. All types of schools provide compulsory education of 9 grades following the program prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

Education in lyceums (grades 10 to 12) is optional. Completion of these grades ends with examinations for a bachelor's degree, which is necessary for entering an institution of higher education.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The school year lasts from September 1st until May 25th for primary classes and May 31st for other classes. All pupils observe the following holidays: 1 week in autumn, 2 weeks in December, and 1 week in the spring. The school year is divided into 2 semesters, as summer vacation lasts from June 1st

until August 31st for pupils in the primary grades, and from June 27th (because of the examinations) until August 31st for the older students.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Ninety-seven percent of the primary schoolteachers are women. The average age is 37.²⁶ The economic crisis had a considerable impact on the whole system of education. Teachers' salaries are the lowest in the social services – US\$ 20 per month, while the living wage is US\$ 100.²⁷ Beyond that, payment of salaries can be delayed by as much as 8 to 10 months in rural areas. As a result, between 1996 and 2000 about 24,000 school and education personnel left.²⁸ Since the graduates of the higher education institutions will not work under such unfavorable conditions, the teacher shortage is met by hiring retired teachers or graduates of lyceums.

Teacher Education

Administered by the Ministry of Education, the programs for teacher training are conducted in universities and colleges. The university program takes five years after completion of secondary school or four years after the lyceum; and the college program is five years after the gymnasium. The majority of college graduates work in the primary cycle, continuing their studies in universities by correspondence (3 years). Some faculties train teachers with a double qualification. For example, some primary teachers might be prepared to teach kindergarten, and they might also be prepared for a special subject such as foreign language or music.

Teacher In-service Education

The Assessment and Improvement Department of the Ministry of Education is responsible for teacher in-service education. Teachers must update their qualifications every five years, according to the Perfecting Regulations. Perfecting courses are conducted by the Science Institute of Education. Both primary teachers and those from the pre-university education cycles can obtain teaching degrees I and II after passing several tests that are stipulated by the Regulations. Upon obtaining their teaching degrees I and II, teachers are given a salary increase.

Every year school teachers improve their pedagogical skills by taking methods courses offered in municipal centers. This can be accomplished in various ways: distance learning, classes, seminars, or consultations. There also are in-service training opportunities that function within the framework of educational planning within each school, including meetings and exchanging information and experience.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Chapter 1, Article 4 of the Law of Education stipulates that “primary education contributes to the formation of intellectual capacities, and to life-long reading, writing, and calculating habits, assuring the development of communication abilities.”²⁹

Instruction in the students’ mother tongue has a basic role in meeting these objectives since literacy is the basis of all knowledge. Consequently, Romanian is taught in school with the following objectives: develop competencies in oral and written communication; consolidate cognitive and performance skills in language, understand the underlying structures of texts, and interpret literature.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

The overarching goal stipulated for primary education is to develop in students a free, democratic, and independent personality, capable of thinking, and prepared to assume responsibility. The basic curriculum was developed on the basis of the Law of Education, the overarching educational goal, and recent research on child development. As such, it can be considered an educational national standard.

The main function of the primary stage of education (grades 1 to 4) is to help students develop the intellectual foundation for future endeavors, including basic skills in reading, writing, and calculating. The course contents are presented in the program for grades 1 to 4 following the concentric principle. According to this principle, new knowledge and performance build on earlier assimilated knowledge. The same program is compulsory for all children. Reading as a separate subject is not taught directly, but as part of Romanian language.

The goals for students in Grades 1 and 2 are to:

- Be aware of the correspondence of verbal sounds with the letters of the Latin alphabet
- Master the technique of correct, conscious, and fluent reading and understand what was read
- Develop the capacity to render and select the information from what was read, using non-verbal communicative means (gestures, mimicry)
- Understand the role of the book in a person’s life
- Develop a positive attitude toward additional reading.

The goals for students in Grade 3 are to:

- Read fluently a text of 30 to 35 lines, without syllabification, omissions, or substitutions
- Read silently an appropriate text and demonstrate understanding of that text
- Improve their technique and speed of reading
- Increase the field of vision, logic, and effective expressiveness
- Conduct an elementary analysis of the text.

The goals for students in Grade 4 are to:

- Demonstrate abilities and techniques necessary for reading in concrete situations (read expressively a long text without pause)
- Identify the significance of the information contained in a text
- Realize the pleasure of reading

- Present detailed information after reading, using language appropriate to the text
- Stimulate the curiosity, imagination, and habit of life-long reading
- Form the habit of systematic library use, and work with books, newspapers, and magazines.
- Develop a point of view and attitude toward what was read.

As a rule, teachers in primary classes teach all the subjects in grades 1 to 4. The main subject in the syllabus is Romanian language, which forms the foundation of the primary school curriculum. It is the base of all knowledge and is necessary for clear communication and organized thinking.

The Romanian language curriculum stipulates oral studies with elements of reading and writing in grade 1; reading and writing (the alphabet and post-alphabet period) in grade 2; development of speech as the basis for integrating skills in grades 3 to 4.

The aim is to learn Romanian orally, and develop the ability to identify sounds, words, and sentences by ear and reproduce them; to assimilate a basic set of lexical units and phraseological expressions; to learn sounds and letters in order to master correct, conscious, and expressive reading and legible writing; to develop competencies in oral speech and in writing a brief summary of what was read or heard; and to describe the main characters, theme, and main ideas in a literary text.

Materials for Reading Instruction

On the basis of the curriculum, instructional materials for grades 1 to 4 were developed that include:

- The pupil's manual
- Literary reading
- Exercise book and problems for formative evaluation
- Demonstrative tables for self-evaluation
- Teacher's guide.

These sets were tested in experimental schools from 1992 through 1996. Once completed, they were approved by the council of the Ministry of Education, and recommended for use in schools (since 1996).

The components of the sets of instructional materials are interdependent, complementing each other within one lesson. The teacher's guide recommends various activities for working in groups or with the whole class. The children's manuals and exercise books contain activities for individual work that cover the knowledge areas according to the school curriculum. Also, alternative instructional materials are published for teaching reading assimilation as well as children's books containing fiction and non-fiction texts.

Instructional Time

- The basic syllabus envisages 20 academic hours (one academic hour = 45 minutes) per week in grade 1, 22 hours in grade 2, 23 hours in grade 3, and 24 hours in grade 4.
- The educational plan for Romanian language provides 7 hours per week in grade 1 with a reduction to 6 hours per week in grades 2, 3, and 4.
- Since reading and speech development are components of the Romanian language course, special hours for learning to read are not provided in primary classes.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

The law stipulates a maximum of 25 pupils per class, but in reality, the number of pupils depends on the local situation and can vary from 15 to 35 pupils in a class. In senior grades, foreign languages lessons or laboratory work with a class of more than 25 pupils is divided into 2 sections.

In general, teachers in primary classes teach all subjects, except music, physical training, and foreign languages, which are taught by specialists. Beginning with the 5th grade, teachers teach a subject in which they have specialized. The teacher decides whether to use individual or group activities during the instructional process.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

As mentioned above, the teacher in primary classes teaches almost all the disciplines encompassed by the curriculum. Thus, in nearly all primary schools the class teacher is responsible for the pupils' success in reading, and receives the necessary training during university studies. In some schools with alternative or private education, specialists teach Romanian, including reading.

Second Language Reading Instruction

The constitution of the Republic of Moldova ensures the right of any citizen to study the native language. Legislation stipulates the role of the official language as well as the languages of national minorities in localities densely populated by such minorities. In schools taught in Romanian, the syllabus envisages the study of the state language beginning with the first grade – 2 hours per week, second grade – 3 hours per week, third and fourth grades – 4 hours per week, in gymnasiums – 3 hours per week, and in lyceums – 3 or 4 hours per week. Beginning with the second grade, the syllabus stipulates the study of a foreign language, including Russian, twice a week, and in grades 5 and 6 it stipulates two foreign languages, including Russian.

Reading Disabilities

The pupils who have difficulties in reading are helped by teachers through consultations, additional lessons, and supplementary reading. As a rule, parents also are involved in this process. Pupils with difficulties of a physiological kind are guided by a specialist. The school psychologist helps identify and diagnose pupils with learning disabilities.

Literacy Programs



There is a whole system of programs to stimulate reading and improve pupils' performance. Some are at the level of a class or a school, while others are at a county or national level. Activities and programs include the so-called olympiads (subject contests), thematic holidays, publications of class newspapers, and weeks specifically devoted to a certain subject or a certain development program for all the pupils in the school. The winners of the first places in the national olympiads are exempted from entrance examinations to a university in the corresponding subject. Parliament has decreed

August 31st a national holiday to celebrate the Romanian language.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Evaluation occupies an important place in the instructional process. It provides a clear picture of how the teaching aims described in the curriculum have been achieved. The routine application of three types of evaluation – initial, current, and summative – enables teachers to monitor pupils' progress and identify gaps in their learning, and helps pupils attain their maximum level of development.

In order to guide the evaluation process, teachers develop sets of tests using general instructions. The tests in primary classes concentrate on subject area content across the cognitive domain of knowledge, understanding, and application. Based on the test results, an assessment of the pupils' progress takes place. A coefficient of correction is established, and pupils are given marks corresponding to this coefficient. The marking system has 10 points, 5 through 10 are considered satisfactory, and 1 through 5 unsatisfactory. At the end of each semester, pupils are given marks in each subject. At the end of the year, pupils receive a mark in each subject, based upon the average of two semester marks. Pupils lagging behind in one or two subjects are nonetheless promoted to the next grade, but are not given the certificate for finishing school at the end of their studies. To continue studies after leaving school, such pupils can take examinations in these subjects. If they pass, they receive the documents for continuing school.

The framework for evaluating the results of the silent reading tests stipulates: title explanation, formulating main ideas, and explanation of expressions and words from the text. This determines the level of coherent, expressive, and conscious reading.

In the primary grades, a pupils' reading speed must be about the same as their speed in speaking. The main emphasis in the process of evaluating reading achievement is on the quality and understanding of reading by the pupil.

National or Regional Examinations

An important component of Moldova's reform of its pre-university education is evaluating the system's effectiveness. With the help of the World Bank, the Department of Evaluation and Examination of the Ministry has developed and implemented a comprehensive process. Once the department decided on the concept and strategy of the evaluation process, it developed items, organized the testing, and analyzed and published the results.

Based on the school syllabus, examinations are set at the end of the primary cycle in Romanian and mathematics and at the end of the gymnasium cycle in the native language, mathematics, history, and foreign language. After completing studies in a lyceum, students take 7 examinations, depending upon the lyceum's profile (but native and foreign languages are obligatory), in order to get a bachelor's degree. As long as Moldova remains in a period of transition, pupils may choose not to go to a lyceum, and in this case, they take their final examinations at the end of grade 11 of a secondary school. In order to enter a college or university, they have to pass entrance examinations depending upon the profile of the higher institution.

In spite of the fact that education is compulsory according to the law, some gymnasia require entrance examinations for grades 1 and 5, which increase their potential to become high quality educational institutions.

The purposes for pupils' evaluation at the end of the primary cycle are to establish their level of knowledge and abilities at the end of the first stage of schooling, diagnose any learning difficulties, predict pupils' future performance levels, stimulate pupils' motivation to learn, and obtain estimates of the quality of teaching-learning in primary education.

Beginning in the 2000-01 school year, the direction of Assessment and Examination of the Ministry of Education administers tests of Romanian language and mathematics to pupils in the fourth form (10- and 11-year-olds). Test items represent several question formats. Multiple-choice, true-false, matching, and constructed-response items are used to measure students' reading ability.³⁰

Standardized Tests

Except for the officially controlled tests made and administered by the Ministry, teachers and researchers are free to select the tests necessary for each purpose. Currently, private investigators intend to develop standardized tests of children's knowledge acquisition and developmental level. Such instruments are not currently in use.

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Language and Literacy



Morocco's official language is Arabic. French, however, is used frequently in business, government, and diplomacy, and Spanish also is spoken. Berber is the first language of about one-third of the population.

Education System



Governance and Organization

The Moroccan education system is highly centralized. The Ministry of Education is currently implementing a new structure recommended by the Royal Commission of Education and Training (*Charte Nationale d'Education et de Formation*) to be in place by 2010.¹ The main features of the new reform are to:

- Enhance school enrollment rates
- Decentralize the education system
- Build new curricula
- Reorganize the structure of the education system
- Assess the education system.

As reflected by the proportion of its investment, Morocco emphasizes the importance of its education system; 26.3 percent of the general budget is allocated to the education system.²

Structure of the Education System

In general, the Moroccan education system comprises four major levels: preschool, compulsory

school, secondary school, and higher education. Since 1963, the primary school has been compulsory for children between the ages of 7 and 13. In 1985, a new structure of the education system was launched, dividing instruction into two levels: compulsory school lasting nine years and secondary school lasting three years.

Pre-primary School

Early childhood education is available to children under the age of seven, and is not compulsory. There are two main types of pre-primary school in Morocco. Kindergarten is a modern school providing a modern education especially in cities. The Koranic school is a traditional school providing traditional education and instruction based on the precepts of Islam. Children learn to read, write, and calculate. This type of pre-primary school is available in both urban and rural areas, but plays an important role especially in the remote areas of the countryside.

Compulsory School

The compulsory school level consists of two stages. Spanning six years, the first stage accepts children between the ages of 6 and 13. The second stage spans three years and receives those children who have successfully completed the first stage.

Secondary School

Secondary school begins at the end of compulsory school when pupils are 16. There are two main types of secondary school in Morocco: the general education school and the technical school.

Types of Schools

Almost all Moroccan comprehensive schools (compulsory and secondary schools) and universities are

Country Profile: Morocco

Geographical Location and Size

Morocco is located in northern Africa, occupying a strategic location along the strait of Gibraltar. It borders the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, between Algeria and Mauritania. The area of the country is 710,850 square kilometers, with 3,500 kilometers of coastline. Rabat is the capital of Morocco. The city's 12th-century Hassan Tower, with its 55 meter minaret, is a major attraction for visitors. Casablanca is the largest city in the kingdom. Marrakech, Fez, and Meknes are well-preserved imperial cities, rich in history.

The climate is Mediterranean but becomes more extreme in the interior. The northern coast and interior are mountainous (the highest point is Toubkal at 4,165 meters) with large areas of bordering plateaus, intermountain valleys, and rich coastal plains.³

From 1912 to 1956, Morocco was divided into French and Spanish protectorates. In 1975, Morocco organized the famous "Green March" in order to liberate the Moroccan Sahara from Spanish occupation. Spain still occupies the Moroccan enclaves of Ceuta and Mellilia on the Mediterranean coast, and several small islands off the northern coast of Morocco.

Population and Health Statistics

Since it was part of the Phoenician, Hellenic, Carthaginian, and Roman civilizations, Morocco has been influenced by several ancient cultures. In the late 7th century, Arabic influences became the strongest, including the written language and the religion of Islam. The majority of Moroccans are descendants of Arabs and Berbers, who to this day live in perfect harmony.

In July 1999, the population was 29,661,636. Berbers live mainly in mountain villages, while the Arab majority inhabits the lowlands. Approximately 55 percent of the population lives in urban areas, and the average population density is 63 persons per square kilometer.⁴

Sunni Islam is the religion of most of the population. However, some 45,000 Jews enjoy religious freedom and full civil rights – a role in society unique among Arab countries.

The life expectancy for males is 65 years, and for females 69 years.⁵ Infant mortality is 48 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁶



Political System

Morocco is a constitutional hereditary monarchy. The King is the spiritual leader through his position as commander of the faithful. The government comprises the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Ministers. The Prime Minister is appointed by the King and exercises administrative powers as well as recommending appointees to the Cabinet. Parliament is a multi-party democracy comprising the House of Representatives and the House of Counselors. Members of Parliament represent several different political parties and trade unions.

Economy and Employment

The major sectors in Morocco's economy are agriculture, industry (mainly food, leather and textiles, and chemicals), maritime fishing, mining, and handicrafts. Men and women comprise approximately 65 and 35 percent of the workforce, respectively.⁷ Of the country's total workforce, about half are employed in the agriculture sector.⁸ In 1999, the GNP per capita was US\$ 1,190.⁹

state-run. Students attending comprehensive schools do not pay any fees except for a minor registration fee. There are, however, a number of private schools. Practically all nurseries and kindergartens are privately run, and approximately 4 percent of all compulsory schools are private.¹⁰

Duration and Timing of the School Year

All schools in Morocco must be open for instruction between the 16th of September and the 30th of June. Prior to 2001-02, the school year was divided into three terms with a two-week break between them, but there are now just two terms with a two-week break between them.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

There are 227,905 teachers in compulsory and secondary schools in Morocco. Approximately 38 percent are female.

Eight percent of teachers are between the ages of 50 and 60, 37 percent are between 40 and 49, 27 percent are between 30 and 39, and 28 percent are under 30.¹¹

Teacher Education

Almost all teachers in Morocco have received formal training. Conducted in institutes of pedagogy, training lasts one year for teachers of the first stage of compulsory school, and two years for teachers of its second stage. Secondary school teachers attend either one or four years in a training college. Admission to either of these institutes requires a matriculation examination. The curriculum for teacher training includes courses in educational theory, psychology, didactics, and specific subject areas such as Arabic, French, mathematics, and science. A teaching practicum is a required part of the teacher education programs.

Teacher In-service Education

The Ministry of Education promotes professional development and encourages all teachers to improve their skills. National and local programs provide information to teachers on changes in curriculum, assessment, and instruction. School inspectors play a large role in designing these programs.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The national curriculum guide promotes literacy as a means of communication, education, and thinking, as well as a melting pot of values and knowledge. Arabic as a school subject is divided into four major areas: reading, writing, grammar, and expression. This reflects the general policy of the education authorities, namely that literacy is the basis of general education, and good reading abilities are essential for everyone to participate in a democratic society.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

In Morocco, reading is taught as a separate subject throughout compulsory school. The formal teaching of reading to Moroccan children begins at the age of 6 or 7, in the first grade of compulsory school. However, many children have started learning at home and some can already read when they begin school.

The National Curriculum Guide lays down clear reading and writing goals for all nine grades of compulsory school. The main objectives for pupils in grade 4 are:¹²

- Become acquainted with the concepts of rhyme and rhythm, letters, words, sentences, and punctuation marks
- Read aloud and silently at a reasonable speed
- Perform tasks that promote the acquisition of a broader vocabulary and linguistic understanding
- Make use of a varied range of texts and understand them.

Materials for Reading Instruction

The Ministry of Education publishes and distributes official textbooks and educational materials for teaching reading. Private publishers also produce a range of quality reading texts, workbooks, and other supporting aids for teachers.

Instructional Time

During the school year, pupils in grades 1 through 4 are entitled to 26 hours per week of instruction

in all subjects. Each lesson is between 25 and 45 minutes. Pupils in grade four receive eight lessons per week in reading and writing in Arabic.¹³

Classroom Organization and Class Size

At the compulsory level, classroom teachers teach all subject areas to their students, including reading. Reading instruction is characterized by whole-class instruction. Many Moroccan primary schools contain composite classes with two or more grade levels. Class size typically ranges from 25 to 40 pupils. There are no reading specialists, but inspectors are available for consultation. Their mission also is to provide advice and encouragement to young teachers.

Second Language Reading Instruction

French is the first foreign language taught in schools, beginning in grade 3. Students receive 14 lessons per week in reading, speaking, and writing in a foreign language.¹⁴

Reading Disabilities

Classroom teachers regularly assess Moroccan pupils to diagnose reading difficulties. Those who have reading difficulties are given support for various lengths of time, depending upon the severity of the problem. There are no special teachers to provide programs for pupils with particular reading difficulties such as dyslexia.

Literacy Programs



Reading competitions are held at the end of each term in some primary schools, but they are not compulsory.

Some non-governmental organizations also have literacy programs targeted at pupils who live in remote or disadvantaged areas. They provide courses in literacy and numeracy and distribute books free of charge. Morocco also has literacy programs targeted at adults. There are two main programs within the nationwide campaign: “AB”, which is carried out through a series of television courses, and “Struggle Against Illiteracy”, a widespread literacy program in reading, writing, and numeracy. Courses are open to both men and women, and are held in all mosques following the afternoon prayer.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Pupils in grades 1 through 5 are given an oral reading test at the end of each term of the school year. No special test in oral reading is given in grades 6 through 9, but reading comprehension is tested as part of Arabic and French courses. Results of class examinations and informal reading tests are used as the basis for assessing pupils’ academic performance at the end of each school year.

National or Regional Examinations

Standardized national examinations are set for grades 6 and 9 of compulsory school. The subjects tested in grade 6 are Arabic and French (comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and grammar), mathematics, history, geography, and precepts of Islam.

Standardized and Diagnostic Tests

The Education System Assessment Direction was created in 1995. Since then, this group has been working hard to create standardized tests for grades 6 and 9. The Direction also has initiated a battery of diagnostic tests in grades 3, 5, and 8, and is currently creating diagnostic tests for grades 4, 6, and 9.

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THE NETHERLANDS

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Language and Literacy



Dutch is the official language in the Netherlands. Frisian, its second official language, has a special status. More than 400,000 people living in the northern province of Friesland speak it every day, and schools in Friesland are allowed to teach in Frisian. From a practical standpoint, however, the second language in the Netherlands is English. During the last two years of primary school, English is part of the curriculum.

Some 25 million people around the world speak Dutch. These people live mainly in the Netherlands itself, in the Flemish part of Belgium, in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, and in the former Dutch territory of Suriname. Various regional dialects are still spoken in these language areas in addition to or instead of Dutch. Afrikaans, spoken in South Africa, is a separate language closely related to Dutch.¹

The Netherlands' literacy rate is over 95 percent.² There are 306 daily newspapers in circulation per 1,000 inhabitants.³ In the Netherlands, there are 1,130 public libraries reporting a total of 69,797,000 visits.⁴ Libraries are generally divided into three categories: research libraries (usually linked to universities and research institutions), public libraries (intended for the general public and open to everyone), and special libraries (linked to companies or public/private institutions, or functioning as a separate specialist library).

Public libraries form a network of local, provincial, and national library institutions. Except the national public library facilities and libraries for the visually handicapped financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, public libraries have been financed directly by the

municipalities and provinces since 1987. Almost all municipalities have at least one public library. Larger cities have a main library as well as local branches and smaller towns usually have a library connected with a provincial library center (Provinciale Bibliotheek Centrale; PBC). In addition to lending books, public libraries offer a variety of services that are free of charge, such as access to information files and reference books, and the use of reading rooms.

Education System



Governance and Organization

One of the key features of the Dutch education system is freedom of education, which is guaranteed by the Constitution. This includes the freedom to found schools, organize the teaching in schools, and determine the principles on which they are based (freedom of conviction). This means that people living in the Netherlands have the right to found schools on the basis of their own religious, ideological, or educational beliefs and to have them funded by government. Because of this constitutional right, schools in the Netherlands vary in denomination and ideological outlook.⁵

To ensure a high quality of education however, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science does impose a number of statutory standards. Core goals for both primary and secondary education were determined in 1993 to help improve the quality of education, while still leaving schools free to determine their own educational content and how to attain the core goals.^{6,7}

The core goals in primary education consist of *cognitive* core goals for each subject as well as goals

Country Profile: Netherlands

Geographical Location and Size

A member of the European Union, the Netherlands is bordered by the North Sea to the North and West, the Federal Republic of Germany to the East, and Belgium to the South. The country is mainly flat, and a significant part of it consists of a river delta and polders. About 27 percent of the land is below sea level, and about 60 percent of the population live on this portion of land. The total land area is approximately 41,000 square kilometers, divided into 12 provinces.⁸

Population and Health Statistics

With a population of 16 million in 2001 and 466 persons per square kilometer, the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world.⁹ Each day the Dutch population grows by an average of 329 inhabitants; 550 children are born, 385 people die, 326 immigrants come to live in the Netherlands and 162 people leave the country.¹⁰ In 2000, the infant mortality rate was 5 per 1,000 live births. Life expectancy for females was 81 years of age compared to 75 years for males.¹¹

In the Netherlands, there is separation of church and state. Dutch society is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic due to the influx of people from Mediterranean countries and immigrants from former Dutch overseas territories. Since many of the migrants have settled in the large cities in the western part of the country, 89 percent of the Dutch population lives in urban areas.¹²

Political System

The Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy, governed by a democratically elected parliament. There is a multi-party system. The Constitution provides for members of the Dutch Lower Chamber, the provincial councils, and the municipal councils to be elected directly. Members of the Dutch Upper Chamber are elected by the provincial councils.



Economy and Employment

The economy of the Netherlands is ranked as high-income. The per capita gross national product (GNP) for 2001 was US\$ 25,140.¹³

In the Netherlands, the total workforce is 40.4 percent women and 59.6 men.¹⁴ About 64 percent of the labor force is in services, transport, and the public sector; 32 percent in industry; 20 percent in construction and manufacturing; and 4 percent in agriculture.¹⁵

related to behavior and self-image, such as motivation or skill acquisition. For language and arithmetic, a number of intermediate goals also were developed to clarify step-by-step how to meet the core goals in the different stages of primary education. The early literacy intermediate goals for kindergarten and 1st grade (Groups 1-3) were published in 1999,¹⁶ and those for advanced literacy are to be published in the near future.

At the secondary level, the core curriculum has attainment targets for fifteen compulsory subjects and six general areas, including several skills and subject-bridging topics, which are derived from societal phenomena (such as the relationship between man and nature). The attainment targets are redefined every five years. Schools are required to use the attainment targets as the minimum levels of achievement for the completion of basic secondary education.

The central government determines the core goals and bears primary responsibility for promoting innovation in education and for inspecting the educational system. The Education Inspectorate – “the eyes and ears of the minister” – carries out the inspection of education. The duties of the Inspectorate are to ensure compliance with statutory regulations, to keep abreast of the state of education, to promote the development of education, and to report and advise the minister either upon request or on its own initiative.

Education is free for all children up to the age of 16, but pupils in secondary school often have to pay for the use of instructional materials (particularly books). In 2000, the Netherlands’ total public expenditure on pre-primary and primary education amounted to 14 percent of its total GNP per capita, while 21 percent was spent on secondary education.

Structure of the Education System

The education system in the Netherlands is divided into three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

Primary education is for children aged from 4 to 12, and special primary education is for children aged 3 to 12 who require special educational care.

Secondary education for pupils aged from 12 to 18 is divided into the following programs:

- Pre-vocational education (VBO) and individualized pre-vocational education (IVBO), for 12- to 16-year-olds

- Junior general secondary education (MAVO), for 12- to 16-year-olds
- Senior general secondary education (HAVO), for 12- to 17-year-olds
- Pre-university education (VWO), for 12- to 18-year-olds.

Secondary vocational education (sub-divided into senior secondary vocational education, MBO, and apprenticeship training) for 16- to 20-year-olds, has four levels: training to assistant level (6 months to 1 year), basic vocational training (2 to 3 years); professional training (2 to 4 years); middle-management training (3 to 4 years), or specialist training (1 to 2 years).

Tertiary or higher education is divided into:

- Higher professional education (HBO)
- University education (WO)
- Open higher-distance education (Open University).

Adult education for those over 18 years of age, includes adult general secondary education (VAVO), courses providing a broad basic education, Dutch as a second language, and courses aimed at fostering self-reliance.

Enrollment Ratios

It is compulsory for children in the Netherlands to attend school full-time from the age of five. In practice, however, nearly all children start school at the age of four. Full-time education is compulsory until the end of the school year in which the student reaches the age of 16, at which point the student is required to attend an educational institution at least part-time until reaching 18. A large proportion of young people in this age group are enrolled in full-time secondary or secondary vocational education. Others opt for day release, spending one day a week in the classroom and the rest of the week receiving practical training with an employer.

The Compulsory Education Act is implemented by the municipal authorities. The municipal executive checks that children below school-leaving age who are registered as residents in the

area are enrolled as pupils at an educational establishment. Local authorities ensure compliance with the Act in both public and private schools through the school attendance officer appointed for this purpose.

Types of Schools

Parents and children in the Netherlands can choose from a range of public and private schools. Public schools are run by the municipal authorities or by a governing committee appointed by the municipality for this purpose. However, most children, 69 percent in primary schools and 79 percent in secondary schools, attend schools privately run by associations or foundations.¹⁷ Most of the private schools are either Roman Catholic or Protestant, but there are also Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, and Humanist schools in the Netherlands. In addition, there are private non-denominational schools, which are run by associations or foundations, but are not based on any specific religious or ideological beliefs. Like some of the publicly run schools, many privately run schools base their teaching on specific educational principles, like those of Maria Montessori. Unlike publicly run schools, which must admit all pupils, private schools can impose criteria for admission. In practice, however, most private schools pursue non-restrictive admission policies.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

One school year encompasses about 40 weeks for both primary and secondary schools. Classes are held between August/September and June/July. The summer vacation lasts six (primary education) or seven weeks (secondary education). In addition, schools close for one week in mid-October, two weeks over Christmas, one week at the end of February and several days between April and May. To spread the holiday crowds, the holidays are staggered across three regions of the country (northern, central, and southern).

The school day lasts a maximum of 5 hours. During the first four years, children receive 3,520 hours of education (an average of 880 hours per school year); in the last four years they receive 4,000 hours (an average of 1,000 hours per school year).

Pupils attend school from Monday through Friday. Schools are free to schedule the five-day school week themselves. For pre-school and

kindergarten (Groups 1 and 2), schools can opt for a four-day school week, provided that the lower number of hours is compensated for in the following years. A typical school day for a primary school pupil would be from 8:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. (until midday on Wednesdays), with a 15-minute break in the morning and a lunch break of 60 to 75 minutes. Secondary school pupils usually start at 8:15 a.m., and remain in school until 2:00 or 3:00 p.m.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

In primary school, 65 percent of the teachers are female and 35 percent male.¹⁸ The likelihood that their teachers will be male increases with the age of the pupils. In the 1994-95 school year, teachers' average age was 38 in pre-school (group 1) and 41 in the higher grades (calculated on the basis of grades 1, 3 and 5 – groups 3, 5 and 7).

Teacher Education

Primary school teacher training colleges provide training at the higher professional education level (HBO). Teacher education takes a total of four years and begins with a propaedeutic year (concluded with an examination), which means that students enter the main phase of training only after successfully completing the first year of study. Most students begin their teacher training immediately after secondary education (HAVO or VWO) at the age of 17 or 18. People with a diploma in senior secondary vocational education (MBO) or pre-higher professional education (VHBO) can also enroll for teacher training. Some of the people currently employed as teachers have received training at old-style training colleges. A large part of the current training program consists of practical work experience in primary or special education.

In addition to the original vocational training, some teachers received additional training or opted for a specialization to improve their own expertise, and to strengthen the expertise of their teaching team in general.

Teacher In-service Education

Teachers can get additional training in various fields provided by primary school teacher training

colleges or other institutions such as school advisory services. As a result of a policy program called *Weer Samen Naar School* (Back to School Together), more and more children with developmental, learning, and behavioral difficulties are being retained in regular primary education. This creates a special challenge for teachers, so they receive training in diagnostic and remedial skills, as well as in how to vary teaching formats and grouping arrangements during instruction, monitor progress of pupils who have very different levels of proficiency, and deal with pupils who require additional attention or have exhibited behavioral problems in class. Additional training also is provided for teachers confronting classes with high percentages of pupils from a non-Dutch and/or disadvantaged background.

Teachers may take courses in implementing a student monitoring system, working with intervention plans, intercultural teaching and/or teaching aimed at decreasing gender stereotyping, and applying new methods in teaching arithmetic.¹⁹ Finally, training is provided for those entering new professions in primary education, such as internal pupil counselors, arithmetic and language coordinators, junior and senior department coordinators, and ICT coordinators.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Dutch language education is focused on helping pupils develop the skills that will enable them to use the language properly in everyday situations; to acquire knowledge of the meaning, use, and form of language; and to enjoy the use and awareness of language. The core goals in Dutch language education are divided into four domains: oral proficiency, reading proficiency, writing proficiency, and language awareness. Reading proficiency is sufficient when the following objectives have been reached:

- The pupils know that texts can be read with different goals in mind.
- The pupils are able to:
 - distinguish between informative and argumentative texts, stories, poetry and dia-

logues for radio plays, puppet shows, or drama;

- adjust their reading in accordance with the goal, set by themselves or the teacher;
 - reiterate the main themes of an informative text;
 - indicate the main line of argument in an argumentative text, as well as how their opinion relates to the opinion stated in the text.
- The pupils are able to use common sources of written information.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

After two years of kindergarten (most children enter primary school at the age of 4), formal reading and writing instruction starts in first grade (Group 3). During kindergarten, preparatory instruction is given to induce phonemic awareness and graphemic identification, and to introduce some of the notions to be used in later instruction.

During the first year of reading instruction, there is a strong focus on the acquisition of decoding skills. Although instruction in the first grade includes stories, only a few instructional activities are aimed at the developing of reading comprehension. Instruction in comprehension takes place from second and third grades onward, when most schools adopt a curriculum for reading comprehension.

In 1991, Aarnoutse and Weterings conducted a study to examine the amount of time devoted to the teaching of reading strategies in reading comprehension lessons.²⁰ This study showed that direct instruction occurred only 4 percent of the time and was primarily focused on the explanation of word meaning. Most of the instructional time was devoted to the (group) reading of the text, answering comprehension questions and checking the answers. These results reflect a long tradition in reading instruction²¹ and are still common instructional practice today.²²

Many children in the Netherlands seemed to think that reading is “saying words aloud” rather than thinking about the content of the text. This

may have been the result of the emphasis on separate skills in reading instruction. By only practicing skills separately, children do not experience the joy of reading, nor do they gain an understanding of the communicative function of reading. This might also be one of the reasons why motivation for free-time reading was decreasing.²³

In the 1990s, an increasing number of schools began working with new methods, explicitly incorporating the direct instruction of reading comprehension strategies.²⁴ Primary schools in the Netherlands currently continue to implement these methods.

Materials for Reading Instruction

Most schools use teaching methods based mainly on textbooks from educational publishers. There are textbooks for integrated language reading education as well as textbooks for separate language and reading education (numbering 15 in 1996). There also is a considerable amount of other material addressing spelling and grammar. Furthermore, schools have boxes with composition cards, plenty of readers, and series of reading material. Since the 1980s, specific material has been available for teaching Dutch as a second language.

For reading instruction, about eighty percent of the schools use a method called *Veilig Leren Lezen* (VLL, Learning to Read Safely),²⁵ which can be characterized as an indirect phonics approach.²⁶ The method is typically applied quite strictly. Particularly in the first three months of reading instruction, there is a strong focus on the structure of the written and spoken language. Children acquire knowledge of graphemes and phonemes, and the correspondences between them. Halfway through first grade, most of the children are able to decode simple and transparent Dutch words. In the second part of the year, there is more emphasis on reading short texts to increase fluency and elaborate on decoding skills. In addition to VLL, several other methods for reading instruction have been recently developed, but have not as yet been widely adopted.²⁷

Use of Technology

The number of computers in Dutch schools has been growing steadily, and technology is beginning to play an important role in an increasing number of schools. The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science encourages the use of com-

puters in education by providing extra funding specifically for this purpose.

In primary education, nearly all teachers use a computer in class. The average pupil in second grade spends 5 to 6 hours a week working or playing on the computer. A list of computer activities with the percentages of grade 5 students who engage in them is provided in Exhibit 1. In the 2000-01 school year there was one computer available for every 8.5 students, although some of the computers are becoming obsolete.²⁸ Furthermore, primary schoolteachers indicate that the available educational software is not always in line with their teaching methods. This will soon be resolved by the development of new educational computer programs. Educational publishers are now constructing sites with practical examples for teachers to use.²⁹

In the 1999-2000 school year 90 percent of 13- and 14-year olds used a computer for some amount of time during lessons. Only one third of them used a computer more than 9 times a year. The computer is used primarily for searching the Internet and gathering information. At home, students reported using the computer mainly for playing computer games, as well as searching the Internet and writing reports.³⁰

Many primary schools employ special ICT coordinators who are responsible for encouraging colleagues to use ICT applications and for providing support. Schools that require support in this field also can call in the school advisory services, which offer a wide range of services to teachers, ICT coordinators, and school heads. Furthermore, there are eight subsidized expertise centers for ICT and education in the Netherlands, which collect and disperse information on ICT-based innovations in education.

Exhibit 1: Use of Computers in Dutch Primary Education
(% of pupils in Group 7/Grade 5)

	% of Pupils At School		% of Pupils Outside School	
	1998/99	1999/00	1998/99	1999/00
Practicing	55	60	37	36
Writing/Text Report	18	25	66	66
Gathering Info/Communication	8	18	30	42
Playing Games	36	40	88	87

The Ministry encourages schools to use the Internet in order to communicate with each other and to establish cooperative networks. *Kennisnet* (Knowledge Net) has made a substantial contribution to this end. *Kennisnet* is a secure and controlled network that brings together schools, institutions, museums, and libraries via cable connections. It is used by pupils in primary education (4-to 12-year-olds), pupils in secondary education (12- to 17-year-olds), managers, teachers, and parents.

Instructional Time

The Ministry does not prescribe how much time teachers should spend on each subject. According to a number of surveys and analyses of curriculum documents, the time spent on language instruction in groups 1 and 2 is usually 3 to 4 hours a week, in group 3 nearly 9 hours, in groups 4 and 5 approximately 7 to 8 hours, and in the highest three groups approximately 7 hours.^{31,32,33,34} From group 3 onwards, more than 25 percent of the available instruction time is spent on language instruction. Research has shown, however, that the effective use of time is approximately 75 percent of the above-mentioned number of hours. Some time is required for organizational and other matters not directly related to the teaching-learning process.³⁵ Using data log books to record the use of time revealed that considerably less time was spent on language instruction than the planned timetable hours reported by surveys.³⁶ According to this method of recording, language instruction occurs approximately four and a half hours per week. Time spent on various aspects of the language curriculum in Group 5 is shown in Exhibit 2.³⁷

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Schools in the Netherlands are free to determine how they arrange students in groups for instruction. Most schools form groups on the basis of age. Pupils are usually taught by the same teacher over a one-year period. It may happen that pupils get the same teacher for more than one year when two-year groups have been combined in a single class. There are also schools where classes are composed in some other way. For example, at schools using the Jena method, classes consist of pupils of different ages and with different levels of proficiency and pupils are taught by the same teacher during the entire primary school period.

Exhibit 2: Time Spent on Various Language Activities (Group 5/Grade 3)

Aspect	Average Number of Minutes per Week	Average Number of Lessons per Month
Spelling	97	12
Language Support	97	11
Decoding	85	11
Reading Comprehension	51	5
Writing (Composition)	42	4
Drama/Language Expression	30	3

In October 2001, classes in Dutch primary education consisted of 23.2 pupils on average (21.9 in the junior department and 25.8 in the senior department). There is no legal maximum limit for class size in Dutch primary education. However, the intention is to reduce the average class size in the junior department (groups 1 to 4) to 20 pupils per teacher in the school year 2002-03. The schools will receive additional funding from the Ministry to this end.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

There are no reading specialists in Dutch schools. Pupils with reading difficulties are often helped by a remedial teacher or speech therapist associated with the school or school advisory service. There also is a trend in primary education towards employing more coordinators, who are responsible for a certain subject or age group (internal pupil counselors, junior department coordinators, senior department coordinators, language coordinators, and arithmetic coordinators). A language coordinator is someone with specialized knowledge of language teaching methods, who takes stock of the primary school's language policy, and implements and evaluates this policy together with the school's management and teachers. If necessary, a language coordinator will coach and guide staff members. A training program has recently been set up for experienced teachers who wish to become language coordinators.

Second Language Reading Instruction

Children from a non-Dutch background may, under certain conditions, receive lessons in their home language and culture, for instance Turkish or Arabic. These lessons are provided outside the

normal program of activities. In a number of primary schools close to the border, some teaching is being done in the languages of the neighboring countries (French and German) by way of an experiment.

Reading Disabilities

A considerable number of pupils in primary education have difficulties with one or more aspects of language. Approximately 10 percent of Dutch pupils and 15 percent of the pupils from a non-Dutch background experience reading difficulties, which in general have serious consequences for their cognitive and socio-emotional development. Unfortunately primary school teachers are in general insufficiently equipped to guide these pupils. The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science pursues a policy geared towards the optimal development of all the talents that pupils possess (known as the Educational Opportunities policy).³⁸ The aim is to improve the chances of children who are most at risk of falling behind in education. Of the 1.6 million children in primary education, approximately 218,000 Dutch pupils and 200,000 pupils from a non-Dutch background constitute the target groups of this policy.

In 2001, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science distributed the Reading Problems and Dyslexia Protocol (from the National Center for Language Education) among all the primary schools in the Netherlands.³⁹ Intended for teachers, remedial teachers, internal counselors, and speech therapists, this protocol contains guidelines for counseling pupils in groups 1 to 4 who have problems learning to read.

Literacy Programs



(Reading Foundation) *Stichting Lezen* is an organization that has been established to promote reading for pleasure.

It promotes reading in both Dutch and Friesian. The foundation supports the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science's reading policy by allocating funds and stimulating projects that promote reading. The foundation links existing promotional activities to one another, supports the development of new reading instruction methods, and stimulates research in the field of reading.

The National Center for Language Education (*Expertisecentrum Nederlands*) aims at improving the teaching and learning of Dutch language arts in primary schools. By undertaking research and development projects, the center documents the school conditions that help children become skilled and motivated communicators and readers. In this respect, interactive language instruction is the central objective with regard to children learning Dutch as a first language (NT1) or as a second language (NT2). Interactive language instruction is intended to promote social, meaningful, and strategic learning.

Assessment



Dutch schools are free to choose the tests used for monitoring pupils' progress. They often use curriculum-embedded tests that match the subject matter provided in the textbooks for various subjects. Additionally, most schools use the pupil monitoring system – *Leerling Volg Systeem* (LVS) – for groups 1 through 8 in primary education. This system was developed by Cito, the National Institute for Educational Measurement, and is used to regularly assess pupils progress. The system consists of a series of packages for the various basic skills. Normally, each package includes three components: the tests, material to identify possible problems, and specific aids. LVS involves a number of phases. Since the tests are administered on a regular basis, problems usually are spotted at an early stage and subsequently analyzed to devise a remedial action plan. Regular testing prevents children from falling behind unnoticed. LVS is also used by the Education Inspectorate to assess whether the quality of education is sufficient or needs to be improved. Tests help teachers to report more accurately to parents and school boards, and also play a role in quality control at the national level.^{40,41}

Some 85 percent of all Dutch primary schools use the tests for primary school leavers developed by the National Institute for Educational Measurement (Cito) to assess pupils' level of attainment at the end of primary schooling.⁴² The results of these (or similar) tests, together with the head teacher's recommendation, are used to determine the most appropriate type of secondary education for each pupil.

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Language and Literacy



English and Māori are the two official languages in New Zealand, English being the most commonly used. Māori, an official language since 1987, is a Polynesian language closely related to the Tahitian and Hawaiian languages. Presently about one-third of Māori understand the Māori language (but not all of these are able to speak it). However, revitalization of the language is underway. Other languages spoken in urban areas include various languages of the Pacific and Asia.

Publications have been in circulation in New Zealand since the mid-1800s. The printing press was brought to the islands from Europe, and by 1842 the first Māori language newspaper had been published. In 1996, there were 23 different daily newspaper titles with a circulation of 216 newspapers per 1,000 inhabitants.¹

New Zealand's public library system is administered and funded through local government bodies. Most of the public libraries provide community services to assist, for example, new adult readers, hospitals and prisons, and literacy programs during the school holidays.

Education System



Governance and Organization

Compulsory education in New Zealand is decentralized under the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for providing policy advice to the Minister of Education, overseeing the implementation of policy, developing guidelines for the national curriculum,

and ensuring accountability for resources. The Ministry of Education also provides funding for schools, including those in early childhood and tertiary sectors, and other educational services like school support; oversees special education services and the national distance-learning Correspondence School; and conducts research.

According to the Education Act of 1989, education in state schools is free to all students between the ages of 5 and 19.

A Board of Trustees is elected for each state primary and secondary school by the parents of children enrolled at the school, and is largely autonomous in its management of the schools within its jurisdiction. Each Board of Trustees is responsible for allocating operational funds. Student enrollment, school type, the socio-economic demographics of the surrounding community, and the school's property profile are all factors that impact on school funding. Public expenditure on education in 2000, including tertiary and early childhood education, accounted for approximately 17 percent of the total central government expenses.

The framework for the curriculum in New Zealand specifies seven broad learning areas, essential skills relevant across all areas, attitudes and values developed by the school curriculum, and policies and procedures for assessment. The seven learning areas are language and languages (including English), mathematics, science, technology, social sciences, the arts, and health and physical education. A curriculum statement for each of the learning areas establishes the objectives for academic achievement, and provides the structure for implementing the curriculum. There are parallel curriculum statements in *Te Reo Māori*.

Country Profile: New Zealand

Geographical Location and Size

New Zealand is an island nation comprising two main islands, North Island and South Island, as well as several smaller islands. Situated in the southwest region of the Pacific Ocean, the islands span an area of approximately 300,000 square kilometers, with over 15,000 kilometers of coastline. The country's capital, Wellington, is on the southern coast of the North Island. The geographical features of the country are diverse. Several of the mountains on the North Island are volcanoes. As a result of the seismic activity on the North Island, the landscape includes boiling mud pools and geysers. In contrast, the South Island has over 360 glaciers, which over time have created many lakes and rivers. The flow of these rivers is a major source of hydroelectricity. The Southern Alps extend the length of the South Island. Because of New Zealand's terrain, there are many small isolated schools throughout the country.

Population and Health Statistics

There are currently about 4 million people living in New Zealand.² Approximately 75 percent of the country's population live on the North Island. About 70 percent of New Zealanders live in urban areas consisting of 30,000 people or more.³ Over a quarter of the country's population lives in or around Auckland, the largest city, which is on the North Island.

The Māori people are indigenous to New Zealand, having arrived from the Polynesian islands around the 10th century. Approximately three-quarters of New Zealanders are of European origin, primarily from the British Isles and other western European countries. Māori constitute approximately 14 percent of the population, mostly residing in the northern regions of the North Island. Immigrants from Pacific and Asian backgrounds each comprise over 5 percent of the population.⁴

The average life expectancy is 77 years, although life expectancy varies somewhat by sex and ethnicity.⁵ For example, the average life expectancy of females is about 5 years higher than for males regardless of ethnicity; and the average life expectancy among male Māori is about 7 years less than that of non-Māori males.⁶ The infant mortality rate in 2000 was 5 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁷



Political System

New Zealand is an independent, sovereign nation. The government is a unicameral parliamentary democracy that encompasses the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Parliament, the legislative branch, consists of the members of the House of Representatives, who are elected every three years under a mixed-member-proportional system. The executive branch includes the Prime Minister, Cabinet, and the public sector. The Governor General, who serves a 5-year term, represents the Queen of England, the constitutional sovereign of New Zealand. In the 1999 election, a center-left coalition government was formed, comprising members of two of the country's main political parties.

Economy and Employment

The main industries in New Zealand include agriculture, horticulture, construction, tourism, and education. The majority of the country's export earnings are from meat, wool, and dairy products from livestock. The service sector is a key source of employment, as are the primary industry sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and construction. In 2000, the female labor force was 44.8 percent of the total labor force.⁸ The GNP per capita in 2000 was US\$ 13,990.⁹

Structure of the System

Pre-primary Education

Early childhood education is available to children under the age of six, and is not compulsory. The services offered at this level of education include kindergartens, play centers, childcare, and home-based services, many of which emphasize learning through play. A growing number of early childhood education services offer bilingual and total immersion programs in Māori and Pacific languages. Government funding is available to services meeting licensing and chartering requirements.

Primary Education

Primary school is compulsory for children from the ages of 6. Nearly all children start schooling when they turn five, in what is commonly called the New Entrants class. Reading instruction begins at this stage as well. Primary education extends to the end of the eighth year (Year 8). There are three main school types at the primary level: *full primary schools* that include New Entrants through to Year 8, *contributing primary schools* (more common in urban areas) that run from New Entrants to Year 6, and *intermediate schools* for Years 7 and 8. Māori medium schools (e.g. *Kura Kaupapa Māori*) provide instruction of the state curriculum in the Māori language.

Secondary Education

There are several types of secondary schools. *State schools*, the most common type, usually provide instruction for students from Year 9 (Form 3) to the end of Year 13 (Form 7), and are primarily coeducational. New Zealand also has a small number of *independent schools*, including boarding schools that are funded privately. In some of the remote rural communities *area schools* accommodate both primary and secondary students. Māori medium schools (e.g., *Wharekura*) provide instruction in the state curriculum through the Māori language.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

Schools are required to be open for instruction a minimum of 197 days for primary schools and 190 days for secondary schools. The school year begins in the first week of February and ends with the second week in December. The year is divided into four terms of approximately 8 weeks in duration, with two-week breaks between terms.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Over 80 percent of primary school teachers are female, a figure that has changed little over the last five years.¹⁰

Just over one-third of New Zealand's primary teachers were aged between 40 and 49, another quarter were aged 50 and over with the rest aged from under 25 to 39. The average age of New Zealand primary teachers is 44 and has been increasing steadily over a number of years.¹¹

In contrast, only 55 percent of secondary school teachers are female.¹² But like the primary teachers, the secondary workforce is aging.

Teacher Education

Prior to the 1980s, all training of primary teachers was conducted in colleges of education. Initially a two-year course, it was increased to three years during the latter half of the 1960s. During the 1970s, a one-year diploma of primary teaching for graduates was introduced. The next major developments were the introduction of concurrent four-year degree courses in conjunction with a local university during the early 1980s and the lengthening of the graduate program to two years. Over the last few years, the number of teacher education providers has increased from 6 to more than 20 as a means of increasing competition through the tertiary-sector reforms incorporated in the Education Act of 1990.

Colleges of education, universities, polytechnics, institutes of technology, and other private training establishments provide initial teacher education in New Zealand. Prospective teachers may enroll in either 3-year or 4-year bachelor's degree programs in education. For those who already hold general bachelor's degrees, intensive teacher certification programs are available. The courses and opportunities presented at the different institutions vary somewhat in content and program emphasis.

Courses cover all aspects of the New Zealand curriculum, foundations of education, learning processes including child development, and teaching practices. Each provider sets out a specified number of core hours to be spent on each aspect of the teacher education curriculum. In most institutions student teachers also have the opportunity to select one or two curriculum areas

that are of particular interest (e.g., reading, special needs, Māori education, or music education), and complete more advanced study. There are no requirements specific to the teaching of reading other than what is taught in the core requirements. During initial teacher education, student teachers undertake classroom practice under the supervision of experienced teachers in a range of schools. After graduating, beginning teachers are provisionally registered and must undergo further supervision for two years under certain restrictions (e.g., maximum class size), before they receive full registration.

In general, secondary school teachers complete a university degree first and then undertake a one-year teacher education program.

The New Zealand Teachers' Council is responsible for maintaining a register of teachers who qualify for a practicing certificate under the Education Act. Teacher registration is mandatory for any teacher employed in kindergartens, private, integrated, or state schools. A teaching certificate is valid for three years. Teachers who do not meet the requirements for registration may receive a temporary position with an annual renewal restriction.

Teacher In-service Education

Professional development programs are available at both the national and local levels in order to inform teachers of changes in curriculum, assessment, and management practices. The colleges of education, universities, and consultants typically run such courses. Schools are responsible for ensuring that teachers undertake regular in-service training. A requirement of the mandatory performance management system for teachers is that they undergo professional development each year.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Reading is a fundamental part of the New Zealand curriculum for all students. Since 1998, a Government led Literacy Strategy has focused on raising literacy achievement through:

- clarifying expected standards of achievement and progress towards achievement;

- increasing the knowledge and expertise of the professionals in the sector to bring about improved practice; and
- encouraging and supporting parents and other members of the family to become involved in helping learners.

Boards of Trustees are required to develop and implement teaching programs that enable students to achieve success in terms of the curriculum. This requirement is set out in the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs). The NAGs have recently been revised following a recommendation from the Literacy Taskforce, so that schools are now required to give priority to student achievement in literacy and numeracy, especially in Years 1 to 4. These changes came into effect in July 2000.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

The national curriculum for reading in classrooms is outlined in English in the New Zealand Curriculum. Like the rest of the curriculum, the objectives are stated quite broadly at each of eight levels. For example, in the Written Language Strand at Level 3 students should be able to select and read independently for enjoyment and information, different contemporary and historical texts, and integrate processes with ease.¹³ Most children are expected to be operating at Level 3 in Year 6.

Successful reading for children at age nine can be demonstrated across multiple text types through text comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and self-motivation to read. Text comprehension includes three components – literal (establishing the facts), inferential (relating the material to one's own experiences), and analytical (critical thinking). Accuracy applies to both comprehension and decoding. Fluency includes the facet of speed and covers both silent and oral reading. Independent reading both inside and outside of school, high interest and enjoyment are outcomes of successful self-motivation to read. A Māori curriculum is also available (*Te Reo Māori*) for the growing number of students taught in Māori immersion and bilingual programs.

The best practice for the teaching of reading in New Zealand primary schools has the following characteristics:¹⁴

- A sound understanding of the learning process that underpins all teaching
- The expectation that all children will become successful readers and writers
- Language programs that acknowledge the inter-relationship and reciprocity of oral, written, and visual language
- Planning for teaching that will build on the child's existing skills, knowledge, interests, and individual needs and that will acknowledge the role of the child as an active learner
- Teaching that takes account of children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds
- Teaching that uses a range of explicit and implicit instructional strategies appropriate to the learner, including small-group or individual instruction where appropriate
- Regular and purposeful monitoring of children's progress in reading and writing (using running records, teacher conferencing, observation, and other methods)
- The development of positive attitudes to reading and writing, including the willingness to take risks
- The use of a wide range of interesting material, fiction and non-fiction, in a range of media and appropriate to the instructional levels, including repetitive texts, rhymes, poems, and songs, to enhance children's print and phonological awareness
- Access to a wide range of interesting and stimulating material, fiction and non-fiction, in a range of media
- Teachers who are readers and writers.

In New Zealand, reading is usually taught as a separate subject from the start through to the end of primary school (12-year-olds). At the secondary school level, reading is incorporated as part of the English curriculum. Over recent years, there has been a push for reading instruction to be more

integrated into the wider curriculum. While writing, language, and spelling are all usually taught as separate subjects at the primary level, they are recognized as being important in the development of reading, and vice versa.

Materials for Reading Instruction

All official Ministry of Education reading materials and teaching resources are published and distributed free of charge, including those in Māori, through the Learning Media Company under contract to the Ministry of Education. There are also a number of private publishers (e.g., Ashton Scholastic and Wendy Pye) who produce a range of high-quality reading texts and other supporting aids for teachers. In New Zealand, teachers and schools are not only responsible for selecting reading materials but also for selecting suitable approaches to teaching particular students.

Teachers have access to a wide range of materials including repetitive texts, rhymes, poems and songs to enhance children's print and phonological awareness. These elements are important in reading.

The *Ready to Read* series is the backbone of reading texts in New Zealand and used extensively. First published in 1964, the series was revised in 1975. It offers:

- a series of stories that gradually increase in difficulty;
- stories that focus on New Zealand content and experiences;
- stories that match children's experiences;
- texts written in a natural format;
- a national series; and
- a range of literacy formats (e.g., poems, fiction, and non-fiction).

The series is published separately for three different developmental stages – emergent readers (following text as the teacher reads), early readers (children developing their own skills), and fluent or independent readers. The Learning Media Company publishes this series, and also produce additional reading materials, such as teacher handbooks, audio

support cassettes, School Journals to supplement class libraries, and other titles. As with the curriculum documents, there are Māori equivalents of Ready to Read (*Ngā Kete Kōrero*) and many of the other resources as well (e.g., *Kawenga Kōrero* and *He Kohikohinga*).

There are some interesting technology-based reading programs being produced commercially. One example is the Sunshine Collection Videos (formerly called the *Magic Box Learning-to-Read Program*) developed in New Zealand by Wendy Pye Ltd. The series consists of eight videos of increasing difficulty, based on the Wendy Pye Sunshine Extension books usually read by five-year-olds. Each video presentation begins by looking at the colorful illustrations, then as each word is read aloud the corresponding word in the text is highlighted on the screen, before finishing off with letter and word study. To reinforce the learning of the video presentation, the children then read the books and complete worksheets either in class or for homework.

Instructional Time

The total instructional time available in primary schools is usually 4 hours and 40 minutes per day. A normal school day runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Instruction time is one hour less per day for the first few months in the New Entrant class.

The exact amount of time designated for reading and language activities varies according to the practices of teachers and schools. The 1991 IEA Reading Literacy Study found that the total number of hours for language (including writing, spelling, literature, and grammar) instruction per week in Year 5 averaged 6.8 and the total hours allocated for reading instruction per week averaged 5.1 in New Zealand.¹⁵

Classroom Organization and Class Size

The deployment of teachers and class size is a school-level decision. Teachers are advised to work with their students as a whole class, in small groups, or individually, whichever is most appropriate for teaching a particular skill or strategy. The critical factors are deciding which strategies particular children need to work on next and how these can be taught effectively and meaningfully. Many New Zealand primary schools contain composite classes with two or more grades.

At the primary school level, classroom teachers generally teach all subjects areas to their students including reading. Many schools have an experienced senior teacher, or Literacy Leader, who is responsible for the organization and quality of their program. As well as providing advice and encouragement to younger colleagues, they may also review relevant research and attend courses or conferences. Literacy advisers, based at the Colleges of Education, are also available for consultation. There are a number of private literacy and education consultants as well.

Second Language Reading Instruction

The number of immigrants entering New Zealand from the Pacific and Asia has increased significantly over the last twenty years. This provides a challenge for our teachers in overcoming the initial literacy and language acquisition problems of speakers of languages other than English. Colleges of Education provide instruction in developing appropriate strategies to assist teachers in dealing with students from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

Reading Disabilities

Dame Marie Clay and her colleagues at Auckland University developed the Reading Recovery (RR) program through extensive research. The program is available nationally and is funded by the Ministry of Education. Specially trained RR tutors provide intensive instruction for classroom teachers entering the program. After one year of schooling, at about six years of age, students are assessed using the RR diagnostic survey. Typically, the lowest performing readers (10 to 20 percent) in a school undergo intensive one-on-one sessions. The goal is to accelerate RR students back to the same reading level as their peers within a 20-week period. Assessment data is collected for RR students up to three years after finishing, to provide a check on the long-term effectiveness.

There are 121 Resource Teachers of Literacy (RT:Lit) employed by the Ministry of Education, each serving a cluster of schools. RT:Lits work with children who have major problems in learning to read, and advise their schools about literacy policy and programs.

Literacy Programs



The Ministry of Education is currently funding a nationwide campaign to raise the profile of literacy and numeracy among primary aged children and their parents. There are two main programs within the nationwide campaign: *Feed the Mind* and *Books in Homes*.

Feed the Mind is carried out through a series of television advertisements that began in May 1999. The advertisements draw a direct link between oral language, reading, and writing. The aim was to emphasize that parents have an equally important role to play at home in encouraging their children to read and write. Pamphlets were also being developed to provide parents with practical suggestions on how to improve their children's literacy skills, for example, what to do if a child becomes stuck on a word while reading. Other features include a new handbook and video for teachers, a revision of the National Administration Guidelines (guidelines issued to schools which emphasize good management practices, strategic planning, and implementation of the curriculum) to place more importance on literacy and numeracy, and professional development workshops for principals on literacy leadership and resources. Schools also can apply for funding to develop their own literacy/numeracy projects.

Books in Homes was initiated by Alan Duff in 1992 to provide quality books for children from bookless homes. The books are provided by Ashton Scholastic and presented at schools with the help of teachers, parents, and well-known role models. The aim is to provide literacy resources to the homes of students from schools in low socioeconomic communities, typically with larger numbers of Polynesians on the roll. The program has presently covered about 65,000 students from 200 schools.

New Zealand also has literacy programs targeted to adults. Literacy Aotearoa is a nationwide organization that provides courses in literacy and numeracy, and develops training resources as well. Literacy Aotearoa also delivers training for tutors, develops new literacy services, promotes literacy, and provides networking opportunities at conferences. The National Center for Workplace Literacy and Language (Workbase) is a national organization that develops programs to improve workforce literacy, English language and numeracy skills.

Workbase has links with employers, education and training providers, and government agencies to promote the latest thinking in literacy and language development. It is accredited with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority to provide vocational training to improve the potential of workers disadvantaged by low literacy skills.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment and Diagnostic Testing

Teachers and schools develop their own policies and practices for assessment in their school with reference to national guidelines. A number of nationally developed assessment resources support teachers and schools in collecting quality achievement information.

School Entry Assessment is a resource kit for teachers of junior classes.¹⁶ It contains literacy and numeracy tasks to assess children starting school and an instruction manual and video for teachers. The literacy task consists of the *Concept About Print Test*, which forms part of Clay's observation survey.¹⁷ In addition, there are six storybooks to check on oral retelling ability. *School Entry Assessment* provides teachers with reliable information that enables schools to support students through suitable programs. A version in Māori is available (*Aro matawai Urunga-a-Kura*).

Running Records is a diagnostic tool that provides accurate and objective information on children's oral reading performance. Data are collected on record sheets, looking specifically at running words error rate, accuracy, and self-correction rate across a range of text difficulty levels. Teachers can evaluate each student's abilities in comprehension; language conventions; letter and sound relationships; letters, words, and print conventions; and self-correction processes. Other common methods of classroom assessment include student's retellings, anecdotal records, self-assessment and peer assessment, and assessing students' performance in relation to learning outcomes.

The Observation Survey is a battery of diagnostic tests administered to students after they have completed one year of schooling.¹⁸ The different components include dictation to see how students are writing and hearing sounds in words, giving word tests, checking students' letter identification

and concepts about print, and completing running records. The survey provides diagnostic data to be used in conjunction with other information collected by the teacher, to highlight strengths and weaknesses for future literacy programs.

A recent development is the Assessment Resource Banks. This is a collection of on-line assessment materials, which assess achievement of learning programs that reflect levels 2 to 5 of the national curriculum.

National Examinations

There are no examinations at the primary school level (ages 5 to 12 years). In 2002 the new National Certificate of Education Achievement, comprising a mix of internal and external assessment, will describe student achievement over the final three years of secondary school, and meet the requirements of some post-secondary trade training courses. This replaces the five separate qualifications previously used.

Standardized Tests

In New Zealand, teachers make use of a series of standardized tests developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). To assess a range of literacy skills there are tests in reading comprehension and vocabulary, word recognition, listening comprehension, and information skills.^{19,20,21,22} All the tests are nationally normed on samples of 8- to 14-year-old students, with a cycle of regular checks in place.

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Suggested Reading

For more information about reading education in New Zealand, consult the following resources, in addition to those references cited in the Endnotes and References section:

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Language and Literacy



Including a variety of different dialects, Norwegian is Norway's main language. There are two forms of written Norwegian, *Bokmaal* and *Nynorsk*, both of which have been official languages for about 100 years. About 80 percent of the population write *Bokmaal* and 20 percent write *Nynorsk*. The two are quite similar, and if you write one of them there is no problem understanding the other. Both languages are taught in school and instructional materials such as textbooks must be available in both languages. In addition, the Sami population has its own language that encompasses three distinctive dialects. Sami students in compulsory schools are entitled to education in their own language. Most Norwegians have a reasonably good understanding of English, as it is taught in school starting in grade one. Since Swedish and Danish are similar to Norwegian, it also is quite easy to communicate among those three languages.

Norway has around 160 daily newspapers with a circulation of 590 per 1,000 inhabitants. On an ordinary day, 77 percent of the population read newspapers for an average of 44 minutes.¹ There is at least one public library in each of the 435 municipalities. The total number of public libraries is 1,108, averaging 4.9 visits per inhabitant in 2000.²

Education System



Governance and Organization

The Norwegian school system is decentralized under the Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry provides guidelines and monitors outcomes, but the schools have a large degree of professional and

financial autonomy. In 2000, the Norwegian Board of Education was established to aid the Ministry in the areas of development, assessment, evaluation, and information. As part of its responsibility for developing curriculum guidelines, the Ministry issued a new national curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school system in 1997. The new curriculum features a strong emphasis on a central curriculum to ensure an educational system with common content in knowledge, traditions, and values. At the same time, there is room for local and individual adaptation.

Schools are responsible for supplying textbooks and materials to the pupils in primary and lower-secondary school. Public expenditure on education is 6.8 percent of the GNP.³

Structure of the Education System

Compulsory education in Norway consists of primary and lower-secondary education lasting a total of 10 years. Children start school in the calendar year in which they turn 6 years old, and finish their compulsory education in the calendar year they turn 16. The primary level consists of grades 1 through 7 and lower-secondary consists of grades 8 to 10. After finishing lower-secondary, most pupils attend upper-secondary school for another three years.

Most pupils are enrolled in public schools. Fewer than two percent of the primary and lower-secondary pupils attend private schools, which are considered supplementary to public education.

Pre-primary Education

Preschool education in Norway is voluntary, and is the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. In 2000, about 52 percent of children in the age group 0 to 5 years attended a child-care institution (*barnehage*).⁴ The attendance rate

Country Profile: Norway

Geographical Location and Size

Norway is located on the western part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, bordering Sweden, Finland, and Russia as well as the North Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. The rugged Norwegian coastline is 22,000 kilometers long, with numerous fjords and some 50,000 islands.⁵ Norway's area, including the island territories of Svalbard and Jan Mayen, is 385,155 square kilometers.⁶ Of the mainland's area of 324,220 square kilometers,⁷ about two-thirds is covered by mountains, and about one-fourth by forests and woodlands. Only 3 percent is arable land.

Population and Health Statistics

The current population is about 4.5 million and the population density is 15 persons per square kilometer.⁸ Norway has a small Sami minority group of about 20,000 living mainly in the northern part of the country. The immigrant population in Norway numbered approximately 297,700 persons at the beginning of 2001, thereby making up 6.6 percent of the total population.⁹ Most Norwegians (86%) belong to the Evangelical Lutheran State church, and of the approximately 210,000 Norwegians belonging to other Christian congregations, about 70,000 belong to the Human Ethical Union.¹⁰ About 63,000 belong to different Islamic communities.¹¹

As of January 2000, 77.3 percent of Norway's population lived in a total of 925 urban settlements. The four urban settlements with more than 100,000 residents – Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger/Sandnes, and Trondheim – had an estimated 1,281,971 residents and constituted 28.6 percent of the country's population.¹²

The life expectancy for men and women is 76 and 81.4 years, respectively. In 2000, the infant mortality rate was 3.8 per 1,000 live births.¹³

Political System

Norway is a constitutional monarchy. The Norwegian Parliament (*Stortinget*) has 165 members who are elected for four-year terms. For most of the period after World War II, the Labor Party has formed the government. In recent years, however, the government has consisted of coalitions of political parties from the center or from the center and the Conservative Party. Norway is a member of the United Nations and NATO, but elected to stay out of the European Union after a referendum in 1994. Administratively, the country is divided into 19 counties (*fylker*) and 435 municipalities. The municipalities are responsible for primary and lower-secondary education, while



upper-secondary education is the responsibility of the *fylker*. The *fylker* and municipalities are financed partly through local taxation and partly through funds transferred from the government.

Economy and Employment

Norway's primary natural resources are fish, forests, minerals, and hydropower. Norway also has a long tradition as a shipping nation. In the late 1960s, oil and gas were discovered in the North Sea and currently only Saudi Arabia exports more oil than Norway. The oil revenues are too large to be absorbed by the national economy and the government has accordingly invested budget surpluses in a Government Petroleum Fund, which is invested abroad.

The total labor force in Norway is about 2.35 million people. The unemployment rate is low, between 3 and 4 percent. Sixty-nine percent of all females aged 16 to 74 participate in the labor force. The participation rate among males is 77 percent.¹⁴ The GNP is US\$ 33,470.¹⁵

in preschool education increases as children get older. Only 37 percent of 1- and 2-year-olds compared to 80 percent of 5-year-olds participate in preschool education. In 1999, there were 5,942 childcare institutions in Norway, somewhat more than half of which were public (2,992). Of the private preschool institutions, 1,537 were partly financed by municipal grants.¹⁶

Primary and Lower-secondary Education

Primary and lower-secondary schools in Norway are compulsory, comprehensive, and coeducational. Their aim is to offer all children an education that is adapted to their individual abilities within the framework of the ordinary school system. The curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school contains guidelines for 10 subjects to be taught in grades 1 through 10. The subjects are Norwegian, mathematics, Christian knowledge (religion and ethics), social studies, art and crafts, science and the environment, English (which is compulsory from the primary level), music, home economics, and physical education. In addition to English, pupils in grade 8 are required to choose a second foreign language, such as German or French, or another language on the basis of local or regional needs. Reading and writing are taught as part of the Norwegian language curriculum.

Upper-secondary Education

In Norway, everyone between the ages of 16 and 19 has a right to three years of upper-secondary education leading either to higher education or to vocational or partial qualifications. Physically disabled pupils are entitled to as many as five years of upper-secondary education. During the first year, students take one of 15 foundation courses. Specialized courses and apprenticeships are offered in the second and third year. Almost all young people between 16 and 19 attend upper-secondary school, but a follow-up service is available for young people between 16 and 19 who do not attend upper-secondary education or who are unemployed.

Types of Schools

The compulsory school system is organized in three stages: grades 1 to 4 are the primary stage, grades 5 to 7 the intermediate stage, and grades 8 to 10 the lower-secondary stage. Most schools have grades 1 through 7, but due to differences in popu-

lation density, geographical conditions, and transportation, schools with grades 1 to 4 and grades 1 to 10 are not uncommon. In small schools where it is impractical to have separate classes for each grade, pupils from several grades are taught in the same class. About one-third of the Norwegian schools are multi-graded (several grades taught in the same class) and about 12 percent of pupils receive their education in multi-graded schools.¹⁷

Counties (*fylker*) run more than 500 upper-secondary schools. These schools often combine general theoretical education and vocational training, giving equal status to practical and theoretical education.

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The school year runs from the middle of August to the middle of June, lasting 38 weeks (190 days). Teachers have an additional week for preparation, planning, and in-service education.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Of the 67,000 teachers in primary and lower-secondary schools, 70 percent are women. In upper-secondary school, there are slightly more male than female teachers – 55% male compared to 45% female. Seven out of 10 teachers work full-time. During the past decade, the age structure of the teaching force has changed. In 1992, 26.9 percent of teachers were over 50 compared to 35.4 percent in 2000. While the mean age of primary schoolteachers remained fairly constant at around 43.7, there has been a marked increase in the number of teachers over 50 for the rest of the system. In upper-secondary school, the mean age has increased from 44.1 in 1992 to 47.2 in 2000. During the same period, the number of teachers over 50 has risen from 27.7 percent to 46.1 percent.¹⁸

Teacher Education

General teacher education, lasting four years, takes place at state colleges. Completion of university studies – a minimum four years – with one additional year of teacher training and teaching practice is another way to qualify as a teacher. General teacher education is typically for primary school teachers, but teachers with general teacher

education may also teach in lower-secondary school. Teachers trained in universities may teach only subjects they studied at university, so they are mainly employed in lower-secondary schools as subject teachers. In upper-secondary schools all teachers are subject specialists. The academic or vocational subjects a teacher is qualified to teach will determine his or her assignment to a particular type of school and class.

Teacher In-service Education

In-service training is encouraged; part of the extra week in the school year (the 39th week) is intended for professional development for teachers. In addition, universities, state colleges, and a number of public and private institutions offer a wide range of courses and seminars.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

For all compulsory grades, guidelines for teaching reading and writing are included in the Norwegian language curriculum. The extent to which reading and writing are emphasized is up to the individual teacher. However, most teachers in the first grades of primary school find it practical to allocate special time for reading instruction.

The general aims for the Norwegian language curriculum are:¹⁹

- To increase pupils' abilities in their mother tongue, and teach them to avail of the opportunities for interaction that their first language provides in both speech and writing, so that they acquire the knowledge and skills that serve as a platform for further learning in and outside school, and also make them active participants in society
- To strengthen pupils' sense of cultural belonging by providing experience in and knowledge of Norwegian language and literature, insight into other cultures, and understanding the influence of other cultures on the development of our own

- To strengthen pupils' sense of personal identity, their openness to experience, their creativity, and their belief in their own creative abilities
- To make pupils conscious participants in their own learning processes, provide them with insight into their own linguistic development, and enable them to use language as an instrument for increasing their insight and knowledge.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

During their first year in school (Grade 1), Norwegian children do not receive formal instruction in reading and writing. In Grade 1, the children play with sounds, letters, and words, and engage in activities that prepare them for formal reading instruction in Grade 2.

The curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school contains suggestions for reading and writing instruction for each grade. Additionally, there are goals set for pupils' accomplishments in reading and writing at the end of Grade 4 (the primary stage), Grade 7 (the intermediary stage), and Grade 10 (the lower-secondary stage).

The goals for pupils at the primary stage are:²⁰

- Learn to read and to meet others through texts and images that can offer experience and insight, and that can inspire their own writing
- Learn to write, see the need for written language in their interaction with others, and master a varied and functional written language
- Become familiar with the use of information technology.

The goals for pupils at the intermediary stage are:²¹

- Develop a variety of reading strategies and be able to read texts in both the primary and secondary forms of Norwegian

- Become acquainted with a broad selection of literary and informational prose that can provide experience of the joy of reading, and pupils satisfy the hunger for knowledge and excitement; they also should learn how to use ideas taken from texts by various authors in their own writing
- Read and discuss a broad selection of texts, some written by pupils, and learn to use the modes of expression inherent in different genres
- Express thoughts and opinions and describe experiences, and accept criticism of their own writing
- Experience writing as a means of clarifying thought, and experience the process that leads from unclear ideas to a published text
- Become acquainted with the printed mass media and develop skills in the use of electronic media.

The goals for pupils at the lower-secondary stage are:²²

- Learn to read critically and independently, further developing their appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of literature, and experience how literature can convey experience and knowledge, visions of the future and concepts that can shed light on their own and others' lives
- Read and write both forms of Norwegian in order to be able to participate in their national written culture, and learn how reading and writing complement each other in working with other disciplines and in all writing activities
- Express themselves in different genres and develop various ways of thinking and communicating through writing
- Learn that writing is a way of achieving understanding, experience, and interaction, be able to interpret and evaluate the con-

tents and techniques of texts in various media, and use media to convey texts

- Work actively to develop a text from the initial idea to the finished product, and to give and receive feedback during the writing process
- Evaluate their own work and their own development as writers
- Obtain information from various sources such as libraries, archives, and data banks, and learn to use such sources critically and independently.

Materials for Reading Instruction

Even though a number of different textbooks or "readers" are available for teaching reading, four or five of them account for almost all textbooks used for reading instruction. Textbooks are not subject to official approval, but they must comply with the aims and goals of the curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school. In principle, each individual teacher can choose his or her own textbook, but for practical reasons most teachers in the same school use the same textbooks. Depending on the textbook, additional materials like workbooks, or special materials for children with learning problems or reading problems also are available.

Using information technology in reading and writing instruction is not widespread, and when in use it supplements more traditional methods.

Instructional Time

The number of hours students spend in school varies with age. As a minimum, the number of hours for instruction is 570 for age 7, 770 for age 10, and 855 for age 14. The number of lessons per week increases from 20 in the first year to 30 in lower-secondary school. A lesson lasts 45 minutes.

At the different levels of education, the Ministry of Education and Research determines the minimum number of periods used for different subjects. In terms of allocated periods, Norwegian is the most important subject, followed by mathematics.²³ The number of periods designated for teaching Norwegian is 912 for Grades 1 to 4, 589 for Grades 5 to 7, and 532 for Grades 8 to 10.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Education in Norway is coeducational, and classes are organized as mixed-ability classes. Pupils with special educational needs are normally integrated into ordinary schools and classes, with extra help provided when needed. About 6 percent of the pupils are recognized as having special educational needs. The teacher is responsible for the choice of educational methods, textbooks, and educational materials in general. However, a minimum of time must be devoted to theme and project work (60% in Grades 1 to 4, 30% in Grades 5 to 7, and 20% in Grades 8 and 9). Permanent grouping within a class is not allowed, but the schools may use flexible groupings according to subject, theme, or project. In Grades 1 through 7, a class teacher is usually responsible for teaching most subjects. In Grades 8 to 10 (lower-secondary education), a teacher who teaches at least one subject in the class will also be responsible for the administration of the class.

The average number of pupils per school is 177 and the average number of pupils per class is 20.3 (19.3 in primary and 23.3 in lower-secondary).²⁴ The maximum number of pupils permitted per class is 28 in primary school and 30 in lower-secondary. The number of pupils per class in first grade is limited to 18. If the number of pupils exceeds 18, the class will be provided with a second teacher. Many schools are small as a result of Norway's scattered population; the maximum number of pupils in a class is usually only found in densely populated urban areas.

Role of Reading Specialist in Reading Instruction

Most schools have special teachers engaged in teaching pupils with special educational needs, but they do not act as reading specialists. Class teachers are responsible for teaching reading and writing in primary school, and as such are required to have received instruction and practice in teaching reading as part of their general teacher education. Additionally, teachers can expand their knowledge and expertise in teaching reading in numerous in-service courses.

Second Language Reading Instruction

Proficiency in the mother tongue is considered essential for the acquisition of a second language. Pupils with foreign language backgrounds therefore may choose Norwegian as a second language and receive instruction in their mother tongue. In

special instances, pupils with foreign language background can receive extra training in Norwegian. The goal is for these pupils to eventually have a mastery of Norwegian sufficient to receive instruction in Norwegian.

Sami-speaking pupils have the right to receive all primary and lower-secondary education in Sami. Accordingly, a parallel Sami version of the curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school has been developed.

Reading Disabilities

In 2000, Norwegian schools started using screening tests in reading for a four-year trial period. The tests are administered in Grades 2 and 7 and the focus is on identifying readers performing below the 20th percentile. The grades were selected because formal reading instruction starts in Grade 2, and Grade 7 is the last grade before entering lower-secondary school. As a first step, a pupil who lags behind in reading development will receive special attention from the class teacher. Many schools have a teacher, or a team of teachers, engaged in special education, and the class teacher may recruit help from that quarter. If the reading difficulty is more severe, the problem will be diagnosed by the educational-psychological service available in every municipality. Pupils who are diagnosed as dyslexic, or who for other reasons have a need for special help, are entitled to special education. Special education can be organized in the ordinary class by having an extra teacher take part in the reading and writing instruction. Special education also may be organized as individual tutoring or tutoring in small groups.

Literacy Programs



In 1997, the organization *!les* (Read!) was established to encourage reading and to co-ordinate and initiate country-wide literacy programs. Supported by the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs, *!les* can be compared with the National Literacy Trust in England and Stiftung Lesen in Germany. While *!les* supplies the plans and programs, organization and implementation is controlled locally. As a result of *!les*, a number of literacy programs with widespread local participation have been organized.

Frequently, schools or classes will organize a reading week or reading month where pupils are encouraged to visit the library, select books, read, summarize, and discuss with other pupils books they have read. The local library is often actively engaged in these reading enterprises.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Assessment in Grades 1 through 7 does not involve the awarding of marks.

Marks are introduced in lower-secondary school in the form of a 1 to 6 scale where 6 is the top mark.

The curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school reflects a change in view about assessment that has taken place in Norwegian schools. In recent years, increased emphasis has been put on continuous and formative assessment reflecting the general aims and objectives of each particular subject. Assessment is considered an integral and continuous part of the learning process. Pupils must take an active part in the assessment process, and conferences among pupils, parents, and teachers are an important part of pupil assessment.²⁵

National or Regional Examinations

Progression from year to year throughout compulsory education is automatic and at no point do pupils have to pass examinations to move on to the next grade. At the end of lower-secondary school (Grade 10), pupils have to take a written examination in one of three subjects: Norwegian, mathematics, or English. Examination papers are prepared centrally and pupils are told only a few days beforehand the subject of their examination. In subjects where the pupils have not taken an examination, the final mark is given on the basis of the teachers' assessment throughout the year.²⁶

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests administered in compulsory school primarily are used for diagnostic testing and screening. In 1992, the Ministry of Education and Research commissioned the Centre for Reading Research (Stavanger University College) to develop literacy screening tests. Tests in both the Norwegian languages were developed for Grades 2, 3, 5, 7, and 9. The tests have been adapted for

use in Sami, and there also are versions of the tests for Grades 2, 3, and 7 for deaf or hearing-impaired pupils. Similar tests have been developed for Grades 2 and 3 in the most frequently used foreign languages. The focus of the tests is on identifying those pupils performing below the 20th percentile. The results are intended to provide the classroom teacher with information useful in planning reading instruction for the entire class or for an individual pupil. To aid the teachers, booklets containing instructions for interpreting test-results and suggestions for organizing instruction in reading have been developed for the different grades. The literacy screening tests are in widespread use on a voluntary basis, and the tests for Grades 2 and 7 have been made compulsory for a four-year trial period ending in 2004.

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Suggested Reading

European Union and EFTA database on education in Europe. <http://www.eurydice.org> (Contains information on every aspect of education in Europe.)

Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. <http://odin.dep.no/ufd/> (A lot of relevant information about education in Norway, most of it also in English.)

Statistics Norway. <http://www.ssb.no> (Information on anything you can quantify in Norway, most of it also in English.)

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Language and Literacy



Romania's official language is Romanian, although English (most frequently), French, German, Italian, and Turkish often are used for business.

Languages spoken at home correspond to the various ethnic groups. The country boasts an adult literacy rate of 97.9 percent – 96.9 percent for females and 98.9 percent for males.

In the past several years, local newspapers have increased both their quality and readership. Newspapers published in the major cities have a local or regional circulation varying between 2,000 and 40,000 copies. There are over 20 dailies published in Bucharest alone, most of them calling themselves national newspapers. However, only three or four claim print runs and circulations above the 100,000 threshold. The most successful, and arguably the best, Romanian dailies, *Adevarul* (The Truth), *Evenimentul Zilei* (The Daily Event), and *Libertatea* (The Freedom) each has a daily circulation of over 115,000 copies.¹ Other important general interest dailies are *Romania libera*, *National*, *Ziua*, and *Jurnalul*, printing 50,000 to 100,000 copies a day.² There also are several specialized publications, the most important of which are finance and business newspapers and sports dailies.

In 1996, a total of 2,902 public libraries were registered across the country, having a collection of 47,696,000 volumes and 2.1 million readers.³

Education System



Governance and Organization

Traditionally, the Romanian education system has been completely centralized. The Government formulates education policy based on the Education Law. Educational policy is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Research as the central authority, and by county inspectorates as regional authorities. In a county, the head of the Inspectorate – called an inspector general, the deputy inspectors, and the head of the Teacher's Resource Center are appointed by the Minister for National Education.

Approximately 4 percent of the GDP was spent on education in 2000.⁴ The local public administration ensures financing and makes decisions regarding maintenance expenditures such as electricity, water, sewage, and repairs. The Inspector General appoints the heads of the primary and secondary school units and their deputies.

Structure of the Education System

Pre-primary School

Pre-primary education is available to 3- to 6-year-olds and is not compulsory. Private and public nursery schools offer various types of programs: normal programs (approximately 4 or 5 hours in the morning), long programs (8 to 9 hours), and weekly programs (five days per week). The state funds half of the meals and accommodation expenses for the latter two types of program.

Primary and Lower-secondary School

According to Article 6 of the Education Law, all Romanian citizens are obliged to receive education for a period of eight years after preschool

Country Profile: Romania

Geographical Location and Size

Romania is located in southeastern Central Europe north of the Balkan Peninsula in the Lower Danube basin, bordering the Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, and the Black Sea. Its land area measures 238,391 square kilometers, making it the 12th largest country in Europe. Romania is centered on the Transylvanian Basin, around which the peaks of the Carpathian Mountains and their associated sub-ranges and structural platforms form a series of crescents. The highest point, Peak Moldoveanu, stands 2,544 meters above sea level. Beyond the Carpathian Mountains, the extensive plains of the South and East of the country form a fertile outer-crescent extending to the frontier, their agricultural potential increased by the Danube River and its tributaries.

Bucharest, the capital of Romania, lies in the southeastern part of the country in the Romanian Plain, and has an area of 1,521 square kilometers, divided into six administrative districts, with a population of 2,066,723.⁵ The city dates back to the 14th century, and was first recorded in writing in 1459 as a residence belonging to the prince Vlad the Impaler.

Population and Health Statistics

Romania's population, as of January 2001, is estimated at 22,430,000 inhabitants.⁶ The population density is 94 persons per square kilometer.⁷ About 57 percent of the population lives in urban areas.⁸ Ethnic Romanians comprise 89.5 percent of the population; Hungarians and Szecklers 7.1 percent; Roma and Sinti 1.8 percent, and other national groups such as Germans, Ukrainians, and Turks 1.7 percent.⁹ Religious beliefs are relatively homogeneous; 70 percent of the population are Romanian Orthodox, 6 percent Roman Catholic, 6 percent Protestant, and 18 percent unaffiliated.¹⁰ The infant mortality rate is 19 deaths per 1000 live births.¹¹ The life expectancy for men is 66.5 years and 73.2 for women.¹²



Political System

Romania is a presidential Republic, according to the Constitution voted by Parliament in November 1991 and validated by referendum in December of that year. The two-chambered Parliament (the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate), elected for a four-year term, is the people's supreme representative body and the sole law-making authority. The president is elected by universal vote for a maximum of four years. The Government, authorized by Parliament, provides general management of public administration.

Economy and Employment

The land itself is Romania's most valuable natural resource. All but the most rugged mountainous regions sustain some form of agricultural activity. In 1989, more than 15 million hectares – almost two-thirds of the country's territory – were devoted to agriculture.¹³ Arable land accounted for over 41 percent, pastures about 19 percent, and vineyards and orchards some 3 percent of the total land area.¹⁴

The machine-building and metal-processing industry is the main branch of the industrial economy, accounting for nearly one-third of bulk industrial production. It provides a good index of the changing priorities in the Romanian economy. After WWII, the industrial sector underwent a radical structural change and increased its relative contribution to national income, particularly in the areas of engineering, metalworking, and energy production. Engineering and metalworking accounted for

25.8 percent of all industrial production in 1990, compared with 13.3 percent in 1950, while electricity and fuels increased their share from 13.2 to 19 percent and chemicals from 3.1 to 9.6 percent.¹⁵ Two other branches, metallurgy, and building materials, also showed a slight relative advance. The main relative declines were in wood, paper, and food processing. The food industry – formerly the foundation of the economy – has been all but eclipsed by the development of other branches.

The labor force was estimated at 9.9 million in 1999, distributed by occupation as follows: agriculture 40 percent, industry 25 percent, and services 35 percent. The unemployment rate in December 2001 was an estimated 10.5 percent.

The country's GDP in 2000 was US\$ 36.7 billion, and the GNP per capita was US\$ 1,670.^{16,17}

education (nine years beginning in 2003-2004). The obligation to attend school terminates when pupils are 16 years old or when they have completed lower-secondary school, whichever occurs first.

Primary education includes grades 1 to 4, usually for 7- to 11-year-olds. Parents or legal guardians may request that their 6-year-old be enrolled, provided the child has reached an appropriate stage of physical and mental development. Lower secondary education includes grades 1 to 9 for 11- to 16-year-olds.

Upper-secondary School

Upper-secondary education for 16- to 19-year-olds is optional, and covers grades 10 to 12, or 13 for some types of schools. Vocational education lasts 1 to 3 years for the upper-secondary age group.

Enrollment

Enrollment for the different types of schools – public, private, and religious – is summarized in Exhibit 1.¹⁸ In the 1998-99 school year, 68.5 percent of 3- to 6-year-olds were enrolled in pre-primary schools, and 96.8 percent of 7- to 15-year-olds were enrolled in primary schools.¹⁹ Very few students were attending private schools at the pre-primary, primary, and lower-secondary levels.

Since 1998-99, the school year has a new structure for the pre-university level, being divided into semesters. The first semester starts around the 15th of September and lasts until shortly before the end of January. It has a total of 14 weeks of study and four weeks of holidays. The second semester starts shortly after the 1st of February and lasts until the end of June. It has a total of 15 weeks of study and 3 weeks of holidays.

Exhibit 1: Schools by Type and Population 1999-2000

School Type	Number of schools	Number of students	Number of teachers
All Types	27,533	4,578,383	301,416
Pre-school	12,761	616,313	35,619
Compulsory	13,154	2,498,139	166,332
Secondary general	492	343,500	21,429
Secondary VET	915	573,110	49,655
Post-high school	90 (57 private)	94,700	1,404
Tertiary	121 (63 private)	452,621	26,977

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

A total of 64,472 full-time and 2,664 part-time teaching staff were employed in primary education during the 1997-98 school year in Romania. In 1998-99, 99.9 percent of all preschool teachers were female. Of all primary and lower-secondary teachers, 25.3 percent were male and 74.7 percent female.

Teacher Education

Primary school teachers (*invatatori*) are trained in upper-secondary teacher-training schools or colleges. College training (special short-term education) lasts for two years for students from an upper-secondary teacher-training school, or three years for those from other types of upper-secondary schools. The new regulation stipulates that, as of 1999, the initial training of teachers for primary education will be provided by university colleges. Generally, a single teacher for each class manages the learning process. Specialized teachers may teach foreign languages, religion, physical education, and music. Such teachers have a special diploma and have completed a short- or long-term form of higher education, depending on the subject they are teaching.

Teacher In-service Education

The Ministry of National Education, which coordinates and finances in-service education, grants the teacher's right to in-service training. In-service training of the teaching staff is provided by higher education institutions through courses

in a particular area, or in methodological and pedagogical training.

In each county the Inspectorate administers a teaching staff center, which provides documents and organizes additional training activities for teachers.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Beginning in grade 1, reading is a part of Romanian language instruction. The main goal of primary school is to help children to learn the Romanian language – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – as a means of communication. Reading texts written in their mother tongue is part of instruction for minorities; reading texts in foreign languages is a part of instruction in foreign languages. The integration of writing and other language skills with reading is done from the beginning of the primary school, both for Romanian language, and for minority or foreign languages.

At the end of each specified grade level students should be able to do the following:²⁰

- Grade 2: Read correctly and fluently a text already studied, using intonation indicated by punctuation marks
- Grade 3: Reproduce the main ideas, sequence of events, and detailed information from a text they read
- Grade 4: Read correctly and fluently an unknown text, using intonation indicated by punctuation marks.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Starting with the school year 1998-99, a *curriculum framework* for the primary level has been introduced allowing schools to design timetable schemes more in line with their instructional goals. In general, however, 80 percent of the instructional time is dedicated to the core curriculum and 20 percent is at the school's disposal. Details of instructional time designated for particular subject areas are shown in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2: Number of Weekly Instructional Hours for the Curriculum in Grades 1 to 4

Curricular Area / Subject	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Language and Communication	7-9	7-9	7-9	7-9
Romanian language and literature	7-8	7-8	5-7	5-7
Modern language	-	-	2-3	2-3
Optional	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	3-4	3-4	4-6	4-6
Mathematics	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4
Natural Sciences	-	-	1-2	1-2
Optional	-	-	0-1	0-1
People and Society	1	1	2-3	3-5
Civic Education	-	-	1-2	1-2
History & Geography	-	-	-	1-2
History	-	-	-	1-2
Geography	-	-	-	1-2
Religion	1	1	1	1
Optional	-	-	0-1	0-1
Arts	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3
Fine Arts	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Music	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Optional	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Physical Education	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3
Physical Education	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3
Optional	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Technologies	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Practical skills	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Optional	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Counseling and Guidance	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Optional	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1
Core Curriculum	16	16	18	18
Minimum number of hours/week	18	18	20	21
Maximum number of hours/week	20	20	22	23

Materials for Reading Instruction

All textbooks, including textbooks used in primary school, are subject to approval by the Ministry of Education and Research. The use of one of the three approved textbooks is compulsory, in primary school they are given free of charge to pupils at the beginning of the school year. There also are a variety of readers and children's books available.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

In pre-primary school, learning takes place in classes organized according to age groups. The average class size is 15, with a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20. In rural areas having few pupils,

classes can be formed without taking age groups into account.

In primary school also, classes are organized according to age groups. The average class size is 20, with a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 30. In regions with lower population density, classes may have even fewer pupils than 10, and the teacher works simultaneously with more than one class. These deviations are subject to approval by the Ministry of Education and Research.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

Reading specialists for pupils with reading disabilities are employed almost exclusively by specialized centers, and so access to them is not readily available to everyone.

Second Language Reading Instruction

Minority groups learn their own language and literature, along with Romanian language and literature, if they enroll in a school providing such an opportunity. Pupils belonging to national minorities have a supplementary examination, which they need to pass in order to receive a leaving certificate for the lower-secondary school (see section on Assessment).

Literacy Programs



There are no national programs that focus on promoting literacy among children and adults. Activity addressing reading in general is very scarce, and is conducted mostly by private groups.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Instructions for classroom assessment, both continuous and final, are described in teacher guides for grades 1 to 4. Teachers are responsible for formative assessment in the classroom. Textbook tests are the most widely used assessments for determining pupils' progress in reading. At the end of each semester, a summative assessment is undertaken. The teacher, taking into account the pupils' general progress, including reading literacy, undertakes the promotion of each pupil to the next class. There is no examination at the end of primary school.

Lower-secondary school is concluded by an examination called *examen de capacitate*, which includes the following subjects: Romanian language and literature, mathematics, Romanian history, and Romanian geography. Pupils belonging to national minorities studying in mother tongue languages are administered a supplementary examination in the language and literature of their mother tongue. In order to receive a leaving certificate – *certificat de capacitate* – pupils have to pass this examination. This certificate entitles the pupil to apply for entrance examination for upper-secondary school.

National or Regional Examinations

There are no regional or national examinations comprising reading literacy in Romania. Furthermore, no use of commercial tests for reading achievement has been reported in published documents.

Diagnostic Testing

Diagnostic testing is undertaken by specialized institutions on request of the parents or legal guardians. General screening tests have not been undertaken for age cohorts enrolled in compulsory education.

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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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Language and Literacy



Russian is the official language of the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation comprises 89 administrative regions, including autonomous districts each with its own regional culture and community identity.

The number of daily newspapers and weekly or monthly magazines available in the country has greatly increased in the past 10 years. In 1999, newspaper circulation was 105 newspapers per 1,000 people.¹ Of the public libraries that survived the transition from the Soviet Union, there are 96,177 units with 54,201,000 members registered to use them.²

The sources of financing for educational institutions are determined by their organizational-legal forms: state (municipal and departmental) and non-state (private, public, and religious). Approximately 98 percent of all primary, basic, and secondary schools in Russia are state-municipal, meaning that the municipal budget is the main source of financing, and that many decisions are made on the regional level.

After nearly a decade of reductions, the education budget slowly grew from 3.3 percent of the GNP in 1998 to 3.6 percent of the GNP in 2001. The proportion of the federal budget devoted to education also increased.³

Current responsibilities of the federal authorities include:

Education System



Governance and Organization

In comparison to the highly centralized system of public education in the former Soviet Union, under the current Law on Education passed in 1992, the Russian educational system has become more decentralized in its decision-making and funding. According to the Law on Education, the state guarantees citizens of the Russian Federation free general education and, on a competitive basis, free vocational education at state and municipal educational institutions.

The Law on Education gives much autonomy and responsibility to schools. According to the Law, the main documents regulating school instruction include the education standards (the minimum content of education to be taught in class and the requirements for student achievement) and the program of study.

- Making federal policy in the field of education and implementing it in the country
- Developing the legislative basis for the functioning of the educational system
- Establishing the federal component of the state educational standards
- Elaborating model curricula as well as model programs of study for different school subjects on the basis of state educational standards (federal components)
- Organizing publication of textbooks and supplementary literature for school.

The educational program at an educational institution is determined independently by the curriculum, the annual calendar study plan, and the timetable of classes developed and approved

Country Profile: Russian Federation

Geographical Location and Size

Covering the eastern part of Europe and the northern part of Asia, the Russian Federation is the largest country in the world. It occupies one-seventh of the earth's surface with a territory of over 17 million square kilometers including a vast range of geographical, natural, and meteorological conditions.

Population and Health Statistics

The country's population of about 146 million people includes more than 100 ethnic groups, each possessing its own language. The majority of the population (about 81.5%) belongs to the Russian ethnic group. The overall population density is 9 persons per square kilometer.⁴ More than three-quarters of the population lives in urban areas.⁵ About 10 million live in Moscow, the country's capital.

The living conditions of the Russian people have changed during the last 15 years due to the economic and social problems the country has encountered in its transition from the Soviet Union. In 2000, the infant mortality was 16 deaths per 1000 live births.⁶ The life expectancy of 72 years for females is considerably higher than life expectancy of 60 years for males.⁷

Political System

Russia is a democratic federal parliamentary state with a republican form of management. The state is ruled by the President, the Federal Parliament (comprising the Council of Federation and the Duma), Government, and the Courts of the Russian Federation. Legislative powers are exercised by the Duma.



Economy and Employment

In 2000, the gross national product per capita was US\$ 2,250.⁸ The country's primary industries include oil, gas, and metal production; agriculture; forestry; and fishing. Unemployment was 3.4 percent of the total workforce.⁹ Women and men comprised an almost equal part of the total workforce, 49 percent and 51 percent, respectively, in 1997.¹⁰

by the institution. State power, management bodies, and local government bodies do not have the right to change the curriculum and study schedule of an educational institution once they have been approved, except for cases stipulated by the Russian legislature.

The tendency towards increasing variability of education could be illustrated by the growing number of textbooks for school subjects by different authors, from 139 textbooks in 1992, to 191 in 1995, and in 2000, to 1,192.¹¹

In 2000, the Russian government began to develop a new educational reform program, declaring that the education system should shift from a regime of survival to a regime of development. The main directions of reform were articulated as follows: modernizing the structure and content of general education, raising the quality of education, providing equal access to education, developing effective mechanisms for transmitting social requests to the educational system, and broadening public participation in managing education.

Structure of the Education System

The state system of education includes preschool education, general secondary education, secondary vocational training, higher education, post-graduate education and improvement of professional skills, and in-service training and re-training.

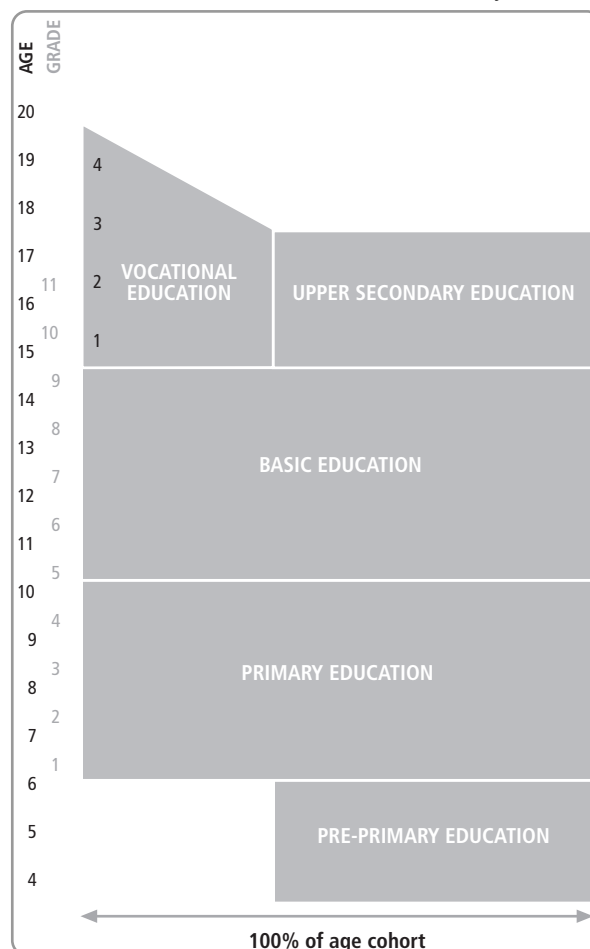
Preschool Education

Preschool, or pre-primary, education is not compulsory and, as of 2001, included 53,990 pre-primary educational institutions with 4.26 million children. Between 1990 and 1995, the percentage of children in the pre-primary institutions decreased from 67 to 55 percent. Annually, the number of institutions of this kind decreased by 4 to 5 percent for a variety of reasons, including demographics. New types of institutions have appeared with focused goals on special care, child development, and compensatory (remedial) care. In 2000 these new institutions accounted for 35 percent of all pre-primary institutions.¹²

General Secondary Education

General secondary education, the core of the Russian education system, includes three stages: primary education – grades 1 to 4, basic or lower secondary – grades 5 to 9, and secondary (completed) or upper-secondary – grades 10–11. Basic

Exhibit 1: Structure of the Russian Educational System



general education is compulsory according to the Constitution. The structure of the general education system is provided in Exhibit 1.

From ages 6 to 7, primary education may be provided in primary schools, in basic schools that include the primary stage, and in secondary education institutions that include all three stages.

Types of Schools

Exhibit 2 provides the number of schools and enrollment figures for the general education system in 2001.¹³ Enrollment in the 65,665 general education institutions, which can comprise one, two, or all three of the stages, was 19.2 million students. These general education institutions included general schools, schools specializing in teaching specific subjects, gymnasiums, and lyceums.¹⁴ Approximately 85 percent of students enrolled in general secondary education institutions attend general schools.¹⁵

Exhibit 2: Secondary Education in Russia: 2001

	Urban	Rural	Total
Number of schools			
Primary (offering only 4 years of education)	1,717	12,520	14,237
Lower secondary (primary included; offering 9 years of education)	1,328	11,073	12,401
Secondary (primary and low secondary included; 11 years of education)	16,355	20,648	37,003
Upper secondary (only), included in secondary	66	28	94
Special education	1,543	481	2,024
Total	20,943	44,722	65,665
Number of students			
Primary	207,974	189,751	397,725
Lower secondary (primary included)	270,096	688,946	959,042
Secondary (primary and low secondary included)	12,430,724	4,901,386	17,332,110
Upper secondary (only), included in secondary	16,424	7,868	24,294
Total	13,316,054	5,874,225	19,190,279
Number of teachers			
Total	961,726	685,734	1,647,460

Of these institutions, 22 percent are primary schools and 56 percent are secondary schools including all three stages. The rural schools make up 68 percent of all general schools. Over two-thirds of all rural schools can be considered small schools, since more than 40 percent of them have fewer than 100 students.¹⁶

The system of schools with native language tuition (so-called national schools) provides citizens the right to obtain an education in their native language. This system has remained stable during recent years. In 2000, 3,469 general education institutions conducted lessons in 33 languages for 239,554 students. Since 1992, the number of these institutions has increased by 1.2 percent, and the number of native languages (mother tongues for different ethnic groups) taught in Russian schools has grown to 78.¹⁷

A parallel non-state educational system is being created with the support of the Ministry of Education. In 1993, it had only 8,500 educational institutions, and today the system still consists primarily of preschools and general secondary institutions of different types. In 2000, non-state general education institutions comprised only 0.9 percent of schools and catered to a mere 0.3 percent of students.¹⁸

The general secondary education curriculum includes three components: federal, ethnic-regional, and institutional. The federal component ensures unity of general education in the country and contains the part of educational content that provides for the introduction of global and national values to school programs of study. These are the Russian language (as a state language), mathematics, informatics, physics, astronomy, and chemistry.

The ethnic-regional component provides for meeting the specific interests and needs of peoples from different parts of the country. It contains educational content with ethnic and regional distinguishing features, such as the native language and literature, history, and regional geography. Some subject matter domains or subjects are presented both in federal and ethnic-regional components, such as history, social studies, arts, biology, physical education, and technology.

The institutional or school-based component, both compulsory and students' optional studies, emphasizes the specific features of the educational institution and promotes the school activity development.

The curriculum for general education (1998) includes the following educational areas:

- Philology (Russian language as the state language, Russian language as the mother tongue, literature, foreign languages)
- Mathematics
- Social studies (social studies, history, and geography)
- Science (biology, physics, astronomy, and chemistry)
- Arts (fine arts, music)
- Technology
- Physical education.

For the primary school, the curriculum includes the same study areas with minor changes in the area of philology (Russian language as the state language, Russian language as the mother tongue, and literary reading) and science is combined with social studies into the “surrounding world.”

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The school year lasts 9 to 10 months starting from the first of September. It has 170 or 240 instructional days, depending on whether the school has a 5- or 6-day week. During the school year, students have three holidays, including one week in the beginning of November, two weeks at the end of December through the beginning of January, and one week at the end of March.

Reforming Primary Education

According to the reform goals declared by the Government in 2000, the structure and content of general education was modernized through an experimental curriculum. This took the form of introducing foreign languages and ICT in primary schools, adopting a general competency approach, encouraging more active forms of learning, and emphasizing the social studies curriculum.

The priorities for primary education reform were maintaining and strengthening the health of children (both physical and mental), supporting each child’s individuality, developing interest in learning and the skills to learn, using a more integrative approach in teaching, introducing new

qualitative classroom assessments based on measuring the dynamics of child achievement, and increasing attention to gifted and advanced students.

In 2001, an experiment was started in about 2,000 schools located around the country. These schools are intended to become the centers for disseminating the new school models and new educational technologies to the other schools.

The experiment involves five different primary education models with sets of textbooks and all supplementary materials having been developed. Although all five models are oriented in the education standards, each model has its own psychological-pedagogical conceptual framework – three based on the traditional system of primary education and two others on the psychology of child development and learning theory.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

In 2000, 77 percent of general secondary teachers had a diploma in higher education, and 22 percent had a diploma in secondary pedagogical education. In primary schools, 69 percent of teachers had a higher education diploma, and 28 percent had a diploma from a secondary pedagogical college.¹⁹

Approximately 85 percent of Russian secondary school teachers, and about 98 percent of primary school teachers, are female.²⁰

About 45 percent of primary school teachers are aged between 30 and 40; 20 percent are under 30; and the rest are 40 or over. The proportion of teachers on pension but working at school has been increasing. In the 1999–2000 school year they made up about 3.5 percent of the primary school teaching force. In secondary schools, 12.7 percent of the teachers in urban schools and 7.8 percent of the teachers in rural schools were in this category.²¹

About one third of teachers (including primary school teachers) have more than 20 years teaching experience, and just under one third have between 10 and 20 years. About 44 percent of primary school teachers have between 10 and 20 years experience. These figures illustrate the stability of the teaching force.²²

Teacher Education

There are several different ways to become trained as a primary school teacher:

- Five years of formal education at a higher education institution with the specialization “Pedagogy, Methodology and Instructions of Primary Education,” or
- Four years of the Bachelor program at a higher education institution with the specialization “Pedagogy,” or
- Two years at a pedagogical college, having entered the college following graduation from secondary school or
- Four years at a pedagogical college, having entered the college following graduation from basic school.

In recent years, earning a diploma from a higher education institution has become more popular among primary school teacher candidates. Even those who received their primary teacher qualification from a pedagogical college will continue their training in a higher education institution.

The training program for the five-year higher education program covers about 9,000 hours, including theoretical, practical, and research work, with more than 20 weeks of teaching in school.²³

To receive a higher education diploma, a student must cover the program of study specified in the curriculum, prepare and defend his or her graduate qualification work, and pass the state examination.

The curriculum of each higher education institution providing teacher training is developed on the basis of the State education standards for higher professional education and includes the study plan, programs of study for all subjects and courses, and programs for teaching practice in school. The curriculum includes federal, regional or institutional, and student components. The federal component, covering 70 percent of training time, ensures that all students across the country studying the same specialization at higher education institutions would have 70 percent of the content of education in common. The distribution of time between the institutional

and student components is decided by the individual institutions.

The teacher-training curriculum includes four cycles of subjects and elective courses. Each cycle includes federal, regional or institutional, and student components. The first cycle, consisting of general humanitarian and social-economic subjects, is almost the same for all higher education institutions regardless of the specialization. It accounts for about 17 percent of class time and includes the following subjects: foreign language, physical education, history of the fatherland, philosophy, culture, politics, jurisprudence, Russian language and the culture of speech, sociology, philosophy, and economics. Only four subjects from the first cycle are compulsory for all higher education institutions. The second cycle consists of general mathematics and general science subjects (5% of class time). The third cycle, general professional subjects (18% of class time), includes for primary education psychology, pedagogy, age anatomy, physiology and hygiene, and basics of medicine. Finally, the professional cycle accounts for the largest block of time (55% of class time) and includes Russian language, children’s literature, introduction to the history of literature, mathematics, science, methodology and instruction in teaching Russian language and literature, mathematics, science, technology, fine arts, and music. Elective courses represent the smallest proportion in the curriculum (5% of class time).

There is no specialization in teaching reading. Training in the teaching of reading is included in methodology and instruction in teaching Russian language and literature course.

Teacher In-service Education

As a rule, primary teachers take part in in-service training every 5 years. In-service teacher training is no longer compulsory and is changing its orientation to be in line with the new goals of education, with a switch in emphasis from subject content to student development, so that teachers have more training in active learning strategies and child development. In 2001, the main topic of in-service training was the reform of primary education (new content and methods), foreign language and ICT in the primary school, as well as the new experimental programs of study for the primary school.

According to the reform strategies, teachers' work will be evaluated not by knowledge level but by the main developmental indicators of their students. Accordingly, during in-service training teachers are taught new ways of assessing student achievement and development.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The history of teaching practice in Russian schools reflects the great changes that have taken place in the teaching of reading. Always a part of “mother tongue” introduction, the main approaches to reading in different periods included “explaining words reading,” “conscious reading,” “progressive reading,” “artistic reading,” “creative reading,” “upbringing reading,” and “explanatory reading.”

“Explanatory reading” was the most heavily emphasized approach. Texts were selected on the basis of their cognitive and moral-ethical characteristics. When reading, attention was paid mostly to the logic, style, and artistic value of the text. Development of reading techniques predominated.

The contemporary approach to reading instruction may be characterized as “literary reading.” This new emphasis may be attributed to the new goal for school – to increase the spiritual, developmental, and ethical role of education. The new course in “Literary Reading” also became possible because the main subjects taught in the primary school (the surrounding world, mathematics, Russian, and history) increased the usage of different kinds of texts (e.g., official, scientific) in these subjects. The “Literary Reading” course is included in study of philology, which includes learning to read and to write, Russian, and literary reading for schools with Russian language of instruction.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Literary reading in the primary school is intended to:

- Develop the skills of conscious reading and understanding texts
- Develop the student's personality and creative abilities

- Develop oral and written speech
- Introduce children to literature as the art of writing
- Introduce children to the world of human relations and moral values through literature.

In 1998 the Ministry of Education approved the following content for the course of literary reading to be taught in all primary schools as a compulsory part of education standards for primary education:²⁴

- The technique of reading and understanding the text, including reading of literary and scientific texts silently and aloud; understanding the content and main idea of the text; answering questions regarding the content of the text; making a simple outline of the text; and retelling the text according to the outline
- A reader's view and orientation to the world of books including folklore, fairy tales, myths, and legends of the people of Russia and the world, Russian classics (from the list of children's reading) and modern Russian literature, foreign literature, children's newspapers and magazines, bibliographic information (author, title, annotation, contents), and dictionaries and reference books
- Special literature knowledge (propaedeutics), particularly the different genres of works: story, fairy tale (folk or literary), fable, poem (or rhyme), novel, and play; the specific forms of folklore: riddles, patterns, songs, and proverbs; the topic of the text: main idea, subject, character and behavior of the hero; and means of expression in the text: epithets, comparisons, sound and rhyme in poetry
- Language development, including activities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing; knowledge of text purposes: narration, description, reasoning; word heritage of the Russian language; emotional and stylistic coloring of speech: expressive reading and storytelling, and speech etiquette; demonstrating understanding by retelling of the text, making a connected story about the main heroes of the text

using an outline, and summarizing students' own impressions of the text

The following trends in literary reading in the primary school may be discerned:

- Literary reading is part of the continuous literary education from grade 1 through grade 11.
- Goals of literary reading such as learning language as the art of the word, working with a text, and developing speaking skills, appear in courses of learning to read and to write, Russian, rhetoric, and literary reading.
- All sets of instructional materials for literary reading include Russian classical literature, foreign children's classics, children's literature of different ethnic groups of Russia; and modern children's literature. All sets have a core of classical literature as well as a core of authors.
- Reading in- and out-of-school have integrated goals including materials for family reading.
- The content focuses on the personal development of a child.
- Literature is the child's main source of information about the surrounding world.
- Developing the core learning skills necessary for studying all school subjects is emphasized.

Materials for Reading Instruction

During the past ten years, seven different sets of programs and instructional materials (including the five experimental programs previously mentioned) were developed and approved by the Ministry of Education for use in the primary schools. As a rule, each consists of a textbook that supplements the literary texts; a reader with the collection of texts; student work booklets for answering oral and written questions, a collection of guides for analyzing the texts; books for family reading; and a teacher's guide.

Teachers have the responsibility for choosing instructional materials according to professional preference, children's characteristics and interests,

and parental opinion. To help them select the program of study and accompanying instructional materials, the Ministry prepared descriptions of the different programs of study and their content requirements. Descriptions of the instructional materials discuss how the materials differ in teaching approach, level of theoretical knowledge, the works of literature and lesson structure, and the teacher's role in the classroom.

Almost every classroom in Russian primary schools has a class library with enough books and magazines (usually about 100 all together) to accommodate independent reading according to children's interests during lessons and to take home. In addition, two special publications are distributed centrally to the school libraries:

- My First Library is a 20-volume set collected by V. Levin and others with a special emphasis on literature for primary school students.
- The Russian School Reader is an 11-volume set collected by O. Dzelelei, with 4 volumes specifically geared to the primary school level.

Instructional Time

The instructional week includes either 5 or 6 days depending on the school. In 1998, the Ministry of Education established the maximum instructional load for different grades by special order. For grade 1, the maximum instructional time is 22 hours for a 5-day week and 20 for a 6-day week. For grades 2 to 4, the corresponding hours are equal to 25 and 22. Each instructional period lasts 40 or 45 minutes, except in the beginning of first grade when the lessons are somewhat shorter.²⁵

Classroom Organization and Class Size

In primary schools, there is no special reading teacher. The classroom teacher usually teaches all subjects except music and an experienced teacher, such as the deputy principal, is responsible for providing the instructional help to other teachers in all subjects including Literary Reading.

Most often teachers work with the whole class during reading instruction. The teacher reads aloud to the class, introduces children to the world of classic literature, and organizes class discussion about what was read. In the first grade, when not all students can read, individual and group activi-

ties are also used. Sometimes students who can read sentences when they begin the first grade are grouped for advanced learning.

By order of the Ministry, the maximum class size is 25 students. The average class size for the primary school is 24, but some schools, particularly the rural schools, have very small classes.

Literacy Programs



Recently, the Ministry of Education has not organized any special literacy programs. Nevertheless, there are programs to help parents or specialists in the pre-primary education institutions prepare children for school and reading. Among them are “Succession,” a program with a set of materials developed by N.Fedosova, and “ABC,” a book for parents edited by M. Bezroukih, and T. Fillinova.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Formative and summative assessments are conducted to assure compliance of student’s achievements with the curriculum requirements and to diagnose student’s progress. The timing and form of assessment, as a rule, are chosen by the school. Sometimes the assessment results are used for teacher or school accreditation. Generally, The summative assessment takes place at the end of each school year in each school subject. Assessment formats include oral examinations, short-answer, extended-response or essay questions, and multiple-choice tests. Schools usually use individual teacher-made tests, locally developed tests, or tests developed centrally and published as special supplementary materials.

Innovations in assessment arising from general education reform include the introduction of a qualitative system of assessment without grades or marks at the end of primary school and a shift in the orientation of assessment from absolute achievement to the dynamics of student achievement throughout primary school.

National Examination

The general education system has a very flexible system of school examinations. National examina-

tions are set for grades 9 and 11. To be awarded the basic school certificate, students must pass compulsory national examinations in mathematics and Russian and a compulsory regional examination, the subject of which is selected at the local level every year. To be awarded the certificate of secondary school completion, students must pass five examinations: compulsory national examinations in mathematics, literature and Russian, a compulsory regional examination, and two compulsory examinations in subjects selected by the students themselves. In addition to the national examinations, a school may set an examination on every subject at any grade of the basic or secondary school. Examinations may be administered in oral or written forms, including short answer questions, essay questions, and sometimes, multiple-choice questions.

During the national examination in Russian at grade 9, students are required to explain the meaning of a text read to them and then answer some questions on the text in written form. At the end of grade 11, secondary school students write an essay on a topic in literature that they select from an official list presented during the examination. Marks are awarded separately for literature and for Russian.

Standardized national examinations, known as unified examinations, have recently been introduced, combining the general secondary education graduate examinations with higher education entrance examinations. In the 2001–02 school year, there was an experiment involving 16 regions. Russian language and literature were assessed separately, but both tests included text analysis and evaluation tasks in extended constructed-response format.

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Language and Literacy



The official language in Scotland is English and this is the medium of instruction in most schools. However, in 2000 there were 62 publicly funded primary schools with Gaelic instruction units.¹ The ethnic minority population speaks a wide range of first languages. The main minority ethnic groups in Scotland are Pakistani, Chinese, and Indian, and the main community languages are Urdu, Punjabi, and Chinese. Teachers are encouraged to build on diversity of culture and language in their schools by fostering a respect for and interest in each pupil's mother tongue and its literature, creating awareness of bias and prejudice and challenging these in the use of language, and, where resources allow, developing proficiency in other community languages.

There are 12 national daily newspapers in the United Kingdom, most of which publish Scottish editions, and in addition, Scotland has 15 regional daily newspapers. Total circulation figures are not readily available.

The public library system is run by Scottish local authorities, many of which offer ICT facilities. There are 668 public libraries in Scotland and in 1999-2000 there were an estimated 1.7 million active borrowers.²

Education System



Governance and Organization

The First Minister for Scotland is responsible to the Scottish Parliament for the overall supervision and development of the education service in Scotland and for legislation affecting Scottish Education,

through the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) and the Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department (SEELLD). SEED and SEELLD broadly determine national aims and standards, formulate national policy, commission policy-related research, issue guidelines in the area of curriculum and assessment, and oversee teacher training and supply.³

In 2001-02, the Scottish Executive Education Department's budget for developing policy on schools was £95.7 million, of which £38.6 million was allocated to school standards and improvement; £39.9 million to curriculum development, information technology, international services, and administration; £13.2 million to pupil support; and £4.0 million to Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.⁴ Provision for preschool education was £141.8 million in 2001-02.⁵ Funding for preschool education will transfer directly to local authority budgets from 2002-03 onwards. School education is the responsibility of local authorities and is supported through the Revenue Support Grant from the Executive. The exception here is specific grants to local authorities. For 2001-02, these grants were £198.7 million for the Schools' Excellence Fund, £5.4 million for pupils with special educational needs, and £2.8 million for teaching the Gaelic language.⁶ In 2001-02, local authority expenditure on education services is expected to be in the region of £271.8 million as part of the overall Revenue Support Grant to authorities.⁷ Further and higher education are funded directly by the central government through the Further Education Funding Council and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council. This area is within the responsibility of the Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department.

Country Profile: Scotland

Geographical Location and Size

Scotland occupies the northern part of the United Kingdom, which lies off the northwestern coast of Europe. To the east of Scotland is the North Sea and to the west, the Atlantic Ocean. Scotland has a land area of nearly 79,000 square kilometers.

Population and Health Statistics

Scotland's population is 5.1 million and it is estimated that between 1.5 to 2 percent of the population are from minority ethnic groups.⁸ The population density is 66 persons per square kilometer.⁹ Much of the population is concentrated in the central belt where the two major cities, Glasgow and Edinburgh, are located. In 2000, the infant mortality rate was 5.6 per 1000 births and the life expectancy was 72.8 years for males and 78.2 years for females.¹⁰ In 1999, 12.7 percent of the people in Scotland were aged 5 to 14, 6.3 percent were 15 to 19, and 13.2 percent were 20 to 29.¹¹ The number of those aged 5 to 14 is projected to fall by 17 percent from 2000 to 2011.¹²

Political System

Since July 1999, the 129-member Scottish Parliament, has taken legislative responsibility for a wide range of matters such as health, education, housing, most aspects of transport, local government, law and order, social work, agriculture, the environment, forestry, and fisheries, arts and sports, and economic assistance and industry.

These responsibilities are administered by the Scottish Executive, which is headed by the First Minister. The office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, who is a member of the United Kingdom parliament, is known as the Scotland Office and is located in London. The members of the Scottish Parliament are elected every four years.

Since April 1996, there have been 32 single-tier local government councils, which among a wide range of other responsibilities, administer much of preschool and school education. Members of the councils are elected every three years. Many areas also have community councils set up on local demand which are intended to be broadly based organizations through which local communities can make their views known and can act.



Economy and Employment

Service industries are the greatest employer in Scotland. There is a growing light engineering industry, including electronics, and a range of oil support activities associated with North Sea oil and gas. Traditional heavy engineering has virtually disappeared, but there is still some residual shipbuilding and coal mining (mainly open cast). Agriculture is still a significant employer and fishing, forestry, and coal mining (mainly open cast) take place on a small scale.

The estimated GDP of Scotland was £64,050 million in 1999, an average of about £12,512 per head of population.¹³ Fifty-four percent of the workforce are men and 46 percent are women.¹⁴

Structure of the System

The education system includes preschool education, primary education, secondary education, further education, and higher education. School education in Scotland is provided free for all pupils by local authorities. However, in September 2002, 2.7 percent of primary pupils and 5.5 percent of secondary pupils attended private schools, which were self-financed.¹⁵

Preschools

Preschool lasts up to age 5 and is available in a variety of forms – local authority nursery schools and nursery classes, day nurseries, private nurseries, and playgroups. The Executive is committed to the continuation of the preschool program. From April 2002, under the Standards in Scotland Schools Act (2000), local authorities have been placed under a duty to secure a free part-time preschool education place for all three and four year olds whose parents wish one.¹⁶ Resources of £137 million were reintegrated into the local government settlement from 2002-03. The latest participation rates available are for the academic year 2000-01 and show 97 percent of 4 year olds and 80 percent of three year olds are participating in preschool education.¹⁷ A curriculum framework for children aged 3 to 5 was published in 1999 by HM Inspectors of Schools who have a responsibility for inspecting preschool establishments. This framework states that preschools should seek to encourage:

- Emotional, personal, and social development
- Communication and language
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Expressive and aesthetic development
- Physical development and movement.

Primary Schools

In September 2000, there were 2,278 publicly funded primary schools in Scotland with 425,216 pupils,¹⁸ representing a reduction of 6,198 pupils over the previous 12 months.¹⁹ The pupil enrollment in these schools ranged from 2 to 786 pupils. In 2000, about one-third of the publicly funded

primary schools had a pupil enrollment of less than 100. Of primary schools, 15 percent were denominational (mainly Catholic).²⁰ In rural areas, there are a few combined primary and secondary schools and in other places there are a few infant schools, which take children for three years and then transfer them to a primary school.

Primary schools are organized into classes for seven years, from Primary 1 to Primary 7 (ages 5 to 12). In 2000, the average class size in publicly funded primary schools was 24.4 pupils and the pupil teacher ratio was 19:0.²¹ There were also 67 private schools with primary departments. Classes are taught by generalist teachers following the national curriculum guidelines for 5- to 14-year-old pupils. Specialist teachers may provide support in art, drama, music, and physical education. Much classroom teaching takes place with pupils in groups, but more recently, there has been a move towards more whole-class, interactive teaching.

Secondary Schools

In September 2000, there were 389 publicly funded secondary schools in Scotland with 317,704 pupils.²² The number of pupils attending these schools increased by 2,348 over the previous 12 months.²³ The pupil enrollment in these schools ranged from 7 to 2,112 pupils. In 2000, 22 (6%) publicly funded secondary schools in Scotland had a pupil enrollment of less than 100 and 15 percent were denominational.²⁴ There were also 62 private schools with pupils of secondary age.²⁵

Almost all (90%) secondary schools take children from age 12 for four years of compulsory education followed by a further two years for those pupils who wish to continue their education.²⁶ Teaching is done by subject specialist teachers mostly on a whole-class basis. In September 2000, the pupil teacher ratio was 13:0.²⁷ Most classes are set by pupil ability but in the early secondary years, there are some mixed ability classes. In the first two years, students follow the curriculum defined in the national guidelines for 5- to 14-year-olds, and from Secondary 3 onwards, students follow the syllabus for national examinations and the National Certificate. The curriculum guidelines for 5- to 14-year-old pupils aim to promote the following core skills:

- Personal and interpersonal skills including working with others

- Language and communication skills
- Numeracy skills
- ICT skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Learning and thinking skills.

These skills are promoted in the main curriculum areas of language (including a modern language); mathematics; environmental studies (society, science, and technology); expressive arts; physical education; and religious and moral education. National guidelines provide recommended time allocations for each area, with 20 percent of teaching time left unallocated to allow schools some flexibility to enhance learning in any of the main areas and address local development priorities. In primary schools, language is given the largest allocation (20% of teaching time) with each of the remaining areas being allocated 15 percent of the teaching time.²⁸ Exhibit 1 shows the allocation of instructional time in the first two years of secondary school.²⁹

The 5-to-14 framework also promotes cross-curriculum learning on, for example, education for citizenship, the culture of Scotland, and information and communications technology.³⁰

For school pupils, the academic year lasts a minimum of 190 days (38 weeks). Teachers work for one more week that is devoted to in-service training. The school year begins in mid-August and ends at the end of June. The norm for the length of the school week is 27.5 hours.

Virtually all 5- to 16-year-olds attend school. As of 2000, at the end of compulsory education in Scotland (16 years of age) 91 percent of students continued to be enrolled in part-time or full-time education.³¹ At age 17, participation rates fell to 70 percent, and at age 19 to 54 percent.³²

Exhibit 1: Secondary School Instructional Time

Subject Area	Percent
Language	20
Mathematics	10
Environmental Studies	30
Expressive arts/physical education	15
Religious and moral education	5

Further and Higher Education

There are 46 further education colleges in Scotland with a very diverse student body ranging from 16-year-olds who have just left school to an increasing number of older students. Typical further education colleges offer a wide range of mainly vocational courses at a non-advanced or an advanced level. The majority of courses lead to the Scottish Qualifications Authority National Certificate or a General Scottish Vocational Qualification. Courses are delivered through lecturing and other classroom methods, but there is a tradition of practical work in workshops, laboratories, and training kitchens. Various forms of open learning have been developed in a number of cases using new technology. Many of the courses are modular, which has influenced teaching. In 1999-2000, there were 72,000 students at further education institutions.³³

There are 22 higher education institutions in Scotland comprising 14 universities and 8 other institutions. The higher education institutions provide sub-degree courses, first degree courses, courses for the education and training of teachers, courses of post-graduate studies at Masters and Doctorate levels, and courses at a higher level in preparation for a qualification from a professional body. The main teaching methods are lectures, tutorial groups, project work, and fieldwork. In some institutions, there has been a growing interest in distance learning, open learning, and flexible learning. In 1999-2000, there were 187,300 students at higher education institutions.³⁴

There are also adult education and community learning centers run by a variety of organizations.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

In September 2000, there were 22,429 full-time equivalent primary teachers working in publicly funded schools and 24,525 full-time equivalent secondary teachers.³⁵ There also were 882 full-time equivalent primary teachers in private primary schools and 1,988 in private secondary schools.³⁶ In September 1998, 93 percent of the primary teachers and 53 percent of secondary teachers working in publicly funded schools were women.³⁷ Of teachers working in publicly funded primary schools in 1998, 14 percent were age 29 or under, 17 percent

were 30 to 39, and 70 percent were 40 or over.³⁸ Of teachers working in secondary schools, 9 percent were age 29 or under, 20 percent were 30 to 39, and 71 percent were 40 or over.³⁹

Teacher Education

There are two routes to obtaining a teaching qualification to become a primary teacher. Students can either take a 4-year course leading to a Bachelor of Education degree at one of five teacher education institutions or, those who already have a university degree can take a 36-week Post-Graduate Certificate in Education. Both courses promote knowledge and understanding of children's learning and development, equip students to teach the full range of subjects covered in the national guidelines for 5- to 14-year-olds, and train students to deliver a rounded and stimulating curriculum at the preschool stage. At least 30 weeks of the Bachelor of Education degree course should be devoted to school experience and the course should contain an element of specialist study in at least one of 11 subjects. At least 50 percent of the post-graduate course must be devoted to school experience.

To become a secondary teacher in one or more subjects, students can take either an undergraduate course (combining subject study with teacher training) or, if they already have a degree in a relevant subject, a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education. The undergraduate course involves from 3.5 to 4.5 years of study and the post-graduate course involves 36 weeks of study (both with at least 18 weeks of school experience). For their subject areas, students must cover the guidelines for 5- to 14-year-olds as they apply to Secondary 1 and 2, Standard grade courses in Secondary 3 and 4, and guidelines on courses in the upper secondary. Students must also develop understanding of the primary and further/higher education interface.

Teachers wishing to work in publicly funded schools must register with the General Teaching Council.

Teacher In-service Education

A recent Committee report entitled *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* (2000) introduced an additional, contractual 35 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) per annum for all teachers. Every teacher will be required to agree upon an annual CPD Plan with his or her immedi-

ate manager and maintain an individual CPD Record. CPD should include personal professional development, attendance at nationally accredited courses, and small school-based activities and should be based on assessment of individual need, taking into account school, local, and national priorities.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The Government policy on reading literacy is embodied in the national curriculum guidelines for English language for ages 5 to 14. These were published in June 1991 and a later supplement was added in February 1999. They suggest that schools structure English language work according to four outcomes – **Listening, Talking, Reading, and Writing** and that the weight attached to these outcomes be reviewed at each stage in the education system. For example, most of the time allocated to language in the early stages of primary schools is spent on talking and listening. For the majority of pupils, the four outcomes will be given approximately equal weighting by Primary 6 or 7. By Secondary 1 and 2, increasing emphasis will be given to reading and writing.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

For each of the four outcomes, there are a number of strands or aspects of learning that pupils will experience. For example, the strands for reading are:

- Reading for information
- Reading for enjoyment
- Reading to reflect on the writer's ideas and craft
- Awareness of genre
- Reading aloud
- Knowledge about language.

For each strand, there are minimum competency or "attainment targets." These targets are defined by reference to the stage in Primary and

Exhibit 2: Standards for Reading Attainment Targets for the Lowest (Level A) and Highest (Level F) Levels for Ages 5 to 14

Strand	Level A	Level F
Reading for information	Find, with teacher support, an item of information from an informational or reference text.	Gather and categorize information from a range of sources in a variety of formats, for cross-curricular research, make notes independently. Evaluate the appropriateness of such information for particular purposes, including reporting.
Reading for enjoyment	Read for enjoyment simple stories, poems and informational texts supported by pictures.	Negotiate a personal reading program, and read regularly for enjoyment texts that range in subject matter and genre. Provide, either orally or in writing, evidence of personal engagement with the texts, substantiated by textual reference.
Reading to reflect on the writer's ideas and crafts	Read and, with teachers support, talk about a short, straightforward text showing that they understand one important idea.	Read independently, skim, and scan to locate main points of a text. Make predictions, identify subsidiary ideas. Comment briefly on the opinions and attitudes of the writer. Describe, with some support, the simpler aspects of style and its intended audience.
Awareness of genre (type of text)	Show recognition of one obvious difference between two simple texts of distinct types, such as a story and a list of instructions.	In texts from a range of genres, demonstrate an understanding of the relationship amongst genre, purpose, and audience. Explore the possibilities of this relationship by creating their own examples. Either orally or in writing, make a critical evaluation of a text, taking account of the genre.
Reading aloud	Read aloud a familiar passage or poem so as to convey understanding.	Read aloud familiar texts of some complexity, not only to communicate meaning but also to convey such aspects of the writer's craft as tone and mood.
Knowledge about language	No attainment targets at this level	Show that they know, understand and can use at least the following terms: literary, linguistic, point of view, onomatopoeia, alliteration.

Secondary education at which those competencies should be attainable. The lowest attainment level (Level A) should be attainable in the course of Primary 1 to 3 by almost all pupils and the highest attainment level (Level F) should be attainable in part by some pupils, and completed by a few pupils, in the course of Primary 7 to Secondary 2. For illustrative purposes, Exhibit 2 shows each of the strands of reading and the attainment targets for the lowest and highest levels.

Descriptions of the types of activities teachers and pupils can undertake to achieve each level of language skills for each strand are found in Programs of Study in the national curriculum guidelines. These activities are designed to help teachers plan and organize their teaching.

For the early stages, the guidelines have been supplemented by further advice entitled "Improving Reading at the Early Stages 5-14" drawing on the experience of HM Inspectors of Schools. This information suggests that good teaching of reading uses a variety of approaches in

ways that support one another. These approaches are exemplified by a number of activities that should be used by teachers of reading.

Materials for Reading Instruction

Most Scottish schools use a reading scheme and have a variety of books and reading texts for use by pupils. Specific texts or reading schemes are not recommended by the Scottish Executive Education Department and the selection and provision of such material is the responsibility of local education authorities and the schools themselves. So far there is very limited use of ICT in the teaching of reading.

Reading Disabilities

Most pupils will at some time experience some learning difficulties in language that can usually be overcome by an appropriate curriculum and methodology. Others, however, may have pronounced, specific, or complex difficulties that prevent them from attaining language develop-

ment targets, even at Level A. To ensure that progress can be made within this one level, the guidelines for 5- to 14-year-olds suggest that teaching should reflect maturation, interest changes, and developing skills. The guidelines also suggest that pupils with severe learning difficulties may need greater emphasis on oral work.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Assessment procedures for 5- to 14-year-olds should be planned as part of the teaching of English language. The 5 to 14 Assessment Unit constructs standardized national tests that teachers can use to confirm their own judgment about attainment levels reached by pupils. A number of different tests are constructed to allow teachers to select tests that assess the specific aspect of the curriculum being taught. Tests are administered and marked by teachers according to a scheme specified by the Assessment Unit.

National or Regional Examinations

To inform the development of education policy, the Scottish Executive also runs an Assessment of Attainment Program. This program monitors standards of attainment in representative samples of Primary 4, Primary 5, and Secondary 2 pupils across Scotland. Banks of reading tests are administered as part of this program to allow the percentage of pupils attaining expected standards to be calculated. Results are reported only at a nationally aggregated level.

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Language and Literacy



Singapore has four official languages – Malay, Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil, and English. Of these, Malay is the national language and English the language of administration.

The proportion of the resident population age 15 and over who are literate increased from 89 to 93 percent from 1990 to 2000.¹ Additionally, as a result of Singapore's bilingual education policy, the proportion literate in two or more languages increased from 45 percent to 56 percent during that same decade.² Residents also have improved their literacy in English; 71 percent were literate in English in 2000 compared with 63 percent a decade ago.³

Education System



Governance and Organization

In 1996, Singapore's public expenditure per pupil on education was about 7 percent of the per capita gross national product (GNP) at pre-primary and primary levels, and 12 percent at the secondary level.⁴ Educational decision-making about national policy matters generally is centralized within the Ministry of Education. The ministry's role is to delineate education goals and develop a coordinated education program for schools and junior colleges. The Ministry provides guidelines in the areas of curriculum, textbook use, and assessment. The curriculum emphasizes literacy, numeracy, bilingualism, moral education, and physical education. A broad-based education is provided, serving as a foundation for responsible living and lifelong learning.

The education system in Singapore is characterized by a high degree of homogeneity and cohesion in curriculum coverage across schools. However, teachers are encouraged to use different teaching strategies to suit the learning abilities of their students. The practice of streaming, which begins in Grade 5, provides for differentiated curricula for students of different abilities. Students who learn at their own pace have a greater opportunity to succeed in their studies.

Singapore's education system aims to bring out the best in all students, instilling in them sound moral values so that they may become responsible adults, loyal citizens, caring people, and diligent individuals. Fundamental to Singapore's education system is its bilingual policy, which ensures that children learn both English and their mother tongue – Malay, Mandarin, or Tamil, thus maintaining an awareness of their cultural heritage and learning the skills to function in a modern economy. National Education has been introduced to strengthen national cohesion, the instinct for cultural survival, and confidence in the future.

Structure of the Education System

The education system provides each child with at least 10 years of education – six years in primary school and four in secondary school. After completing secondary school, students may enter a junior college for a two-year pre-university course, if they are academically inclined. Most of these students will then pursue a degree program at a university. Students interested in technical and commercial studies may join a technical institute or polytechnic. The structure of the education system is shown in Exhibit 1.⁵

Country Profile: Singapore

Geographical Location and Size

Singapore is situated in Southeast Asia between Malaysia and Indonesia, approximately 137 kilometers north of the equator.⁶ It is about 42 kilometers in length, 23 kilometers in breadth, and 683 square kilometers in area.

Population and Health Statistics

The resident population, including citizens and permanent residents, was nearly 4 million in 2000.⁷ About 77 percent of the population are Chinese residents, 14 percent Malays, 8 percent Indians, and 1 percent other ethnic groups. The median age rose from 29 years in 1990 to 34 in 2000. The proportion of persons aged 65 years and over increased from 6 to 7.3 percent during the decade.⁸

The population density is about 6,384 persons per square kilometer.⁹ Living conditions improved in 2000 with more living space per person compared to 1990. About 86 percent of Singapore's population lives in apartments built by the Housing and Development Board.¹⁰ The average household size decreased from 4.2 to 3.7 people between 1990 and 2000.¹¹

The country's infant mortality rate decreased from 6.6 per thousand live births in 1990 to 2.5 per thousand live births in 2000.¹² Rising standards of living and health also increased the average life expectancy from 73 to 76 years for males and from 78 to 80 years for females between 1990 and 2000.¹³

Political System

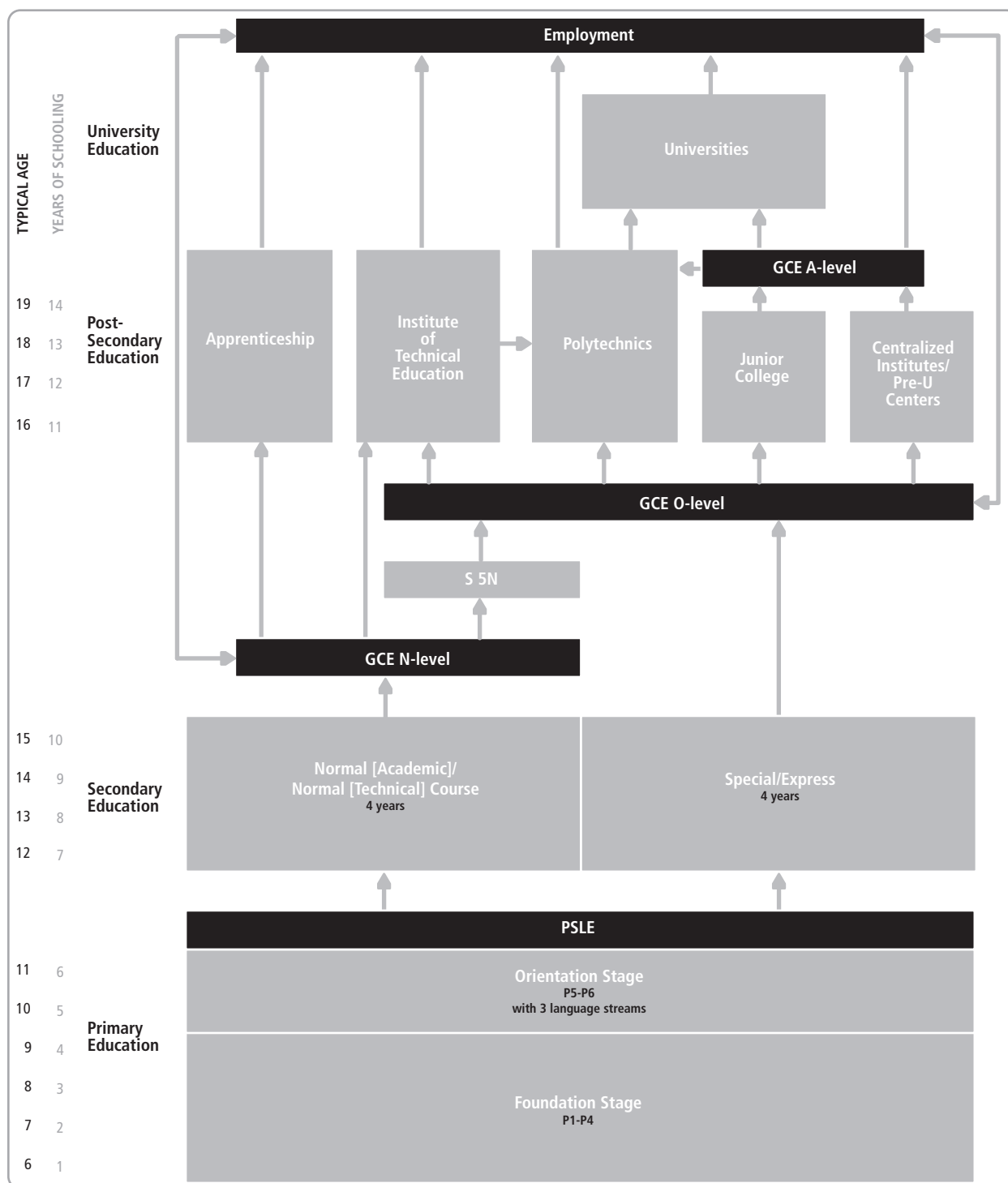
Singapore is a republic with a parliamentary system of government with a President as Head of State, who appoints the Prime Minister and the other Cabinet Members from among the Members of Parliament. Authority to govern is vested in the Cabinet, which is headed by the Prime Minister.

Economy and Employment

Singaporeans enjoy a high standard of living. In 2000, the labor force comprised 69 percent of the population aged 15 years and over.¹⁴ The GNP per capita in 1999 was US\$ 22,310.¹⁵



Exhibit 1: Structure of the Educational System in Singapore



Primary Education

Education at the primary level consists of two stages – Grades 1 to 4 are the foundation stage, and grades 5 and 6 are the orientation stage. The foundation stage emphasizes basic literacy and numeracy skills. About 80% of the curriculum time is used for the study of English language, mother

tongue, and mathematics.¹⁶ Moral education, science, social studies, art and crafts, music, health, and physical education also are taught at this stage.

At the end of the foundation stage, the students are streamed according to their abilities.

There are three streams at the orientation stage: EM1, EM2, and EM3. Students in the EM1 and EM2 streams take English language, mother tongue, mathematics, and science. In addition, EM1 students study their mother tongue at a higher level. Students in the EM3 stream study English language, mother tongue, and mathematics at the basic proficiency level. All students, regardless of the stream they are in, also take other non-examination subjects such as social studies, and participate in athletic or recreational activities that help promote a healthy lifestyle, while cultivating team spirit and instilling discipline.

At the end of Grade 6, all students take a national placement examination, which determines placement in secondary school courses.

Secondary Education

At the secondary level the majority of students (Grades 7 to 10) take the four-year special and express courses while the rest enter a four- to five-year normal course. The special and express courses follow essentially the same curriculum except that in the special course mother-tongue study is at a higher level. Both special and express courses prepare students for the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level Examination (GCE 'O'-level) in four years. Students in the normal course are divided into academic and technical streams, both leading to the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education Normal Level Examination (GCE 'N'-level) at the end of the fourth year. Those who do well may continue on to take the GCE 'O'-level examination at the end of the fifth year.

Post-secondary Education

Upon completing secondary education, students may enter a junior college for a two-year pre-university course, or a centralized institute for a three-year pre-university course. Admission is based on the aggregate score attained at the GCE 'O'-level examination. At the end of the pre-university course, students take the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Examination (GCE 'A'-level) to determine their eligibility for tertiary education in the local universities.

Students interested in technical and commercial studies may join the polytechnic instead of taking a pre-university course. They also may

pursue degree courses at the university upon graduation. Alternatively, secondary school leavers may pursue a wide range of higher-level vocational courses at the Institute of Technical Education.

The majority of younger Singaporeans attain secondary or higher qualifications. In 2000, about 80 percent of the residents aged 25-34 years had at least secondary qualifications.¹⁷ The proportion of university and polytechnic graduates among this group increased over the past decade – from 7 percent to 24 percent for university graduates and 5 percent to 11 percent for polytechnic.¹⁸

Types of Schools

In Singapore, government schools are fully funded by the government; government-aided schools are set up by religious missions and other organizations but are heavily subsidized by the government, and independent schools receive substantial funding from the government but are run by Boards of Governors that decide on personnel and policy matters within the institution. Autonomous schools are government and government-aided schools that are given greater autonomy and more funds to provide a wider range of innovative enrichment programs for their students. In addition, there are Special Assistance Plan schools that were established to maintain high standards in both English and Chinese, while preserving the traditional ethos existing in the schools. Both special and express courses are offered in these schools.

Children with physical or intellectual impairment go to special schools that are run by voluntary welfare organizations and are heavily funded by the government. These schools are equipped with special facilities and follow specially designed curricula to prepare disabled children for life and work in society.

In 2001, there were 194 primary schools, 162 secondary schools, 3 full session schools, 15 junior colleges, and 2 centralized pre-university institutes.¹⁹ Full schools are those functioning with primary and secondary sections. The average enrollment was about 1,500 in primary schools, 1,100 in secondary schools, 530 in centralized pre-university institutes, and 1,600 in junior colleges.²⁰

Duration and Timing of the School Year

The school year consists of four terms of ten weeks each, beginning on January 2nd. There is a one-week break between the first and second terms

and another between the third and fourth terms. A four-week break follows the mid-year school examinations, and a six-week vacation takes place at the end of the year.

While all secondary schools and pre-university centers are single session, most primary schools are double-session – students attend either the morning session from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., or the afternoon session from 1:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Students attend school from Monday to Friday, and participate in athletic or recreational activities either before or after school hours or on Saturday.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

In 2001, there were more than 12,000 teachers in primary schools.²¹ Of these, 50 percent were under 35 years old, 81 percent were female, and 32 percent were graduates.²² About 47 percent had more than 10 years of teaching experience.²³ The student-teacher ratio was 25.2 at the primary level.²⁴

Teacher Education

The National Institute of Education (NIE), an institute of the Nanyang Technological University, trains teachers for the workforce. NIE was formed in July 1991 by merging the former Institute of Education and the College of Physical Education.

NIE offers a four-year degree program that leads to the award of the degree of either a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science with a diploma in education or physical education. It also offers non-degree two-year programs leading to the diploma in education or diploma in physical education for holders of GCE 'A'-level and polytechnic diploma qualifications. For university graduates, NIE offers a one-year post-graduate diploma in education. Alternatively, prospective teachers can receive a two-year post-graduate diploma in education and specialize in physical education.

Other special training programs include training of early childhood and special education professionals. There is also a program specializing in the teaching of mother-tongue languages at the primary level.

Teacher In-service Education

NIE offers in-service courses for practicing teachers, including a diploma in the departmental management program, which trains teachers to be level, subject, or department heads. The six-month full-time Leaders in Education Program prepares selected education officers for the post of school principal. These selected personnel are experienced and well-qualified educators with a background of successful experience in both teaching and management.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Singapore's reading policy emphasizes literacy development for all students to ensure they learn how to read and write in primary school. At the secondary level, they should acquire good reading habits in order to understand, enjoy, and appreciate a wide range of texts, including the literature of other cultures. The foundation stage of the primary school curriculum highlights basic literacy and numeracy skills in the first four years of primary school, ensuring a firm foundation in the core subjects – English, the mother tongue, and mathematics. From the orientation stage of Grades 5 and 6 through the secondary level, the emphasis is on developing reading as a lifelong skill. All primary and secondary schools have extensive reading programs that promote reading school wide, such as Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR).

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Formal reading instruction in English begins at age 6 when the children enter Grade 1. Since most Singaporean children do not come from English-speaking homes, they are taught the alphabet, and to distinguish the basic sounds and phonological features of the English language, recognize individual letters and words in familiar contexts, and use a combination of picture cues, sight cues, and phonic and contextual cues in reading.

The language teacher is responsible for integrating reading instruction with the instruction in grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, and writing. Language learning involves learning to read in both English and the mother tongue.

The following reading objectives are listed in the *English Language Syllabus (Primary) 1991*. Under this syllabus, students learn to:

- Read a variety of texts and demonstrate comprehension (and enjoyment) by responding verbally or non-verbally
- Express feelings and views, give reasons, do a simple review, paraphrase or complete forms
- Read silently and in a sustained manner for pleasure and information
- Skim to get the general idea of a text
- Scan to locate specific information
- Deduce the use and meaning of unfamiliar words, phrases, and expressions
- Recognize and understand the meaning and use of discourse markers, figurative language, and literary devices
- Read a variety of texts to answer comprehension questions at different levels – factual (recall), interpretive (inferential), and evaluative (application).

The *English Language Syllabus 2001 (Primary & Secondary)* represents an updating of the objectives and list of reading skills in the 1991 syllabus. The 2001 syllabus is being implemented in stages through the grade level in primary and secondary schools. (At the time of writing this chapter, the revised syllabus has been implemented in the primary schools up to Grade 3.)

Primary schools in Singapore use a variety of approaches to teach children how to read. The two major approaches since the late eighties and early nineties are the Shared Book Approach (SBA) and Guided Reading with the teacher. Extensive reading programs teach reading explicitly and implicitly. Print resources like Big Books, multimedia resources, and activities such as storytelling, dramatization, and poetry recitations support language learning and reading in the primary schools.

Materials for Reading Instruction

English language textbooks contain both fiction and non-fiction passages for teaching reading comprehension. From 1980 to 1996, the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Institute of Singapore (CDIS) produced English language textbooks, workbooks, listening tapes, and video programs as well as children's Big Books for teaching reading and English language.

The following reading and English language materials for primary schools were produced by CDIS.

In the 1980s:

- Primary English Project (PEP) for Primary 1 to 6
- New English Series for Primary Education (NESPE) for Primary 1 to 6
- Correct Use of English (CUE) for Primary 4 to 6
- Learning English Activity Program (LEAP) for monolingual students of low-academic ability learning only one language
- Special Project on English, Mathematics, and Science (SPEMS) remedial materials for academically low-achieving schools

In the 1990s:

- Primary English Thematic Series (PETS) for Primary 1 to 6
- Thirty Big Books for teaching reading in Primary 1 and 2

Since CDIS closed in 1997, educational publishing companies have been producing curriculum materials for reading and English language instruction. Prior to publication, these materials undergo a rigorous review process conducted by curriculum officers at the Ministry of Education.

Instructional Time

The total instructional time allocated for the English language curriculum is 17 periods per week for students in Grade 1 to 4, and varies from

12 to 16 periods per week for students in Grade 5 and 6. Each period is 30 minutes. The exact amount of time designated for reading varies from school to school.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

Primary school teachers generally teach all subjects to their classes except the mother tongue, civics, and moral education. In 2001, the average class size was 37 at the primary level and 36 at the secondary level.²⁵ Class size was only 25 at centralized institutes, and 23 at junior colleges.²⁶

During the first two years of primary school, there is special provision for teaching small groups of 8 to 10 children with reading difficulties. Reading in pairs or small groups also is conducted outside of curriculum time under programs like “Reading Mums” and “Buddy Reading” (see section on Literacy Programs). Mixed-ability grouping and whole-class instruction is common in both primary and secondary schools.

Second Language Reading Instruction

Singapore’s bilingual policy is a cornerstone of its education system. English is the language of instruction for all subjects except the mother tongue, civics, and moral education. All students are required to study their respective mother tongue language (Malay, Mandarin, or Tamil) up to pre-university level. An integrated approach is adopted in teaching reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Chinese students in Grade 1 learn *Hanyu Pinyin* (the Chinese phonetic alphabet) during the first ten weeks of school.

Role of Reading Specialists

Reading specialists assist educational psychologists in assessing students with reading difficulties and disabilities such as dyslexia, and in intervention programs. Reading specialists also help to design and conduct training programs for key personnel such as the Learning Support Coordinators in the primary schools who teach students with reading difficulties.

Reading Disabilities

Children with reading difficulties are identified in Grade 1 and given help and support in a specialized program that offers structured early intervention in English language learning and reading.²⁷ There also are special programs to assist schools in maximizing

the potential of children with learning difficulties and learning disabilities. The programs aim to identify average and above-average underachievers and slow learners in Grades 1 to 3. Remedial lessons in English and mathematics are provided for underachievers, while lessons for low achievers and slow learners include only English language as a subject.

Grade 1 pupils who are identified as being “at risk” of failing in the English language are given assistance by the Learning Support Coordinators during the English language curriculum time for one half hour per day. Grade 1 to Grade 3 underachievers who have learning problems will attend remedial lessons with a focus on “diagnostic teaching” in English language and/or mathematics conducted by teachers outside curriculum time.

Literacy Programs



Most primary and secondary schools in Singapore promote reading through extensive school-wide reading programs and “Library Week” or “English Week” during which students are commended and awarded for achievements in reading, the recitation of poems, dramatization of stories and other literary activities. Other literacy improvement programs in the schools are peer-reading activities like “Buddy Reading” in which an older child reads to a younger child, and the “Reading Mums” program held before or after school hours during which a volunteer mother reads to a small group of primary children.

At the national and community levels, there are several literacy programs conducted by non-government organizations and self-help non-profit organizations such as the Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC), Majlis Pembangunan Masyarakat Islam Singapura (Mendaki), Singapore Indian Development Association (Sinda), the Society for Reading and Literacy, and the National Library Board (NLB).

Self-help non-profit organizations like CDAC, Mendaki, and Sinda conduct tuition programs to help Chinese, Malay, and Indian students from less well-to-do families in their respective communities to improve their academic performance, especially in English language and mathematics. In addition, Sinda conducts a literacy program to help Indian children aged 4 to 8 learn to read. This program has four components:²⁸

- *Project Read*, a home-reading program in which an adult volunteer reads to a child from a low-income family in the child's home for an hour each week
- *Block Reading*, a group reading program in which 2 to 5 children living in the same or nearby apartment block are grouped together for a reading session in one of the children's homes
- *Reading Centers*, a group reading program for children who no longer require individual attention. Each group session has between 20 and 30 children and lasts for an hour
- *Library Helpdesks*, a program that helps parents and their children choose books and orientates them to library facilities.

At the national level, the National Library Board recently launched the "Born to Read, Read to Bond" project that encourages parents to read to their young children. Community language papers also collaborate with the National Library Board to organize competitions that encourage students to read books and newspapers written in Chinese, Malay, or Tamil.

There also are literacy programs targeted at adults. BEST (*Basic Education in Skills Training*) is a national program for workers to get a basic education in English language and mathematics up to Grade 6 level. WISE (*Work Improvement through Secondary Education*) is another national program that offers workers a shortened route to the GCE 'N'-level examination in English language and mathematics. The Society for Reading and Literacy runs an adult literacy program, *WISH*, that teaches non-working, middle-aged and elderly women basic functional English for daily communication. These adult literacy programs are organized and conducted in community centers by volunteers.

Assessment



School-based Assessment

At every grade, students are assessed at least twice, by mid-year and end-of-year summative examinations. Except for the assessment at Grade 4, schools develop their own examination papers for Grades 1, 2, 3,

and 5. At Grade 4, students take an examination to determine the stream they will be in at Grades 5 and 6. For this examination, schools compile their own examination papers from item banks provided by the Ministry of Education. Students are then streamed into the EM1, EM2 or EM3 streams. Parents are given the final say in determining the stream their children will enter.

Reading assessment in class is closely integrated with the reading program of the school, and schools may vary in the way reading progress is assessed at the classroom level. However, while schools may vary in how reading is assessed formatively in the classroom, they generally adhere quite closely to the approach and format adopted in the national examination for their school-based semester- or year-end summative assessments.

In both the Grade 4 school-based examination and Grade 6 national examination, English language is one of the three or four subjects assessed, the other subjects being the mother tongue and mathematics. Science is included at Grade 6 only for the more academically inclined students. In both the Grade 4 and Grade 6 examinations, English language as a subject is given the same weighting as the other subjects. Although a passing score on the English language portion is not the only deciding factor in determining the assignment of a student to a stream, achievement in the English language is highly regarded because it has the status of a first language in the national school curriculum and it is also the working language used in different settings and contexts such as education, administration, commerce, and social interaction.

National Assessment

Students in primary school take one major national examination. At the end of Grade 6, when the children are 12 years old, they take the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) to determine their placement in a secondary school. Based on their results in this examination, students are streamed into four different courses according to overall academic ability. Most parents regard this examination as a crucial threshold in a child's school career.

Reading is assessed as part of the English language examination paper, which includes reading comprehension, writing, speaking, and listening comprehension. Performance in reading is not reported separately.

Diagnostic Testing

A “School Readiness Test” is administered at the start of the year in Grade 1 to identify children who enter school without the requisite English language and literacy skills to access the formal curriculum. On the average, about 15 percent of the students identified as requiring support in language and reading are placed in the “Learning Support Program” that offers structured early intervention.²⁹ These students are taken out of their English language lessons for half an hour per day to receive lessons with a Learning Support Coordinator who is a specially trained teacher. The children are monitored through their performance on the school examinations as well as their gains in reading. Those who still require support will remain in the Learning Support Program in Grade 2 and some may continue until Grade 3.

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THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Zuzana Lukačková

SPU – National Institute for Education

Language and Literacy



The Slovak Republic's official language, used in schools and institutions, is Slovak. As one of the Slavonic languages from the Indo-European family, the Slovak language has been in use for centuries, its existence established through historical documents and rich folklore heritage.

The Slovak language began to be standardized in the 18th Century, and in the 19th century the official form was codified by Ludovit Stur, a Slovak linguist and politician. Although the language of the common people, Slovak was not recognized officially, and its use was not allowed in schools until an independent Czechoslovakia was established. Citizens who are from a national or ethnic minority have the right to master the official language as well as be educated in their mother tongue and use their own language in official contacts.

The Slovak Republic has 16 daily newspapers with a circulation of 184 per 1,000 inhabitants.¹ There is a wide network of public libraries with 2,630 service points and 758,000 registered users in 2000.²

Education System



Governance and Organization

According to the Slovak Republic's Constitution, everyone has the right to free primary, secondary, and, subject to student ability and state availability, higher education.

The Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic is responsible for educational policy, as well as its implementation, legislation, and

financing. The Ministry allocates funds for education in accordance with the acts of the state budget.

In 1996, school governance was shifted to local state administration or departments of education at the regional and district boards, which are linked to the state budget. Regional boards manage secondary schools and other educational establishments, while departments of education at the district boards are responsible for kindergartens and primary schools.

Primary and secondary schools are managed by a principal who is responsible for implementing curricula, integrating professional and pedagogical standards into the teaching process, and supervising the teaching staff. The principal cooperates with the school board, which consists of representatives of teachers, parents, students, the municipality, and higher educational establishments. The board functions as public control. State control is exercised through school inspections that monitor and evaluate achievements in education and training in schools. Such inspections involve the collection of information on the management, organization, and quality of the educational process. The school inspection is independent of the schools' administrative bodies.

Schools, including higher education institutions, are funded from the state budget. State funds are allocated through the "Education chapter" which has to be approved by the National Council. In 2000, Slovak public expenditure on education was 4.17 percent of its total GNP.³ Private educational establishments are allowed to collect school fees and find additional financial resources or material aid, which may be offered by parents. At the same time, these schools are subsidized by the state (about 60%-80% of their budget). Even state schools strive for additional

Country Profile: The Slovak Republic

Geographical Location and Size

The Slovak Republic, or Slovakia, is situated in the middle of Central Europe. It borders the Czech Republic to the West, Poland to the North, Austria and Hungary to the South, and the Ukraine to the East. Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, lies on the river Danube. The area of the country is 49,035 square kilometers. According to the 2001 census, the population is 5 million inhabitants.⁴ The landscape of the Slovak Republic is hilly in the central and northern parts with plains in the South.

Population and Health Statistics

The area of present day Slovakia was settled by Celtic tribes before the arrival of the Slavs in the 6th century A.D. After the decline of the Great Moravian Empire in the 9th century, the territory was occupied by Hungarians and belonged to the Hungarian Kingdom for about 1,000 years. In 1918, Czechoslovakia, a common state of Czechs and Slovaks, was created, and later became a federal republic. The Slovak Republic became an independent country in 1993.

The majority of the population is of Slovak origin, but there are a few minorities living on the territory of the Slovak Republic. The Hungarian minority forms about 9 percent of the population and there is also a large Romany minority.⁵ There is also a small number of Czech, Ruthinian, Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish, German, Croatian, and Bulgarian minorities or communities in Slovakia.

The population density is 112 persons per square kilometer – highest in southwest and eastern Slovakia.⁶ The largest city is Bratislava with almost 428,672 inhabitants. Approximately 57 percent of the population lives in urban areas.⁷

The infant mortality rate in 2001 was 8 per 1,000 live births.⁸ The average life expectancy is 69 years for males and 77 years for females.⁹ The birth rate has been decreasing since 1990.¹⁰



Political System

The Slovak Republic is a parliamentary democracy headed by the President, who is elected for five years. The National Council (the Parliament) is the constitutional legislative body; it has 150 deputies elected for four years. The President appoints the Prime Minister, who is typically a member of the majority party from the National Council. Deputy prime ministers and other government ministers are appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

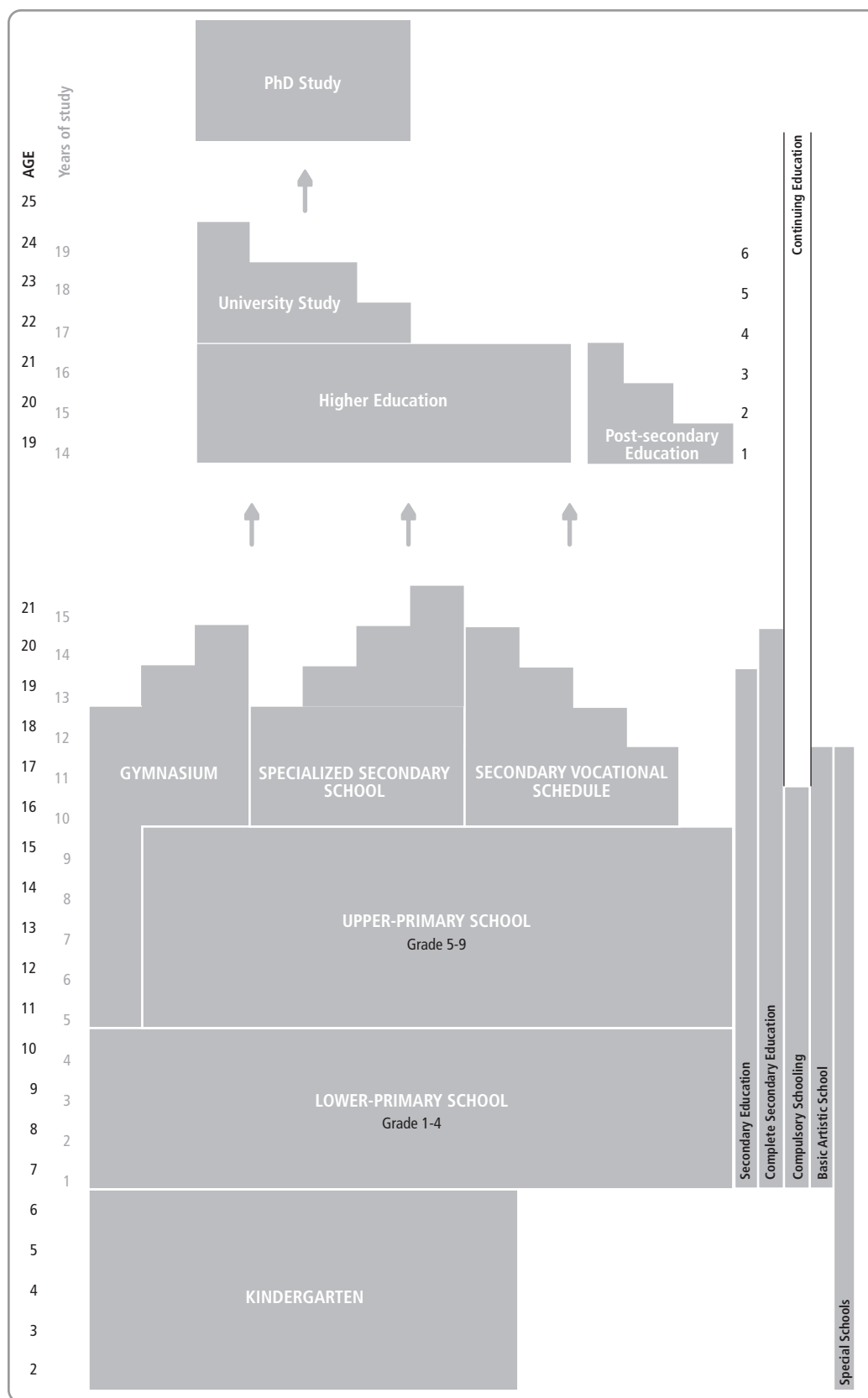
Slovakia has recently been divided into eight administrative regions and 79 districts, which are represented by local administrations gradually taking over some responsibilities from central institutions

Economy and Employment

Slovakia is a member of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, UNESCO, and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and strives to join the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The GDP per capita was US\$ 3,770 in 2001.¹¹ Since the fall of the communist regime in 1989, the centrally controlled economy has been transforming into a market economy.

The female labor force was 45 percent of the total working force – 2,600,000 people. The highest percentage of people is employed in industry, heavy industry, construction, services, and agriculture.¹²

Exhibit 1: Education System in the Slovak Republic



financing – some establish financial foundations to be able to cover necessary expenses.

Structure of the Education System

Compulsory education in Slovakia lasts 10 years – from the age of 6 until the age of 16. Compulsory school attendance is completed at the end of primary school (*Základná škola*) which has nine grades. As shown in Exhibit 1, there are four main levels in the educational system: preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education.

Preschool Education

Preschool education is voluntary but considered a part of the educational system. Designed for children of preschool age (2 to 6), it is considered a preparation for compulsory school attendance. The preschool establishments are kindergartens and special kindergartens (for children with special needs). About 51 percent of children aged 2 to 6 attended kindergartens in the school year 2000-2001; 35 percent of six-year-olds were enrolled in the last year of kindergarten.¹³

Primary education

Primary school has two stages: the lower primary with grades 1 to 4 and the upper primary with grades 5 to 9. The upper-primary school is comparable to lower secondary education. Primary school attendance is nearly 100 percent.

Primary school provides pupils with basic knowledge and skills. In addition to the general education, and ethical, aesthetic, polytechnical, health, environmental, and physical education, it also offers religious education as an optional subject.

The National Curriculum Guide (a document approved by the Ministry of Education) provides content specifications for all grades of primary school. Students receive instruction in the Slovak language, mathematics, and the arts. The basics of history, geography, biology, chemistry, and physics are included in national history, geography, and natural sciences in lower primary school. Beginning in grade 5, all sciences are taught as independent subjects. Reading and writing are taught as part of the Slovak language and literature. There are no general nationwide examinations taken after completing lower- and upper-primary education.

After completing grades 1 through 4, talented pupils can apply to be enrolled in an eight-year gymnasium or specialized dance or sport schools.

After finishing primary school, pupils can apply for further study at a secondary school, for which they must pass an entrance examination.

Secondary Education

Secondary schools are of three types: gymnasium, secondary specialized school, and secondary vocational school. Admission to secondary school is conditional upon the successful completion of primary school and the passing of entrance examinations. In the 1999-2000 school year, there were 209 gymnasia, 379 secondary specialized schools, and 361 secondary vocational schools in Slovakia.¹⁴ Study usually lasts four years. Secondary schools are included in the network approved by the Ministry of Education. Secondary schools are granted the status of a legal entity, giving the headmaster greater authority in decision-making.

The gymnasium (grammar school) prepares students primarily for studies in higher education institutions. It offers academic courses on a variety of subjects. Two foreign languages are compulsory. Students may choose some optional subjects according to the school program. The period of study lasts from four to eight years. The first eight-year gymnasia were established in the 1991-1992 school year.

In the 1990s, bilingual gymnasia were established where students study through a foreign language. Study at bilingual gymnasia lasts five years. Students graduate from the gymnasium by passing the school-leaving examination (*maturita*).

Secondary specialized schools prepare students primarily for performing professional activities in economic and technical fields. Programs usually take four years and end with a school-leaving examination (*maturita*).

Secondary vocational schools prepare students for occupation through apprenticeships. Courses last two or three years and end with a final examination. Students receive a certificate approving their professional skills.

Conservatories are a special type of secondary school that prepares students for careers in singing, music, dance, or drama. They also prepare students for higher education study. Studies at a conservatory take six years to complete.

Types of Schools

The majority of schools in Slovakia are run by the state and are called state or public schools.

Non-public schools are private or church schools that are run by a person or legal entity. Private schools receive contributions from parents as well as state subsidies. These schools try to offer innovative programs, which must be approved by the Ministry. In the 2000-01 school year, 0.72 percent of pupils attended private schools and 3.54 percent of students attended church schools.¹⁵

Duration and Timing of the School Year.

The school year lasts from September 1st until August 31st. Official teaching ends on June 30th, followed by holidays in July and August. There are approximately 180 days of instruction, with several holidays throughout the year.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

As of 1997, there were 16,280 primary school teachers in the Slovak Republic. Female teachers comprise about 91 percent of the teaching force and male teachers represent only 9 percent.¹⁶ The average age of female teachers is 39.6 and of male teachers 42.6.¹⁷ The Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic determines the professional and educational qualifications of the educational staff by a generally binding rule in agreement with the Ministry of Labor.

Teacher Education

Prospective teachers are educated at various types of institutions, depending upon their future career goals. Secondary schools of education provide teacher training for kindergarten teachers, social workers, governesses, and other related jobs.

Teachers for other types of schools are trained at Universities or Faculties of Education that are also parts of Universities. In 2000, there were six Faculties of Education in the Slovak Republic, some specializing only in training teachers for lower-primary school. The most widespread form of study is a master's degree, which takes four to five years. Most universities also offer postgraduate courses.

The program of study for future teachers includes the following: Core curriculum, pedagogy, psychology, subject methodology, and teaching practice (classroom observation, and teaching proper). Attention is paid mostly to academic studies, although prospective teachers have proper

teaching practice after first making visits to schools and conducting observations. Students usually choose a combination of two subjects in which they specialize. Elementary teachers are trained in all subjects that are taught in grades 1 through 4. Teachers for secondary schools also are trained at Faculties of Art, Humanities, and Natural Sciences or Faculties of Physical Education and Sport. The Faculty of Education of Comenius University also prepares teachers for schools where children with special needs are instructed. Some new concepts of instruction for prospective teachers are offered by non-governmental organizations in cooperation with Universities. A new credit system of study is being introduced.

Teacher In-service Education

In-service training of educational staff is provided by several institutions that offer teachers further professional development (updating their knowledge, developing teaching methods and skills, etc.). It is part of the education system and its implementation is a public task. A special Act of the National Council regulates further education as a part of lifelong education. Teachers are expected to continue their further education constantly. In-service education is offered in the following forms:

- Involve the new staff in practice
- Prepare educational management
- Continuous education
- Specialized qualification
- Extended courses.

There are several institutions that provide further courses for teachers – higher education institutions, regional teacher development centers, the National Institute for Education, and the State Institute for Professional Education. Proposals are being prepared to integrate and coordinate these individual institutions and establish the system of in-service teacher training in use in the countries of the European Union.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

In the Slovak Republic, the main objectives, content, and range of instruction in any subject are declared in official documents – syllabi and educational standards that are centrally coordinated and prepared by the National Institute for Education, and approved by the Ministry of Education. The reading curriculum and instruction in the primary grades is an integral part of mother-tongue instruction and therefore all requirements are stated in the syllabi and standards for Slovak language and literature. This subject is based on a communicative approach and devotes a substantial part of instruction to teaching and practicing reading and writing skills, especially in the first and second grades. Children are expected to master basic reading skills after the second grade. Reading comprehension is closely connected with literature instruction in the grades that follow, highlighting the fluency and quality of reading, stimulating reading literature, forming good reading habits, and a positive attitude towards culture in general. General and educational objectives and specifications for literature and reading instruction in primary grades 1 through 4 clarify the goals, techniques, and methods used in the process of achieving basic literacy and comprehension skills.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Teaching reading in the Slovak Republic officially starts at the beginning of compulsory school – in the first grade when most children are six years old. However, pre-school education gives children opportunities to develop some basic skills needed later at school.

The general outlines of the basic subject matter in reading are defined in the national curriculum guidelines for each grade of primary school, and are closely connected with mother-tongue and literature instruction. Reading is not taught as a separate subject but as an integral part of Slovak language and literature, where all parts (written and spoken language, reading, literature, grammar, orthography, oral, and written composition) are given equal attention. Teaching is based on a communicative approach with emphasis on previous knowledge, experience, and aesthetic and moral values. As part

of the reading instructional goals, reading for pleasure is stressed together with developing reading strategies and competencies.

The specific goals for reading and literature as part of Slovak language and the general goals for literature in grades 1 through 4 are as follows:

- Acquire a good command of techniques for learning to read and to constantly improve
- Gain reading and comprehension skills
- Stimulate an interest in reading and enjoying literature
- Enrich and develop vocabulary
- Form basic communicative skills
- Improve command of spoken and written language
- Stress the ethical and aesthetic function of reading and literature
- Create positive personal attitudes and values.

Instructional methods should promote the choice of suitable reading texts, foster the development of reading experiences, and support the foundations for reading comprehension. Central to these methods are the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of works of fiction; and the location and identification of similarities and differences among texts.

The process of instruction uses different approaches so that children can manage reading effectively. Special attention is given to developing various ways of reading, poetry and prose reciting, using and comprehending visual materials (pictures), using reference materials (dictionaries, encyclopedias), using library references, note taking, reading text critically, and developing argumentation skill.

In the first grade of primary education, the analytical-synthetic method is used. Attention is given to phoneme segmenting and blending, training letter-sound connection, proper linking of syllables and words, basic concepts of rhyme and rhythm, vocabulary and linguistic understanding, learning reading techniques, and ability

to respond to questions based on texts (training in reading comprehension). Reading instruction is closely connected with writing instruction (scriptological method).

There are specific goals aimed at literature instruction. Pupils are expected to read two books of their own choice.

During the second and third grades, more attention is given to the improvement of reading techniques and literary text comprehension.

At the end of fourth year pupils should be able to:

- Read appropriate texts properly, fluently, quietly, and aloud at reasonable speed with full comprehension
- Use proper stress, rhythm, and intonation
- Use suitable articulation, pronunciation, and proper linguistic items when speaking and reading.

Reading competence is based on work with pieces of fiction. As for literature, pupils should be able to:

- Perform a part of story or poem
- Comprehend texts presented in various forms
- Dramatize extracts – role-play
- Distinguish the sequence of events
- Identify the main idea and characters, finding connections and relationships among them.

Pupils whose mother tongue is Slovak are normally offered instruction in a second language at the age of ten, which is typically the 5th grade. There are some programs that schools may choose that offer second language (first foreign language) in the third grade and a second foreign language in the fifth grade. English and German are the most commonly offered foreign languages, though in some schools French and Russian are being taught. In schools with another language of instruction (e.g., Hungarian), Slovak is introduced as a second language and foreign languages are offered later.

During the school term, teachers are expected to follow the general outlines given in the curriculum: annual time allocation, thematic units, and genres that are compulsory for the grade. They may choose the forms and strategies for how to achieve the objectives.

Materials for Reading Instruction

Teachers are encouraged to use the suggested materials. Aside from two special readers for the first grade (basal readers) that teachers can choose from, there is a new alternative textbook for reading being tested. There are additional teacher's books that present instructional methods and types of lessons and propose supplementary material. There are special readers for each grade with excerpts mainly from fiction. Textbooks are free and available for all students. Teachers also are encouraged to use various other sources such as books, encyclopedias, children's magazines and books, film and video, and audio tapes with books adaptations. Additional materials used in the class are the teacher's choice and the result of his or her creative way of teaching. Children are encouraged by teachers to read books of their choice from the school, public library, or other sources.

Instructional Time

In grades 1 through 4, students have 21, 22, 24, and 25 hours of instruction per week, respectively. One lesson lasts 45 minutes and is followed by a 5, 10, 15 or 20 minute break. In all grades and programs in the lower primary school, 9 lessons per week are allocated to language instruction in mother tongue. Slovak language and literature is comprised of reading, writing, grammar, literature, and oral and written composition. The following is the number of lessons devoted to teaching the literature and reading part of the subject:

- In 1st and 2nd grade, 5 lessons per week – 165 lessons per school year.
- In 3rd and 4th grade, 4 lessons per week – 132 lessons per year.

Pupils whose mother tongue is not Slovak, and who attend schools with a different language of instruction, start learning to read and write in

their respective language according to the following number of lessons per week:

- First grade – 8 lessons of which there are 5 lessons of reading per week for a total of 254 lessons per year (165 for reading).
- Second, third, and fourth grades – 7 lessons of which there are 3 lessons of reading per week for a total of 231 lessons per year (99 for reading).

Slovak is taught only as an audio-visual oral course, without reading and writing, for 5 lessons per week in the first and second grades. Reading and writing of Slovak is introduced in the third and fourth grades for 5 lessons per week. One or two optional lessons per week may be added to the learning plan of lower primary pupils; one of the options may be drama lessons. In the upper primary school (grades 5 through 9) development of reading comprehension is included as part of Slovak language and literature.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

According to official educational policy, the maximum number of students in the first grade is 29. There can be up to 34 pupils in the class in grades 2 through 4. If the number of pupils exceeds 24 students in the first and second grade, the class may be split in two groups for one lesson of Slovak language and literature per week. An average class has about 25 students, but there are substantial differences in the number of students in a class depending on the school site. The number of students ranges from as few as 5 pupils in small village schools to up to 34 in large urban schools.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

The form teacher is usually the teacher who provides reading instruction in grades 1 through 4. There generally is no special training provided for reading teachers except the basic training and practice offered during their teacher-training courses. However, course opportunities in professional development are offered by some in-service training institutions. Such courses are aimed at introducing an innovative way of teaching, which may include modern methods in reading instruction. Attendance in these courses is optional. Some schools with special classes for children with

learning or reading problems have a specialist who is in charge of teaching these pupils.

Reading Disabilities

Children identified as having learning problems by the first grade teacher are sent to see a specialist in the regional special diagnostic and remedial pedagogical center, who investigates the problem and suggests appropriate instruction. Parents must agree and support this proposal. Depending on the seriousness of the learning problem, pupils can attend the center regularly, and receive extra lessons with a specialist. If the reading problem is more serious, pupils may attend special classes available in some schools where they receive extra help from trained teachers. There are approximately 12 students in such classes. Instruction is based on the same curriculum as in other schools, but special methods are used. If the problem is more complex or a child needs special care, the specialist may recommend that the child attend a special school for learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia). There are five schools of this type in Slovakia as well as other schools for children with special needs. Later, when the problem has been treated, children can be integrated into ordinary classes accompanied by a special teaching plan and a plan of assessment.

Literacy Programs



There are no special nationwide literacy programs targeted at specific age groups. There are, however, some educational projects aimed at innovative teaching that enable creative teachers to try new concepts of reading instruction. Programs supporting pedagogical innovations are the initiative of a professional non-governmental body. These would offer better conditions for literacy and reading comprehension programs. Other NGOs are trying to apply and creatively develop some foreign programs.

There is an international program, Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT), which was initiated by the Open Society Institute and International Reading Association. It is called Project Orava. The Support of Reading Aloud is the applied program of University of Northern Iowa. Other initiatives in the literacy field, based

on experience from abroad, are implemented by non-governmental bodies such as the Association of Susan Kovalik as part of the Integrated Teaching Program. It is hoped that new methods of reading literacy instruction will be more widely used.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

There are special general instructions for assessment and marking criteria offered in the teacher's guide for all grades of primary school for both continuous and final assessment. The level of acquired knowledge, skills, habits, and personal development is assessed through various procedures. Different principles are used based on the age group and subject being evaluated. Pupils are not given grades in the first grade, they are provided only with verbal assessment (very good, good, weak) based on their classroom performance of reading, writing, and math skills. No special test of oral reading is given, although some teacher's guides recommend and provide speed-reading test.

In grades 2 through 4, assessment in Slovak language and literature can be either verbal or expressed in grades as the result of class examinations and students' performance during the term. There are two certificates during the school year. Some aspects of the subject (e.g., the aesthetic form, reading skills and abilities, student's reading and classroom activity, the ability to perceive literary text etc.) can only be evaluated verbally.

National or Regional Examinations

There are no standardized national examinations set for any grades of primary school. A project is being prepared at the national Institute for Education to create instruments for testing of pupils at the end of lower primary school. Reading comprehension is planned to be tested as a part of the standardized tests for the mother tongue.

Diagnostic Testing

Diagnostic testing is only used by special diagnostic centers to identify the severity of the problems of pupils who have reading difficulties. No general screening test is given to all students in the first grade or any subsequent grade.

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Language and Literacy



Slovenia's official language is Slovene, a Southern-Slavonic language with as many as 36 separate dialects, some of which are quite dissimilar. Italian and Hungarian are also spoken in some areas.

The oldest known written record in the Slovene language dates from the beginning of the 10th century; the first book in Slovene was printed in 1550; and primary education in Slovene began in 1774, when the Slovene territory was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The adult population of Slovenia is almost 100 percent literate. Six daily newspapers are published with a daily total circulation of 356,000 copies.¹ There are 60 main public libraries with 214 units, and 136 special libraries.² Together they have 491,000 registered readers (one quarter of the total population), one-third of whom are children under 15 years.³ The individuals using the libraries borrow 17 million books a year,⁴ and their numbers have been constantly growing in the past few years.

Education System



Governance and Organization

The state is responsible for virtually all aspects of education (except the universities, which are autonomous according to the Constitution). Education is financed primarily from the state budget, with a small share from municipal budgets. Curricula are determined nationally. The Council of Experts determines the curriculum and the content of individual school subjects.⁵ The Council is appointed for six years and therefore does not

depend on the temporary balance of political power. The Council has three sub-commissions: the Council of Experts for General Education, the Council of Experts for Vocational Education and the Council of Experts for Education of Adults. The sub-council for general education has 27 experts who are specialists in pre-schooling, compulsory education, general secondary education, and other fields of education. Among their responsibilities, the sub-commission for general education decides which textbooks to approve.

Slovenia spends 6 percent of its GNP (13% of total public expenditure) on education.⁶ This covers primary, secondary, and tertiary education (in spite of the autonomy of the universities), as well as operational costs for pre-primary education and post-graduate studies.

Structure of the Education System

The Slovene educational system consists of pre-primary, primary, secondary, and higher education.

Primary education in Slovenia currently is in transition. Before introducing a new primary education program in 1999-2000, Slovenia had an 8-year primary school consisting of lower grades (1-4) and higher grades (5-8). The same teacher taught all subjects to pupils in the lower grades, while different teachers for each subject taught those in higher grades. Children began school at 7 years of age. The change in the system has been gradual, which means that about 60 percent of primary schools have entered the new system and the rest will by 2003-04. Children now begin school at 6 years of age and attend elementary school for nine years. There are three triads in the elementary school now, each consisting of three grades. Children who participated in PIRLS in 2001 were students in the third grade of the previous 8-year primary school.

Country Profile: Slovenia

Geographical Location and Size

One of the smallest European countries, Slovenia borders on Italy, Austria, Hungary, Croatia and the Adriatic (part of the Mediterranean) Sea. The total area of the country is 20,273 square kilometers. It has a diverse landscape: Alpine, Karst, coastal region, and Pannonian plain. More than half of Slovenia is covered by forest. The country also has a considerable amount of water, approximately four times the European average.

Population and Health Statistics

The population of Slovenia is 2 million, with a population density of 97 persons per square kilometer.⁷ Ljubljana, the capital, is the largest city with 300,000 inhabitants. Some 30 percent of the population lives in towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants.

According to the 1991 census, 87 percent of the population is Slovene.⁸ Italians and Hungarians (approximately 11,000 people) are official minorities protected by the Constitution. Other inhabitants of Slovenia are Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Albanians, mainly immigrants from the territory of former Yugoslavia.

According to the Constitution, religion is separate from the state, and religious beliefs are a private matter. It is estimated, however, that the majority of the population is Catholic, with significant populations of Muslims and Protestants, as well as people of many other religions.

The infant mortality rate is 4.9 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁹ In the year 2000, life expectancy was 71.8 years for men and 79.5 years for women.¹⁰



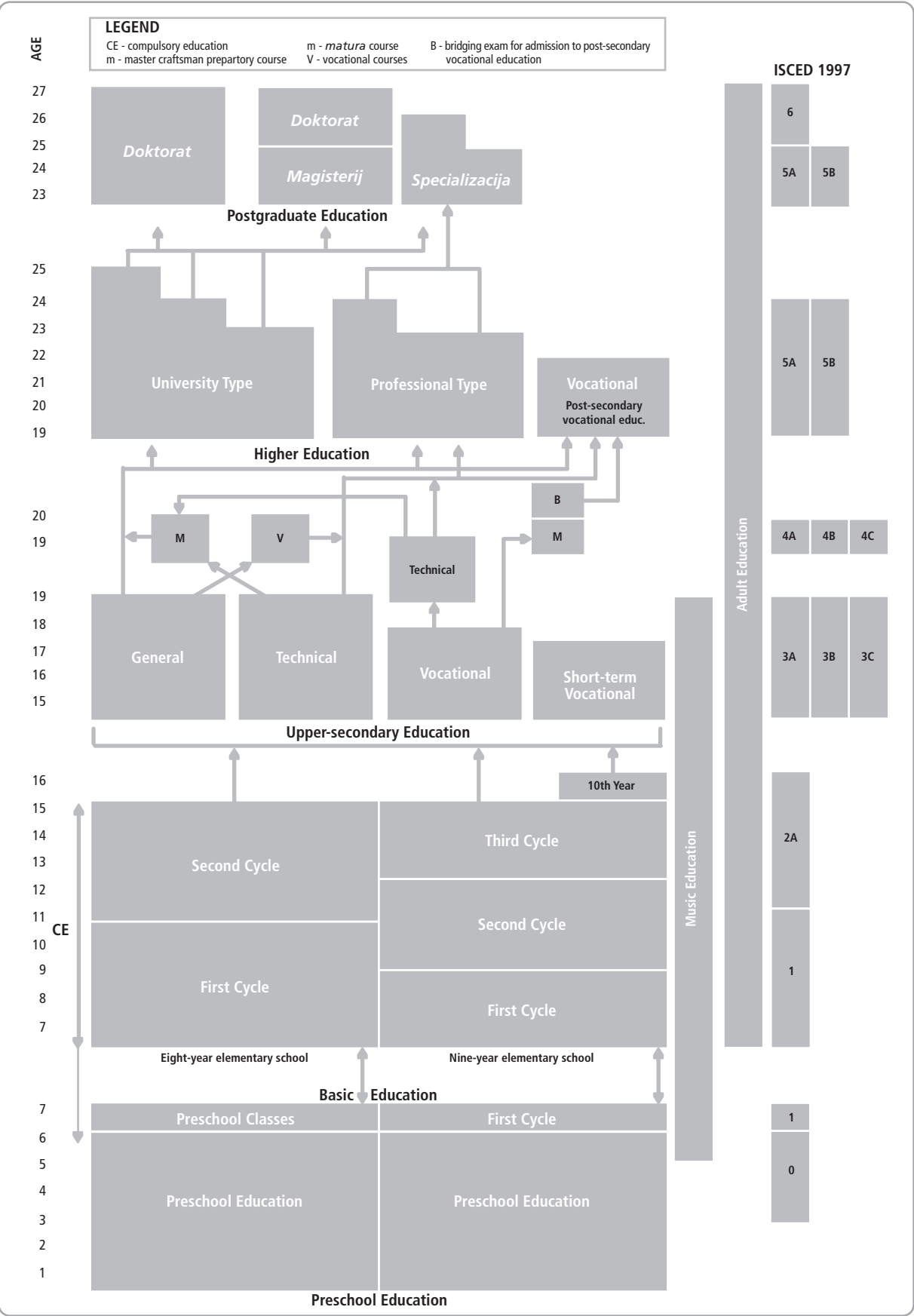
Political System

Slovenia is a new country, having gained its independence in 1992. It is a republic under its Constitution. The highest legislative body is the National Assembly, comprised of 90 deputies (88 from political parties, and one each from the Italian and Hungarian minorities) elected every four years. The National Council consists of 40 members that are elected every five years. The National Council has no legislative power, but functions as an advisory body to the National Assembly. The government, accountable to the National Assembly, has a Prime Minister and 15 other ministers. From the first elections, no political party has ever had a majority. The government is a coalition of political parties with the Liberal Democracy currently as the strongest party. There are 192 municipalities in Slovenia with their local governments and Mayors, which are directly elected by the voters as the heads of municipal administrations.

Economy and Employment

The gross national product per capita in 2000 was US\$ 9,105. The strongest economic sectors are manufacturing (automobile, chemical, pharmaceutical), real estate, retail, wholesale, transport, storage, and communications.¹¹ Unemployment, according to the ILO standards, was 7 percent. Of the total population, 49.5 percent is employed, 52.9 percent of which is female.¹²

Exhibit 1: Structure of the Educational System in Slovenia



Pre-primary Education

Pre-primary school in Slovenia is not obligatory. It is organized for children from 1 to 6 years of age and has both day care and educational roles. The curriculum for preschool children consists of five main areas – physical activity, language, art, society, natural world, and mathematics. The individuality of each child and the need to recognize the hidden curriculum (e.g. caring and daily routine) are emphasized in the new curriculum. Children do not learn to read and write. Kindergartens are open from Monday to Friday, 9-hours a day. About 56 percent of the children aged 1 to 6 are in kindergartens.

Primary Education

Primary education is compulsory and enrollment is virtually 100 percent. According to the *Primary Education Act*, schooling is obligatory for all children from 6 to 15 years of age. This corresponds to the nine grades of elementary school. Of the three elementary school cycles, the first and second cycles are comprehensive while the third cycle has external differentiation in some subjects (e.g., mathematics) according to the student's performance. At the end of each cycle there are national examinations, which are not compulsory. Reading and writing literacy are emphasized in the first cycle as part of the Slovene language. Foreign language instruction (predominantly English, sometimes Italian and German) begins in the fourth grade. The Italian and Hungarian ethnic minorities are given special rights according to the Constitution, and can receive education in their own language. There are some Italian schools with all lessons taught in Italian, but in the Hungarian regions pupils are taught in both languages equally (i.e., Slovene and Hungarian).

Higher Secondary Education

Higher secondary education consists of gymnasiums (general higher secondary schools), higher secondary technical and professional schools, vocational schools, and lower vocational schools. Gymnasiums and the technical and professional schools take 4 years and vocational schools (including lower vocational) take 2 to 3 years. Students who want to study at a university must pass the *matura* exam, which certifies that they have completed the four-year higher secondary education program.

Types of Schools

Almost all pre-primary, elementary, and higher secondary schools are public. There are some private schools (1 private elementary school and 3 gymnasia) with a concession agreement and some vocational secondary schools. All of those schools, both public and private, are free of charge, although students pay for school accessories.

Duration of the School Year

There are 190 days or 38 weeks of instructions per year.¹³ The school week lasts from Monday to Friday. The school year begins on September 1st and ends on June 25th (or June 15th in the last grade of elementary school). Pupils also have three one-week holidays per school year.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

In general, teachers are employed full-time. Female teachers represent 85 percent of all teachers at the primary education level and 60 percent at the secondary level.¹⁴ The average age of elementary school teachers is 45.

Teacher Education

The first cycle of elementary school focuses on basic reading and writing (basic literacy). Teachers of the first cycle obtain their basic university education (B. A. degree) at the Faculty for Pedagogical Sciences with a sub-specialty in lower grade teaching. Following secondary school and the *matura* examination, the training course takes four years and concludes with a diploma thesis. There are no special teachers of reading in the first or second cycle of the elementary school, reading is taught by the classroom teacher, who also teaches all other subjects.

Teachers of the elementary school cycles either specialize in a certain school subject (e.g., chemistry) at the Faculty for Pedagogical Sciences (the vast majority of them) or study in a different faculty (e.g., Mathematical Faculty, Faculty of Sports, or Faculty of Arts) and take pedagogical courses.

There is no teaching certificate that could substitute for a teacher's diploma from a faculty. However, teachers take an external examination after one year of teaching to obtain a formal

teaching certificate. By passing this examination, teachers prove that they have proficient teaching knowledge and are familiar with the Slovene legislation on education.

Teacher In-service Education

All teachers in the first grade of the new 9-year elementary school have special courses to qualify for their teaching; otherwise in-service education is not obligatory for primary-school teachers. However, teachers do have the right to in-service education and the school principal must enable them to obtain it. In fact, the great majority of the teachers exercise this right, gaining extra credits for promotion.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The reading policy in general is defined by the *Primary Education Act* which states the aims of primary education. These are (among others):

- Develop literacy and the ability to communicate in the Slovene (Italian or Hungarian) language
- Achieve at internationally comparable standards of knowledge
- Achieve a general working knowledge that enables independent, effective, and creative interaction with society and nature
- Develop critical thinking.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

The curriculum for the Slovene language explicitly defines the basic standard in reading and writing for each of the three cycles (end of 3rd, 6th, and 9th grades) and for each grade within the cycles.¹⁵

One of the purposes for introducing the 9-year elementary school was to improve reading and writing abilities. The first year of schooling aims to prepare children for these processes, so they:

- are introduced to a variety of written materials (children “read” illustrations, recognize printed

names, and simultaneously follow the story with pictures and the teachers voice),

- learn the basics of writing (holding the pencil, practicing drawing from left to right),
- learn about the basic principles of polite communication,
- perform “spoken” texts (in front of other students in the class, describe what has happened to them, describe the picture),
- read pictograms and write familiar pictograms,
- compare fictional persons to themselves (and compare fictional experiences with their own experiences), and
- recognize fairy tales, watch theater shows, describe cartoons and children movies, recite poems,

At the end of third grade, the basic standards as written in the curriculum for the Slovene language state that pupils should be able to:

- Read various kinds of texts fluently, without mistakes and with proper accents
- After reading the text, identify the narrator, audience, main ideas, and basic facts
- Predict an unfinished text according to the context. When reading fiction, pupils should be able to tell the content, time, and place of the story; name the main characters; and explain why something has happened
- Differentiate between the real world and an imaginary one, and explain the distinction.

After the fourth grade of the 9-year elementary school (at the age of almost 10 years, which corresponds the age of PIRLS 2001 third grade population), pupils should be able to:

- Read and analyze short passages, answer questions about them, and write similar text

- Read informative texts and analyze them according to different tasks
- Write drafts and develop texts from drafts
- Enrich their vocabulary
- Recognize the logic of an action and use conjunctions to describe the actions
- Read fiction and analyze it in different ways
- Recognize and write different types of fiction
- Express their own opinions about a task.

Even though reading and writing instruction begins at age six, the first year is introductory. The first cycle of the elementary school aims to teach basic reading and writing skills. The more elaborate literacy program begins in the second cycle, at fourth grade, after basic skills have been acquired.

Instructional Time

Reading is not taught separately but as part of the Slovene language. Slovene language courses consist of reading, writing, listening, talking, literature and grammar, and is emphasized during the first cycle. In the first grade, the total amount of time spent on Slovene language courses is 210 hours per year. In second and third grades it is 245 hours per year, and then it declines from 175 hours of lessons in the fourth grade to 128 hours in the ninth grade. However, since a regular school hour lasts 45 minutes, in the first grade there are 157 hours of Slovene language courses, in the second and third grades, 183 hours, and in the ninth grade, 137 hours.¹⁶

Classroom Organization and Class Size

The maximum size of a class is 32 students, and in bilingual schools 24. However, due to fewer new-borns in the last decade, the limit has not been reached and the average class size in primary school is now 22 students per class.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

Teachers of first-cycle classes study at the university to teach children how to read and write. At their own initiative they can learn more, although for most teachers understanding the basic con-

cepts is sufficient. Teachers are free to choose their teaching approach. Besides the basic and the most widespread model taught at the university, there are some alternative approaches used in public schools. For example, some alternatives allow a more individualized approach, which enables students to work at their own speed. There are no specially employed reading specialists besides regular first and partially second cycle teachers. However, if children have specific problems, they are offered special help.

Second Language Instruction

In regular Slovene-speaking schools, there are no extra Slovene language courses for less-than-perfect Slovene speakers. There is remedial instruction in the Slovene language, but that instruction is not intended to be a second language course. Beginning in the fourth grade with two courses per week, Slovene as a second language is taught in Italian schools (in the areas where Italian is the official language) and in a few English schools.

Reading Disabilities

Students with reading disabilities (approximately 10 percent of the population) receive special help in school. However, solutions differ across schools, depending on school policy, the quality of the school's team of specialists (usually comprising a psychologist, pedagogical specialist, and sometimes a speech-therapist), the school principal, and the teacher of the child with special needs.

Some children are given extra help by a member of the school team of specialists (usually the psychologist) during regular courses in the class, some have special help outside regular courses but still in the school, and others get extra help outside the school after regular courses.

Literacy Programs



The promotion of reading has been on the rise in recent years. There is a long tradition (40 years) of the so called reading plaque, *bralna značka*, which encourages children to read. *Bralna značka* is a school competition. Each year there is a list of books which must be read individually in order to obtain the plaque. The award is symbolic but most primary school students take part in the competition. There are special awards for children

who read all the books each year. The organizers even publish a newsletter that is made available on the Internet. Last year, 125,000 primary-school students entered the competition. The main goal of the competition is to promote reading; there are tutors specially educated for the competition. *Bralno društvo*, the reading society established in 1995, promotes reading for adults and is a member of the International Reading Association.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Better literacy is one of the aims of the reformed elementary school in Slovenia. The aim of reading and writing instruction goes beyond fluent reading and writing to using written language for communication, thinking, creating, learning, and fun. To achieve a level of “critical reading” a major aim. Instruction goes through different stages with different language skills: at the first grade the emphasis is on listening and talking, while at the second and third grade the emphasis is on reading and writing.

Teachers assess progress at these stages in different ways and are responsible for providing written reports about the child’s progress three times a year. At least monthly, they report orally at individual meetings with parents (if parents wish to meet a teacher). Written reports (certificates) at the end of the year address curriculum standards: teachers have to describe if the child has achieved the prescribed standards of knowledge (these standards are also written on the certificate). The certificates in the first cycle of elementary school (grades 1 to 3) consist of descriptive grades indicating the child’s ability regarding reading and writing. Parents can have more individual meetings with the teachers (and with the specialists from the school’s team of specialists) if they wish.

National Examinations

There are national examinations at the end of each cycle of the elementary school (grades 3, 6, and 9). At the end of the first cycle there are two examinations: in mathematics and in Slovene language. The examination in the Slovene language mainly tests the student’s understanding of written texts. The national examinations are voluntary and do

not affect the final report or certificate about the child progress in the grade or decisions about whether a student will enter the next grade or not. However, at grade 9 the national examinations are obligatory for those students who compete for the more popular schools. The results of the national examinations influence the decisions about whether a student enters a desired secondary-level school.

Standardized Tests

There are no obligatory standardized tests of reading for regular classes. The psychologist in the school specialist team sometimes use standardized tests for identifying children with reading problems.

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Mona Lansfjord

National Agency for Education

Language and Literacy



Among the most avid newspaper-reading countries in the world, Sweden's daily newspaper circulation is 430 per 1,000 citizens.¹ There is a nationwide system of libraries open to the public, and almost all school children have access to a school library. There also are other, specialist libraries.

Among Nordic immigrants, the approximately 200,000 Finnish-speakers constitute the largest group. Other Nordic languages are spoken by fewer than 100,000 persons.² Since Sweden is a small country in terms of population and heavily dependent on international trade, the use of English is widespread in business life. Other languages of significance are Arabic, Persian, Spanish, and various languages spoken in former Yugoslavia.³

Education System



Governance and Organization

Curricula, national objectives, and guidelines for state schooling in Sweden are defined by parliament and the government. The national budget includes grants to the municipalities for their various functions. Within the goals and frameworks, each individual municipality is free to decide how its schools should be run. An education plan must be produced describing how schooling is to be funded, organized, developed, and evaluated. The head of each school is obliged to draw up a local working plan based on the curriculum, national objectives, and the municipal

education plan. This is done in consultation with teachers and other staff.

The municipalities are obliged to organize and provide preparatory-school activities (preschool) for all children from the year of their sixth birthday until they enter school. Arrangements vary between the municipalities. For example, they may be located in or coordinated by an ordinary school, or linked to some other function of municipal child-care.

The National Agency for Education (Skolverket) is responsible for developing, evaluating, following up, and supervising state schooling in Sweden. At three-year intervals, the Agency is required to provide parliament and the government with an overall report on Swedish schooling. This forms the basis of a national development plan for schools. The Agency has a supervisory duty to ensure that the provisions of the Education Act are complied with and that the rights of individual pupils are respected.

The Swedish Education Act⁴ stipulates that all children and young people are entitled to education of equivalent value. All pupils enjoy this right, irrespective of gender, geographical place of residence, social background, or economic conditions. The Education Act also gives adults the right to education. This can be provided in municipal adult education (*komvux*) or adult education for the mentally handicapped (*särvux*).

There are three interlinked curricula for the preschool, compulsory (including pre-school class and leisure time center), and upper-secondary school, respectively. The compulsory and upper-secondary school have their own syllabi.

Country Profile: Sweden

Geographical Location and Size

Sweden is located in northern Europe with land frontiers with Finland (586 kilometers) to the East and Norway (1,619 kilometers) to the West⁵ and is linked to Denmark in the southwest via the Öresund bridge. The Baltic Sea separates the country from Finland, Russia, the Baltic states, Poland, and Germany. Europe's fifth largest country in geographic size, Sweden's total area is 449,964 square kilometers, of which 410,934 square kilometers is land area and the rest water.

Population and Health Statistics

In just a few decades, Sweden has changed from a largely monolingual and ethnically homogeneous society into a multilingual society with a large number of groups with different linguistic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The population totals nearly 9 million with a population density of 19.7 persons per square kilometer.⁶ At the end of 1997, there were about 522,000 foreign nationals living in Sweden.⁷ In addition, about 690,550 immigrants have become naturalized Swedish citizens.⁸ About 50 percent of all foreign nationals in Sweden are from the other Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Norway). About one-fifth of the total population are immigrants or have at least one foreign-born parent.⁹ This estimate includes persons from other Nordic countries. Immigration has accounted for over 40 percent of the country's population growth.

Some 85 percent of the population belongs to the Lutheran Church of Sweden. The percentage of urban population (83%) has hardly changed since 1980.¹⁰ Life expectancy is about 76 years for men and 82 for women.¹¹ The infant mortality rate is 3.5 per 1,000 live births.¹²

Political System

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy governed by a parliamentary democracy. The Riksdag (Parliament) is the legislative assembly with 349 members, and is elected every four years. The Parliament chooses the Prime Minister who, in turn, appoints the Government. The Riksdag enacts laws and decides on the levels and allocation of the income and expenditure of the state. This means that the Government first submits proposals to the Riksdag in the form of bills and then decides on the rules needed for putting decisions made by the Riksdag into effect. Compara-



tively small in international terms, the Ministries cooperate to a large extent as preparatory bodies for the Government.

The practical implementation of decisions is delegated to the central administrative authorities and agencies. The Ministries working with educational questions are mainly the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Industry, Employment, and Communications and the Ministry of Agriculture. The National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) is the central agency in the school area and in 1998 took over responsibility for pre-school activities and school-age childcare.

Sweden has three democratically elected levels of government, each with different areas of responsibility and different duties – the Parliament at the national level, the county councils at the regional level, and the municipalities at the local level. County councils and municipalities are run by elected bodies known as county council and municipal assemblies. The 289 municipalities have extensive powers of self-determination and are responsible for local issues in the citizen's immediate environment, such as preschool activity, primary and secondary schools, care of the elderly, roads, water, sewerage, and energy.

Sweden has been a member of the European Union since 1995, and as such it cooperates with 14 other countries on economic, foreign policy, policing, and judicial issues. For Sweden, membership in the European Union (EU) means that Parliament has given up part of its decision-making authority to EU institutions.

Economy and Employment

Once one of the richest countries in the world in terms of production value, Sweden is highly industrialized and still has a GDP per capita of 27,800 euros (US\$ 24,800).¹³ It has rich natural resources of coniferous forests, water power, iron ore, uranium, and other minerals, but the country lacks significant oil and coal deposits. The iron ore mines are situated in the far north. Production is mainly exported. Sweden's forests support a highly developed sawmill, pulp, paper, and finished wood product industry, making the country an important supplier of forest products to global markets. Cheap hydro-power has been a major factor in Sweden's industrial development. The 20 largest manufacturing groups, which include AGA, ASTRA, Electrolux, Ericsson, Pharmacia, Volvo, and SCA, account for about half of the total export of goods, producing sophisticated products like telecommunication equipment, specialized machinery, motor vehicles, and pharmaceutical products.

Post-war governments in Sweden have been successful in maintaining full employment. Unemployment has averaged around 2 to 3 percent due principally to a highly effective combination of a labor market policy supporting the transformation of industrial structure with a rapidly expanding public sector. However, unemployment rates rose during the early 90s, reaching 8 percent in 1997, but declined in the latter part of the decade. Traditionally, labor force participation rates, particularly among women, have been comparatively high in Sweden. During the 1990s, employment patterns by sector have remained fairly constant, ranging between 37 and 39 percent in private services, and declining slightly in public services. Manufacturing, mining, construction, agriculture, and forestry have all remained virtually unchanged through 1999. In the mid 1990s, the Government resolved to halve the level of unemployment, a target that was essentially achieved in 2000.

Structure of the Education System

Public and household expenditures on education represent 5.13 percent of the GDP, not including infrastructure (buildings, etc.) and privately funded company-internal education.¹⁴

The overall structure of the education system is illustrated in Exhibit 1.

The formal school system in Sweden consists of the preschool class, the compulsory school (ages 7 to 16), and the upper secondary school (ages 16 to 19). The preschool class and the compulsory school share the same curriculum.

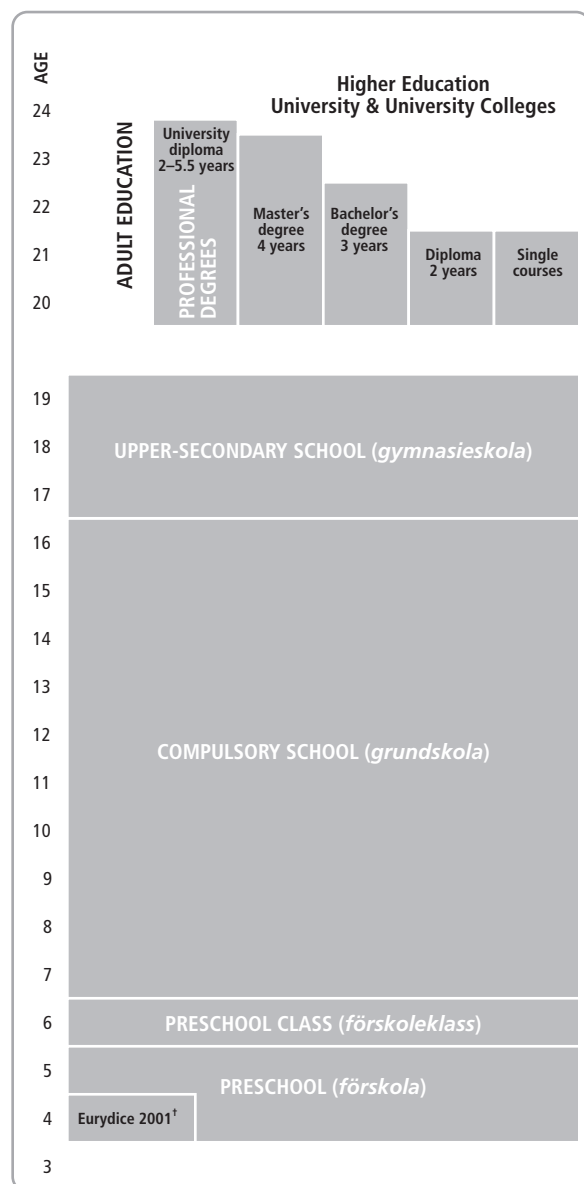
School Year

Lasting some 40 weeks, the academic (school) year normally begins at the end of August and ends early the following June. A school week is five days long, from Monday to Friday. The longest holiday within the academic year, apart from a summer holiday of 2½ months, is from around December 20 until the beginning of January.

Compulsory School

Compulsory schooling can be national, municipal, or private (independent). More than 97 percent of all pupils attend municipal compulsory schools. These include compulsory schools, schools for the Sami peoples of northern Sweden, special schools (for children with impaired sight, hearing or speech), and compulsory schools for mentally handicapped. The nine-year compulsory school is for all children between the ages of 7 and 16 years. If parents prefer, children may start school at six years of age. Sami children are entitled to education in Sami schools with an ethnic emphasis for the first six years of compulsory school. Special school comprises 10 grades for children with impaired sight and those who are deaf or partially deaf with secondary handicaps. Compulsory schooling for mentally handicapped children comprises compulsory school and training school.

Exhibit 1: Structure of the Swedish Educational System



† Eurydice 2001. Used also as a general reference.

The average municipal school has 200 pupils, although schools in large cities often have up to 2,000 pupils. Most smaller schools are in country areas. Preschool classes are tending more and more to be organized conjointly with a compulsory school. A compulsory school can decide its own organization, including how teaching is to be structured and the size of classes. Many pupils receive their entire compulsory schooling in the same school, but it is also common for children to change schools when entering the sixth or seventh grade. Most often the pupils change class teachers in grade 4. In grades 1 through 6, the class teacher

teaches nearly all subjects, though they have special teachers for craft subjects, physical education, art, and music. The pupils in the senior grades are taught by a number of teachers, many of them specializing in two or three subjects.

Upper-Secondary School

Almost all pupils attending compulsory school continue directly to upper-secondary school, and complete their studies within three years, although some may need an additional year. Upper-secondary school is divided into 17 three-year national programs, all of which are intended to provide a broad-based education and result in general eligibility for further studies in higher education. In addition to the national programs, there are also specially designed and individual programs. Upper-secondary school for mentally handicapped children provides vocational education in specially designed national or individual programs in a similar way to the regular upper-secondary school. However, there are fewer national programs available, and these concentrate on vocational training. The programs in the upper-secondary school for mentally handicapped take four years.

Educational Choice and Independent Schools

Most children attend a municipal school near their homes, but pupils and their parents have the right to select either another municipal school or an independent school. Approximately 3 to 4 percent of pupils in compulsory schooling attend one of the approved independent schools. Independent schools are open to all and must be approved by *Skolverket*, the National Agency for Education. They receive municipal grants based on the number of pupils per academic year. Teaching in the independent schools shares the same goals as the municipal schools, but may have a distinct profile. They may, for example, have a special religious profile, or be based on special educational methods, such as Montessori or Waldorf.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

Teacher training in Sweden has undergone a number of reforms. After 1988 (and until 2001), there was no specialized training for the lowest grades. Instead, teach-

ers were trained to teach grades 1 to 7, with an orientation either in mathematics and science or language and social studies. A second specialization was toward grades 4 to 9 (i.e., an overlap with grades 4 to 7) with three combinations of subjects: mathematics and science, Swedish and foreign languages, and social studies. The latest statistics are based on these teacher categories. In 1999 the percentage of female teachers in grades 1 to 7 was 88 percent for the language combination and 79 percent for the mathematics and science combination. In the compulsory school (grades 1 to 9), the proportion of female teachers was 73 percent.¹⁵ However, in grades 1 to 3, the teaching force is almost completely female.

Throughout the 1990s there has been a shortage of trained teachers so that today 19 percent of the teaching force does not have formal qualifications to teach.¹⁶ For teachers of grades 1 to 9, the average age was 44 years in 2001-02.¹⁷ Most teachers work full-time. The average teacher/pupil ratio is 1/13.¹⁸

Teacher Education

In 2001, a new teacher-training program was launched, which provides a high degree of individual choice with regard to the combination of subjects. All teacher training is university based, which means that an upper-secondary school certificate (9 years compulsory + 3 years "upper-secondary") is required for admission. Because of the general decentralization of the education system, universities have a high degree of freedom in arranging training in accordance with the framework set up by the government. A large part of training is arranged in mixed groups, where students choosing different subjects and age levels (6 to 18 years) study together, particularly in courses dealing with pedagogical matters and teaching practice. The number of years in teacher training ranges from 3½ to 5, with teachers of older pupils receiving longer training. Lower grade teachers have 3½ years of training. Specialization in teaching literacy and mathematics in the early years is optional, which means that teachers in grades 1 through 7 are not trained reading teachers. This is true for all teachers who have been trained since 1988. The difference in the new teacher training program is that some universities will arrange specialized courses for literacy teachers ranging from 20 to 40 weeks of study.

Teacher In-service Education

Teachers are expected to attend a minimum of 13 days (or 104 working hours) per year in-service training. In the decentralized system, it is the responsibility of the school head to provide opportunities for this training. Courses, lectures, and study visits are provided by universities and other institutions, as well as by freelance consultants. A school or a school district also can organize tailor-made arrangements with universities. Teachers can apply for grants from the National Agency for Education or various foundations to attend national or international conferences and meetings.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

The curriculum for the pre-school emphasizes the idea that "Language and learning are inseparable, as is language and the development of a personal identity. The preschool should put great emphasis on stimulating each child's language development, encouraging and taking advantage of the child's curiosity and interest in the written language. The preschool should help to ensure that children with a mother tongue other than Swedish receive the opportunity to develop both their Swedish language and their mother tongue."

At the compulsory school level, the general goals of schooling are outlined in the curriculum for the compulsory school, the preschool class, and the leisure-time center (Lpo 94). In the syllabi, they are broken down into "goals to aim for" and "goals to be attained" for each subject.

The Swedish as a subject provides pupils with opportunities to use and develop their ability to speak, listen, see, read, and write, as well as experience and learn from literature, film, and theatre. Language and literature are of great importance in developing a sense of personal identity. The subject aims to promote pupils' ability to speak and write well, and to respect with understanding different ways of expressing themselves in speech and writing. Knowledge is viewed as being acquired through language, and through language is made explicit and useful. The written word is of immense importance for learning, and society imposes demands on the ability to cope with, assimilate and evaluate texts.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

Goals to aim for in the teaching of Swedish – with regard to reading, in particular – in compulsory school state that the pupils should:

- Develop their imagination and desire to learn through reading literature, as well as reading on their own for personal enjoyment
- Develop correctness in their spoken and written language, and have the courage, desire, and ability to express themselves in many different contexts, and by means of writing acquire an instrument for thinking, learning, communicating, and exercising influence
- Develop their ability to improve texts they have written based on their own critical reflection and advice from others
- Develop their ability to read, understand, interpret, and experience texts of different kinds and adapt their reading to the purpose and character of the text
- Have an opportunity to understand cultural diversity through exposure to literature and authors from different times and in different forms from Sweden, the Nordic area and other parts of the world
- Acquire a knowledge of the Swedish language, its ongoing development, structure, origins, and history, as well as develop their understanding of why people write and speak differently
- By means of their own writing, deepen their insight into basic patterns and grammatical structures in the language, as well as develop their ability to apply the standards of written language in different contexts
- Be encouraged to be personally creative and search on their own for meaningful reading, as well as take part in cultural activities.

Goals that pupils should have attained by the end of the fifth year in school include:

- Read with fluency, both aloud and to themselves, understand events and meaning in books

and non-fiction written for children and young persons, and be able to discuss their experiences from reading, as well as reflect on texts

- Produce texts for different purposes as a tool for learning and communication
- Orally relate and present something so that the contents are understandable and brought to life
- Apply the most common rules of the written language and the most common rules of spelling, as well as be able to use dictionaries.

Goals that pupils should have attained by the end of the ninth year in school include:

- Actively take part in conversations and discussions, as well as share the thoughts of others, and present work orally so that the contents are clear and understandable
- Read literature appropriate to their age from Sweden, the Nordic area, and other countries, read non-fiction and newspaper articles on general subjects, be able to reproduce the contents coherently, and reflect on what they have read
- Reflect on and put into a context some literary works and authors that have been influential in affecting how people live and think
- Appreciate, reflect on, and evaluate the contents and means of expression used in pictures, films, and the theater
- Write different kinds of texts, by hand and using computers, so that the contents are clear, applying the standards of written language.
- Have a knowledge of the language that makes it possible to carry out observations of both one's own and others' use of language.

A specific and official definition of literacy has not been stated, but it is generally believed that a child should be able to decode and understand simple texts at the end of grade 3 (the age of 10 years). Upon completion of grade 9, the reading skills attained could be said to correspond broadly

with the “adult literacy” definition used in the IALS study: “Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”¹⁹

Reading instruction normally begins in first grade at age 7. Today, however, almost all 6-year-olds attend preschool, where some preparatory reading instruction takes place. At this age, most children have spent time in nursery school and day-care centers where they have received some training in language awareness.

Reading is not taught as a separate subject, although it makes up – combined with writing – a major part of the teaching of Swedish in the early grades. In teaching Swedish, language and literature are treated as a whole. For this reason, Swedish cannot be divided into pre-determined parts building upon each other in a given sequence. On the other hand, both reading and writing are seen as essential in all subjects. All teachers thus have a common responsibility for their pupils’ development of literacy skills and must be aware of the importance of language for learning.

Materials for Reading Instruction

In general, there is a rich variety of materials to use in reading instruction, limited only by the availability of financial resources. There are no standard rules or recommendations for educational materials at any level. Teachers are free to choose any reading series or graded readers available on the market, according to policies set up by the local school authorities and existing financial and other circumstances. The same is true for other textbooks and instructional materials.

By tradition, Sweden has a wide variety of high-quality children’s books for all grade levels. Many teachers choose a model of working with beginning reading where they combine children’s books together with graded readers, and also use the texts children have produced themselves either independently or in conjunction with books.

Two of the “goals to aim for” in the syllabus for the teaching of Swedish are to:

- develop the pupil’s ability to use computers as an aid, and
- develop the ability to use different opportunities to obtain information, and acquire knowl-

edge of the language and functions of the media, as well as develop their ability to interpret, critically examine, and evaluate different sources and their contents.

The use of ICT in beginning reading varies widely depending on the interest of teachers and the availability of financial resources at each individual school. However, various types of computer programs are available for all grade levels. At the lower grades, there are computer programs for training in language awareness, reading, and writing, and the computer is frequently used as a writing tool. Pupils are also encouraged from an early age to seek information on the Internet when working on various assignments. The computer is considered to be a particularly valuable tool in special education for pupils with reading and writing disabilities.

Instructional Time

Swedish pupils are entitled to 1,490 hours (60 minutes) of instruction in the Swedish language throughout the nine grades of compulsory school. Schools themselves decide how these hours should be distributed across the grades. Such wide limits of discretion apply to all subjects. Pilot projects are now going on in a number of schools across the country with the aim of determining the effects of having no time limit set for instruction in different subjects. Besides Swedish and Swedish as a Second Language, English is compulsory from grade 4, adding 480 hours to the total number of hours spent on language activities. The foreign language options in grades 6 or 7 comprise 320 hours, the most common being German, French, and Spanish.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

In line with the decentralization of the school system, there are no overall rules regarding grouping for instruction. Some schools work in mixed-age groups particularly with the 6 to 10-year-olds (i.e., grades 0-1 to 3). Others have homogeneous groups with regard to age. Flexible grouping also exists, that is, groups vary in different subjects, as does ability grouping for short periods of time. This is practiced particularly when beginning reading instruction.

Typical class size in the lower grades ranges between 20 and 25 pupils per class, but there is wide variation between schools and municipalities.

Classes tend to be larger in large cities. Furthermore, as a result of a shortage of trained teachers, class size has increased more than is desirable in the last few years.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

There are very few trained reading specialists in the country today, partly due to lack of training opportunities in this area. This is now being remedied in the new teacher training, and a number of courses are being offered at universities. Specialist reading instruction can be organized as one-to-one sessions for a number of hours per week, as small group instruction, or as individual assistance within the classroom, depending on resources, and on the preferences of the reading specialist.

Second Language Reading Instruction

Pupils with a mother tongue other than Swedish are – regardless of age – taught Swedish as a second language. The aim is that pupils should acquire a functional mastery of the Swedish language comparable to that of pupils who have Swedish as a mother tongue. Ultimately, pupils should attain a first-language level in Swedish, since the ability to use Swedish in speech and writing is a prerequisite for pupils in their future lives and activities. Through the subject of Swedish as a second language, the school should provide pupils with opportunities to develop their ability to speak and listen, and also read and write in different situations.

Reading Disabilities

Normally the classroom teacher in first grade is able to identify children with reading difficulties. Special education should be provided, but a shortage of reading specialists makes it difficult to provide assistance for all children who need it. In recent years, many municipalities have set up special education teams that offer advice to both teachers and parents, in-service training for teachers, and short-term assistance at local schools. In addition, there are regional centers with specialists who can diagnose dyslexia and other reading disabilities and give advice on instructional materials and aids. When dyslexia is diagnosed, the child has the right to get special assistance, in terms of materials, computer programs, and instruction.

Literacy Programs



For a number of years, many Swedish municipalities have given a book to every newborn child in the municipality. This is followed up by information (“ABC drops”) to the parents during their visits to the local childcare unit when the child is 3 months, 9 months, and 3 years old. On the World Book and Copyright Day (23 April) the National Agency for Education usually gives a book to each child in a specific grade, which changes each year. The book is written by a well-known author, and is suitable for the age group. International Literacy Day (8 Sept) is celebrated in libraries and schools in various ways all over the country, for example by arranging reading and writing competitions, exhibitions, and lectures. The latest in a line of nationwide literacy campaigns is “The Reading Movement,” which arranges different activities to raise people’s awareness of the importance of adequate literacy skills. The movement collaborates with organizations, companies, schools, and libraries, as well as with authors, journalists, politicians, and researchers. “Room for Language” is a project initiated and sponsored by the National Agency for Education, with the aim of strengthening the active role of the school library in pupils’ language and literacy development.

Apart from involvement in international surveys such as PIRLS and PISA, many Swedish schools are involved in various exchange programs within the EU, several of which focus on literacy.

Assessment



In accordance with the National Curriculum, the grading system is goal-related. That is, the grades relate pupils’ knowledge and achievements to the goals set out in the syllabi. In the compulsory school, there are three passing grades – Pass, Pass with Distinction, and Pass with Special Distinction.

Classroom Assessment

It is up to each local school to decide how to arrange the assessment of progress in different subjects. For reading and writing, a number of schools use standardized screening tests to determine the general literacy level of the school (usually in the middle grades, e.g. grades 4 or 5), or in the lower grades, to identify pupils with difficulties. Teach-

ers are also free to use other tests if they choose a diagnostic teaching model. In some municipalities, language awareness is tested among 6-year-olds before they enter grade 1.

At least once a term, the teacher, the pupil, and his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) have a meeting to discuss how the pupil is progressing and how learning can be stimulated and supported. The pupil is the focus of this meeting, but it also gives the adults involved with the child an opportunity to get to know each other. Everyone taking part in the meeting should be familiar with the contents of the curriculum and syllabi, as well as the objectives and the working plan of the local school. These meetings take the place of annual reports or marks until grade 8, but they continue throughout compulsory school.

Support Measures

Pupils who experience difficulties in their school work are entitled to support. In such cases, a special program is drawn up, normally designed by school staff in collaboration with the pupil and the parents/guardians. Sometimes consultation with external specialists may be necessary.

National or Regional Examinations

At the end of ninth grade, national tests are administered to assess pupils' achievement levels in three subjects: Swedish (including Swedish as a second language), English, and mathematics. The tests provide support for teachers in setting marks for the school-leaving certificate. Pupils are given national tests in the same subjects at the end of the fifth grade. Although these earlier tests are not compulsory, they are widely used as an indicator of progress. No marks are given before grade 8. The national tests are designed by the National Agency for Education and are updated regularly.

Diagnostic Testing

There are diagnostic materials for the years before the sixth grade in Swedish and mathematics, and for years 6 to 9 in Swedish, English, and mathematics. The diagnostic materials are intended to highlight individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses in respective subjects. The diagnostic material for years 6 to 9 also is intended to provide an indication of the pupils' chances of achieving the objectives for year 9, and to indicate how far the pupils have progressed in relation to goals and objectives.

Apart from test materials supplied by the National Agency for Education, several reading achievement tests, spelling tests, screening tests, and diagnostic materials are available on the market. In general, reading achievement tests cover such areas as chains of letters, words, or sentences; decoding of words; and comprehension of words, sentences, and short texts. Computerized tests also exist for language awareness, reading words and sentences, spelling, and other similar language related skills.

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Language and Literacy



As the official language, Turkish is spoken throughout the country. Turkish is neither an Indo-European nor Semitic language, but belongs to the Ural-Altaic group and has an affinity with the Fino-Hungarian languages. Turkish is written with Latin characters and is spoken by some 150 million people. English is an increasingly popular second language.

The country has 20 daily newspapers, with a circulation of 110 per 1,000 people in 1999.¹ There is both a national and a public library system in Turkey. In 1999, there were 1,071,000 registered users of the public libraries.²

Education System



Governance and Organization

The Ministry of National Education is responsible for all educational services in the country, in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law of National Education. The National Council of Education and the Board of Education are the two main advisory bodies. There are two subsidiary organizations affiliated with the Ministry, the General Directorate of Higher Education Loans and Dormitories and the National Education Academy.

At the provincial level, educational services are under the supervision of provincial directorates of national education. Various powers can be vested within these directorates, depending on the social and economic developments of the province, its population, and the number of students.

National development plans and government programs define educational targets that take into

account the needs of individuals and of the industrial and service sectors. Technological developments and the outcomes of the national census also are considered while developing these targets.

The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) is the planning, coordinating, and policy-making body for higher education in the country.

Public expenditure on pre-primary and primary education is 9 percent of the GNP.³ Resources allocated to education consist of funds set aside for education out of the general budget as well as out of provincial budgets. In addition, the private sector and other bodies such as the schools' support associations, parent-teacher associations, and foundations are encouraged to contribute to the construction of school buildings.

Structure of the System

According to the Basic Education Law, educational activities in Turkey can be divided into two parts, formal and adult education. The formal education system covers preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. A diagram of Turkey's educational system is shown in Exhibit 1.

Preschool Education

Preschool education, which is optional in Turkey, aims to support the development of children up to 6 years of age with respect to mental, emotional, social, and psychomotor formation in a school environment. The preschool education program is designed for children with normal development, maintaining a flexible curriculum to take children's needs into consideration. As a result, conditions of the educational environments within preschools may vary.

Country Profile: Turkey

Geographical Location and Size

Turkey is located at the intersection of three continents making up the old world – Asia, Africa, and Europe. Straddling the point where Europe and Asia meet, it has a total area of 780,576 square kilometers, with 8,441 kilometers of coastline.⁴ The country's capital, Ankara, is set in the strategic heartland of Central Anatolia, a site chosen by the founder of the modern Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Population and Health Statistics

Turkey has 67,864,903 inhabitants,⁵ 73 percent of whom live in the countryside. Population density is 85 persons per square kilometer. Istanbul is Turkey's largest city, with approximately 9.1 million inhabitants. The next largest cities are İzmir, Konya, and Adana. The country's infant mortality in 2000 was 34 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁶ In 1997, the average life expectancy was 68 years.⁷ The government provides basic health care to the public and engages in a program to increase health-care provision. The government is determined to improve the country's record on child immunizations, prenatal care, and general health education.

Political System

The Turkish republic is based on a Democratic, pluralist and parliamentary system where human rights are protected by laws and social justice. The National Assembly is elected by popular vote, and the nation is governed by the Council of Ministers directed by the Prime Minister. Turkey is a member of NATO, OECD, CE, CERN (observer), FAO, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICFTU, IEA, IFRCs, ILO, IMF, IMO, INTELSTAT, INTERPOL, ISO, ITU, NEA, OAS (observer), UN, UNCTAD, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNRWA, UPU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, and WTO.



Economy and Employment

Agriculture plays a very important role in the Turkish economy. The main crops are wheat, rice, cotton, tea, tobacco, hazelnuts, and fruit. Sheep are Turkey's most important livestock, and Turkey is the major European wool producer. The principal minerals extracted are coal, chrome, iron, copper, bauxite, and sulfur. Industry is developing rapidly and is directed mainly towards the processing of agricultural products, metallurgy, textiles, and the manufacture of automobiles and agricultural machinery. The GNP per capita in 1999 was US\$ 2,910.⁸ Women represented 29 percent and men 71 percent of the total workforce in 2000.⁹ The labor force, by occupation, is primarily in agriculture (45.8%), services (33.7%), and industry (20.5%).¹⁰

Primary Education

As of 1997-98, primary education, lasting eight years (between the ages of 6 and 14) is compulsory for all citizens of both sexes and is free of charge in state (public) schools. In accordance with national education's general aims and basic principles, the aims and duties of primary education institutions are to enable students to acquire the basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for a Turkish citizen and prepare them for higher education and for life. Graduates of these schools are awarded a primary education diploma. In 1996-97, the enrollment rate was 99.8 percent in primary schools, grades 1 to 5, and 69.6 percent in junior high schools, grades 6 to 8.¹¹

Secondary Education

Secondary education covers general high schools, as well as vocational and technical high schools, providing at least three years of education. The duties of secondary education institutions are, through general education, to introduce the concepts of personal and social conflicts or problems, to search for remedies for such conflicts, and to enable the students to acquire the consciousness and power to participate in the economic and social development of the country. Such an education will prepare the students for higher education or vocational education, and guide them to choose a focus in higher education or an occupational field consistent with their abilities and interests. In 1996-97, the enrollment rate at the secondary level was 54.7 percent – 30.8 percent in general high schools and 23.9 percent in vocational/technical high schools.¹²

Duration and Timing of the School Year

Beginning in the second week of September and ending the second week of June, the school year is 180 instructional days for both the primary and secondary levels. It is divided into two terms with a two-week break between terms.

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

The Ministry of Education hires all teachers for the primary and secondary levels. Teachers are employed full-time.

The average age of primary school teachers is 40, and approximately 56 percent are male.¹³

Teacher Education

Article 43 of the Basic Law on National Education defines teaching as a profession that requires special expertise. Article 45 of the same law indicates that teacher training consists of knowledge and skills in general subjects, special subject areas, and professional studies.

Teachers were trained in higher education schools under the Ministry of National Education and in faculties of education, until the responsibility for teacher training was completely transferred to universities in accordance with the 1981 Higher Education Law.

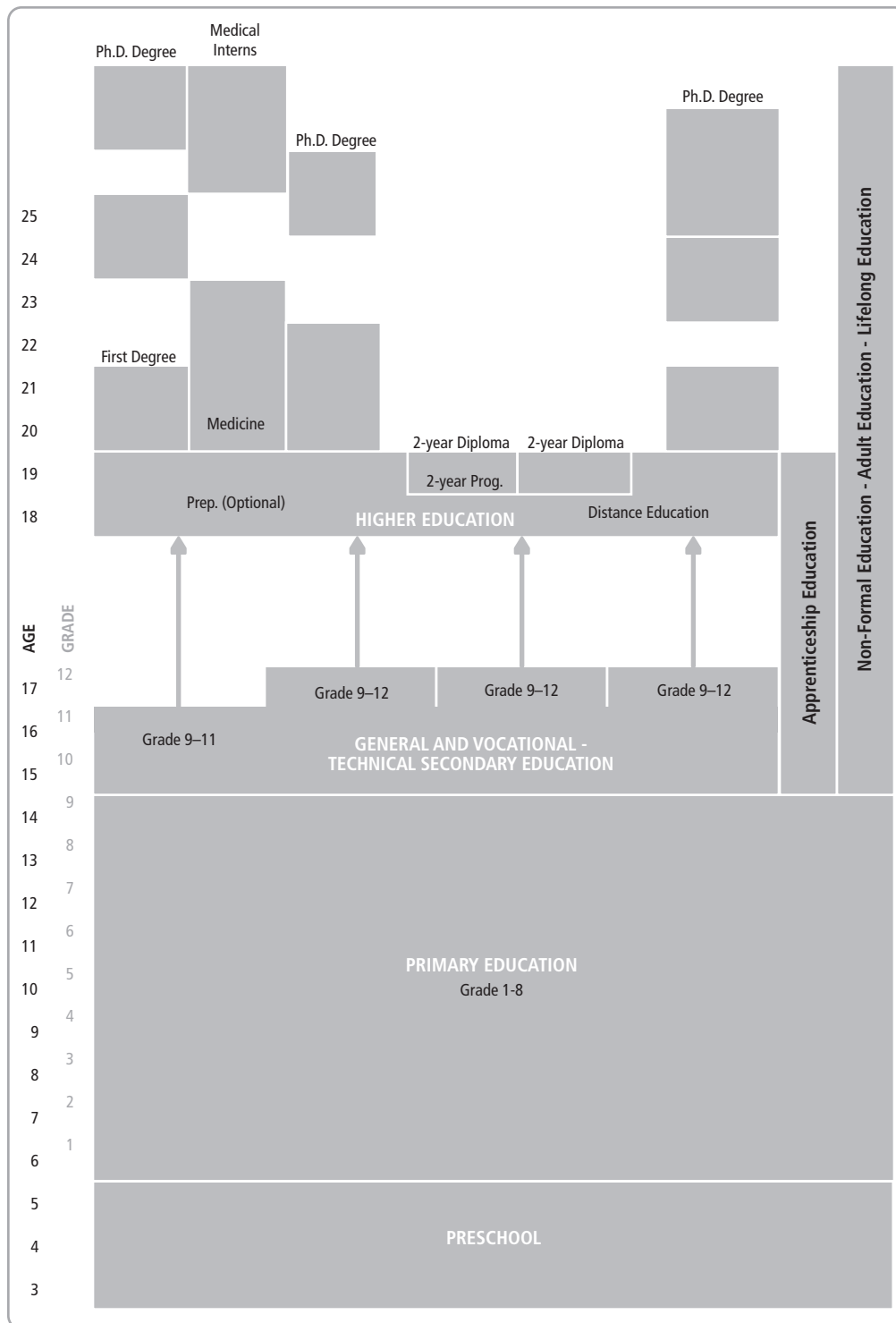
All teachers are required to possess a degree, regardless of the education level at which they teach. Newly graduated teachers who have applied for appointment in schools under the Ministry of National Education have taken a basic education, preparatory education, and a practical teacher training program, the duration of which varies between three and ten months. During their practical training, they teach under the guidance of an experienced teacher. The experienced teacher and the school management evaluate the student teacher's achievement on the completion of the training. Successful graduates of the training period are then appointed as permanent teachers. Those who are not successful are entitled to repeat the same training once more.

Teachers assigned as "classroom teachers" in the first five grades of the primary schools are required to teach 30 hours per week. In addition, they have to participate in seminars organized in the school at the beginning and end of the academic year.

Teacher In-service Education

In-service training is arranged in accordance with the regulations of in-service training centers. These regulations determine the principles, objectives, planning, application, evaluation, and management of the training activities

Exhibit 1: The Turkish Educational System



to be performed. In-service training activities were centrally planned by the Ministry of National Education until 1995, when the provincial administrations also were authorized to organize such activities locally. Provincial directorates plan in-service training activities that

conform with the local requirements. The duration of in-service training programs varies from three to ninety days, according to the content of the program. In 1997, 121,911 teachers were offered in-service training opportunities through 2,268 in-service training programs.

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Consistent with the general aims and basic principles of national education, the goals of reading instruction at the primary level are as follows:

- Have students gain the ability to accurately understand what they observe, listen to, and read
- Have students gain accurate explanatory skills and habits in spoken and written form, based on what they see and observe, listen to, read, examine, think, and plan
- Have students love the Turkish language, learn its rules, and use Turkish consciously, attentively, and securely
- Have students gain the habits and joy of listening and reading and help them develop their aesthetic emotions
- Develop students' vocabulary through various activities
- Have students realize their own performance and contribution in developing their national emotions and joys
- Help students love the Turkish territory and nation, nature, life, and humanity in their acquisition of Turkish culture through spoken and written Turkish and international works
- Realize the contribution of the Turkish language as subject matter in and of itself, by having them learn scientific, critical, accurate, and creative ways of thinking.

Formal reading instruction begins in grade 1 of primary school when children are 6 years old. In Turkey, reading is usually taught as a separate subject in grades 1 through 4; in the upper grades reading is integrated with writing and grammar.

Materials for Reading Instruction

Word and sentence cards, reading texts, short stories, and riddles are used for the first grades. For the upper grades, particular reading books, magazines, daily newspapers, short stories, and novels are used. Overhead projectors and computerized activities also are used for reading instruction.

Instructional Time

During the school year, students in grades 1 through 8 receive a total of 30 hours of instruction per week across all subjects. Each lesson is 40 minutes.

Students in grades 1 to 3 receive 12 hours of instruction per week in reading and writing. Students in grades 4 to 8 receive 6 hours of reading and writing instruction that includes speech, listening, literature, and grammar.

Classroom Organization and Class Size

The most common form of grouping for instruction is the mixed-ability class. During reading instruction, individual and group activities are carried out. The typical class size is 40.

Role of Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

Experienced senior teachers also act as reading specialists.

Second Language Instruction

Reading instruction is conducted on the same basis for the students who do not have a sufficient command of Turkish.

Reading Disabilities

According to law, students who have reading difficulties are taught with the normal students in the same classes. Classroom teachers identify and give support to the students with reading problems.

Literacy Programs



Reading and written composition competitions are held in all primary and secondary schools. Successful students are honored with awards.

Assessment



In grades 1 to 4, students are monitored and progress is documented with assessment cards. Continuous monitoring is the most effective way for the assessment to be conducted. In addition, oral and written examinations are given and tests are administered.

In grades 1 and 2, verbal assessments are essential. In the upper-grades, both verbal and written assessments are used as well as homework.

National and International Examinations

For grades 4 to 8, national and international examinations are conducted to assess students' achievements in the fields of reading, mathematics, and science.

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests are used to assess the students' achievement for grades 8 and 11.

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Language and Literacy



Although television and the Internet (with a reported 148 million users in 2000)¹ have caused a decline in the number of newspapers operating in the United States during the last 50 years, today there are 1,700 daily and 6,800 weekly newspapers printing 63 million and 40 million copies, respectively.² The daily newspaper circulation is 212 per 1,000 people.³

The first library supported mainly by public funds was established in 1698. In 1998, 8,964 public libraries served the 50 states and the District of Columbia.⁴ Ninety-seven percent of the population had access to public library services.⁵ English is the official language of the United States. A sizeable minority speak Spanish.

Education System



Governance and Organization

In the United States, government-financed public education is considered to be a national interest, a state responsibility, and a local operation. Since education was not mentioned in the Constitution as a federal function, it remains a state responsibility. States have delegated the responsibility of operating schools to local governments, which in turn have assigned the role to elected school boards. Local school boards raise funds, establish policy and operating regulations, and hire superintendents to manage and operate the district. Superintendents hire principals, teachers, and other staff and carry out the day-to-day activities of operating schools, with the oversight of the school board. The local district is responsible for curriculum

decisions, standards implementation, facilities construction and maintenance, and operation of school programs. In 1999-2000, there were 14,571 school districts in the United States. The variance in district size is reflected in the fact that 5.7 percent of the districts (817) contained 50.8 percent of the total students. Conversely, 73 percent of the districts (10,650) contained only 18.2 percent of the students.⁶ A total of 89,599 schools were operated by the districts. The average enrollment in these schools was 524, with elementary schools averaging 446 students, middle schools 595 students, and secondary schools 752 students.⁷

Each of the states and extra-state jurisdictions have established state departments of education headed by a state superintendent or commissioner (with oversight from a state board of education). The role of the education departments is to distribute state aid, establish policy for graduation requirements and teacher certification requirements, provide curriculum guidance, conduct student assessments, and ensure that efficient and effective school opportunities are made available to every eligible child in the state.

In 1867, Congress authorized the U.S. Department of Education to collect and disseminate information on education. Approximately one year later, this function was moved to the Office of Education in the Department of the Interior, and it became part of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1953. The Department of Education was elevated to a Cabinet-level department in 1980. The major purposes of the Department are to ensure equal educational opportunities for every individual; supplement and complement efforts to improve the quality of education; encourage increased involvement of the public, parents, and students in federal education programs; promote

Country Profile: United States

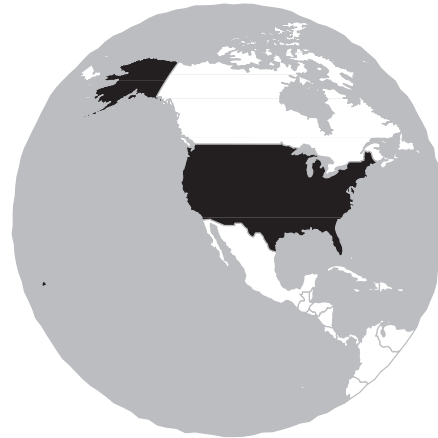
Geographical Location and Size

The United States is a federal republic whose 48 contiguous states are located in North America bordering both the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Pacific Ocean, between Canada and Mexico. The United States also includes the state of Alaska (located north of Canada), the state of Hawaii (located in the tropic region of the South Pacific Ocean), and extra-state jurisdictions (or territories) in the South Pacific and the Caribbean. The District of Columbia, located on the East Coast, is the national capital and operates as a separate jurisdiction similar to a state.

With 9,384,000 square kilometers of surface area, the United States is the fourth largest country in the world.⁸ It has coastlines totaling 19,929 miles.⁹ The terrain of the contiguous 48 states varies from hills and low mountains in the east, to a vast central plain, to mountains in the west. Alaska has rugged mountains and broad river valleys, and volcanic topography can be found in Hawaii. All four of the world's most productive agriculture climates are found in the mainland United States. These climatic regions display a favorable mix of rain and sun, and together they cover more than a third of the continental United States. Land use is estimated to be 19 percent arable, 25 percent permanent pastures, 30 percent forests and woodlands, and 26 percent other.¹⁰

Population and Health Statistics

The United States is one of the most diverse countries in the world. It was inhabited by Native American Indians who spoke many languages before the first European settlers introduced their own diversified cultures. Later, Africans, Hispanics, and Asians added their imprint on the mosaic of the American identity. Today, approximately 25 percent of the U.S. population are of a minority race. The 2000 Census of Population reported the total population in the United States as 281,421,906. The Census Bureau collects information on a racial basis. The concept of race (including both racial and national-origin groups) as used by the Census Bureau reflects the race or races with which people most closely identify. These categories are sociopolitical constructs and should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature. The classifications include the following (with percentage of the total population included in the 2000 Census): White (75.1%); Black or African American (12.3%); American Indian



and Alaska Native (0.9%); Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander (0.1%); and some other races (5.5%). Additionally, individuals may be reported as two or more races (2.4%). The Census also collects information on people who identify their origin as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino but who may be of any race. In 2000, this group accounted for 12.5 percent of the total population.¹¹

The population is estimated to be growing at a rate of 0.9 percent per year.¹² The population density is 30 persons per square kilometer,¹³ with 77 percent of the population living in urban areas.¹⁴ The infant mortality rate in the United States is 7 per 1,000 live births.¹⁵ Life expectancy is 80 years for females and 74 years for males.¹⁶

Political System

The U.S. government is a federal one, dividing authority and jurisdiction among national, state, and local governments. The Constitution specifically grants certain powers to Congress, prohibits states from activities that could undermine the national government, then gives the states power over anything not specified. States have emulated the federal government by adopting their own constitutions with shared powers between executive, legislative, and judicial branches. States, in turn, have delegated many responsibilities and functions to local governments. State and local governments plan and pay for most roads, operate public schools, provide water, organize police and fire services, establish zoning regulations, license professions, and arrange elections for their citizens.

Economy and Employment

The United States has one of the largest and most technologically powerful economies in the world, with a per capita gross national product (GNP) of \$31,910.¹⁷ Leading industries are petroleum, steel, motor vehicles, aerospace, telecommunications, chemicals, electronics, food processing, consumer goods, lumber, and mining. Agricultural products include wheat, other grains, corn, fruits, vegetables, and cotton; beef, pork, poultry, and dairy products; forest products; and fish.¹⁸

The labor force of 140.9 million is composed of 45.8 percent women and 54.2 percent men.¹⁹ By occupation, the labor force is 30.2 percent managerial and professional; 29.2 percent technical, sales, and administrative support; 13.5 percent services; 24.6 percent manufacturing, mining, transportation, and crafts; and 2.5 percent farming, forestry, and fishing.²⁰

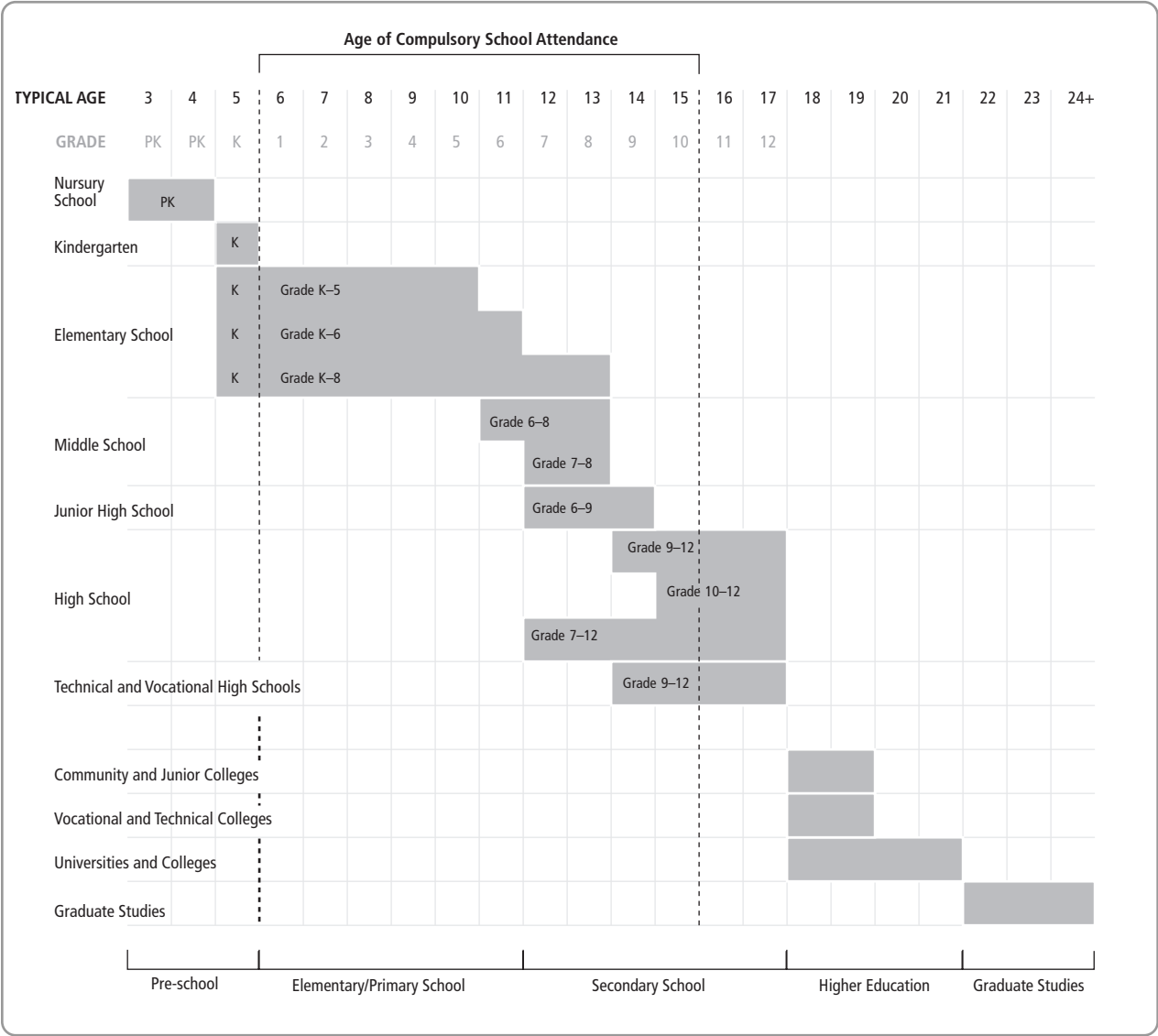
improvements in the quality and usefulness of education through federally supported research, evaluation, and sharing of information; improve the coordination of federal education programs; improve the management of federal activities; and increase the accountability of federal education programs to the President, the Congress, and the public.²¹ The Department oversees a variety of financial-aid programs, including support to state and local education agencies to assist underprivileged and handicapped students, provide vocational education, promote bilingual education, and oversee racial integration.

A total of \$389 billion was spent on elementary and secondary education in 1999-2000 (\$360 billion for public schools and \$28.4 billion for private schools).²² In 1996-97, revenues for public elementary and secondary schools were provided from local funds (45.4%), state funds (48.0%), and federal funds (6.6%).²³

Structure of the Education System

The individual states establish, through state law and regulations, a system of free public education that must be made available by local communities to all citizens within their jurisdiction. All states include kindergarten through grade 12 in this mandate. The states also require school attendance for all children between age 6 or 7 and age 17 or 18 (variable from state to state, usually totaling 10 years). A child may attend a private school, and more recently a growing number of parents have elected to home-school their children. Parents choosing this option must periodically demonstrate to the state that their child is maintaining an acceptable level of achievement. Exhibit 1 provides a detailed illustration of the structure of the U.S. education system.

Exhibit 1: Structure of the Education System in the United States



Pre-primary Education

Pre-primary education programs (ages 3 to 4) vary from child-minding to programs that stimulate developing communications skills; a growing awareness of size, shape, and color; manipulative skills; and physical development. For public safety purposes, states exercise some control through licensing, inspection, and regulation of conditions within facilities. Most programs/schools are privately operated and not publicly funded. An exception to the privately funded programs is Head Start. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services financially supports Head Start, a program intended to provide preschool education for children from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Most Head Start centers operate outside of the public

education structure. The Census Bureau reports 2,269,000 students enrolled in nursery schools (1,072,000 in full-day programs, 1,198,000 in part-day programs). The United States has a gross enrollment ratio of 70 percent of the total relevant age group enrolled in pre-primary education.²⁴

Primary Education

In the United States, the initial level of public education is normally called elementary education and consists of some combination of kindergarten through grade 8. School grade patterns are a local option determined by the districts. The most common configuration of grades in elementary education is kindergarten through grade 6 (K-6). Children normally enter kindergarten at age 5. Many

states currently fund kindergartens. Twenty-eight support half-day kindergartens, while 10 offer full-day attendance. At age 6, children must enter the first grade.²⁵ Other organizational patterns include K-4, K-5, and K-8. All have the first year of schooling in their grade span in common. These schools are characterized by a single classroom teacher teaching core subjects (reading, writing, mathematics, and social studies) to the same students in a single classroom (referred to as self-contained classrooms). Special teachers may assist the classroom teacher in art, music, and physical education instruction at the upper-elementary levels. The total enrollment in primary education represents 102 percent of the official primary school age group.²⁶ (Primary schools contain some students whose ages lie outside the official age range. When these are counted in the total number of students in primary schools, expressed as a percentage of the number in the official age group, the percentage can exceed 100 percent.)

Most school districts operate an intermediate school between the elementary and secondary school levels called a middle school or junior high school. In these institutions, students move from classroom to classroom for instruction in separate subjects (referred to as departmentalized classes). Middle schools terminate at grade 8 and most often include grades 6 to 8 or 7 to 8. In contrast, junior high schools typically include grades 7 to 9.

Secondary Education

Secondary education is designed to provide specific subject knowledge building on the general foundations developed during elementary school. Classes are 50 to 60 minutes in length, with 4 to 5 minutes provided for passing from one class to another. Students move to the teacher's classroom, often located in a common section of the building devoted to that discipline (e.g., the Science Department). Students normally start secondary school, or high school, at age 14 and attend for four years. However, depending on the district's grade organizational plan, students may attend secondary school for as little as three years or as long as six years.

Secondary teacher certification requires a demonstrated mastery of a particular discipline, as evidenced by college coursework in the subject to be taught (e.g., 36 hours in mathematics). Generally,

certificates are issued in English, a language other than English, mathematics, science, or social studies. Public expenditure on secondary education from local, state, and federal sources totals 24 percent of the U.S. GNP.²⁷

Types of Schools

In 1999-2000, there were 89,599 public schools operating in the United States. Of these, 74 percent were public elementary schools, 22 percent were public secondary schools, and 4 percent were public combined elementary/secondary schools.²⁸ Special education schools, alternative schools, and other special purpose schools make up less than 1 percent of these schools. A total of 30,299,964 students were enrolled in elementary schools, 14,538,776 students were enrolled in regular high schools, and 993,968 students were enrolled in combined elementary/secondary schools. Including students enrolled in special schools, the total public school enrollment was 46,398,360.²⁹

In addition to the publicly funded and operated school system, major religious denominations and other private groups operate schools in the United States. These schools charge a tuition fee and operate under their own rules and regulations. Although the law prohibits direct federal aid to parochial schools, it does allow for auxiliary services such as bus transportation, textbooks, loans, school lunches, and health services to all children, including those in religiously affiliated schools. School choice/voucher programs are a major source of controversy in the current school reform debate. Such programs would allow the use of public funds to pay private school tuition or to pay private companies that sign contracts to run public schools. In 1997-98, 12 percent of elementary/primary students were enrolled in 24,915 private schools and 10 percent of secondary school students were enrolled in 10,799 private schools.³⁰

Duration and Timing of the School Year

Elementary and secondary schools in the United States are required by state regulations to be in session from 170 to 180 days per year (the actual number of days varies by state). The school year begins in late August or early September and ends in late May or early June. The local district determines the starting and ending dates. Students are given a summer vacation of approximately three

months during the summer months (June, July, and August). The school year is typically divided into two semesters, each having two nine-week grading periods. The school day is generally six to seven hours in length. A one-week holiday is normally taken the last week of the calendar year, and another during the spring.

In an effort to enroll more students than school buildings would normally accommodate during the regular school year, more than 2 million students in close to 3,000 public school districts in 41 states attend year-round schools. However, students attending these schools spend about the same number of days in school as students in schools with more traditional calendars.³¹

Teachers and Teacher Education



Teaching Force

In 1999-2000, 3,002,258 teachers were employed in public elementary and secondary schools. Seventy-five percent of them were female. Elementary school teachers accounted for 57.1 percent of public school teachers. About 61 percent were 40 years of age or older, and 84.3 percent were white. Approximately 47 percent had a master's degree or higher educational attainment. About 58 percent had 10 or more years of teaching experience.³²

In private schools, 449,057 teachers were employed. Seventy-six percent were female. Sixty-eight percent were elementary school teachers. Approximately 58 percent were 40 years of age or older, and 89.5 percent were white. More than one-third (34.7%) had a master's degree or higher educational attainment. Approximately 45 percent had 10 or more years of teaching experience.³³

Teacher Education

Most universities, both public and private, have a school of education that provides teacher-training programs. The content and structure of teacher education programs is left to the discretion of the institutions offering them, with the understanding that their students must meet state standards to become certified to teach. Some institutions have initiated a series of tests for applicants to teacher education programs. Following a 4-year program and a practicum, prospective teachers must then apply to individual states for certification or licen-

sure. Forty-three states require satisfactory performance on a test as part of the licensure process.³⁴ These tests are designed to evaluate the candidate's basic academic skills, subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and classroom performance during the year. States also have developed processes for individuals making career changes (e.g., military officers), graduates of liberal arts colleges, and other groups to secure conditional certification.

Teacher In-service Education

Employed teachers are provided in-service education by the local district. Generally, teachers and principals determine what kind of assistance would be useful and then retain consultants to address those areas. Usually one or two days in duration, these programs are offered (with pay) before students return to school at the beginning of the school year or during the year when students are not in attendance.

Additionally, teachers possessing Provisional Certificates must complete a designated number of relevant college credit hours to maintain their certification until they qualify for permanent certification, which requires a master's degree. As of 1999-2000, 47 percent of public school teachers and 35 percent of private school teachers held a master's degree or above.³⁵

Reading Curriculum and Instruction



Reading Policy

Legislation passed in December 2001 calls for the administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading to fourth grade students in each state every two years, beginning in 2003. The purpose is to determine the percentage of students reading at each of three achievement levels established by the National Assessment Governing Board: basic, proficient, and advanced. States will then compare those percentages with the percentages of students achieving at those levels on annual state tests of reading, in order to demonstrate the rigor of the state performance standards in reading compared to those established for NAEP. The appropriate emphasis for beginning reading, phonics or comprehension, continues to be the subject of debate. Most agree that an effective program needs to be "compre-

hensive” and include instruction in all aspects of reading. National programs that provide funding to states, districts, and collaborative endeavors in literacy education tend to favor approaches that promote balance. While the federal government has established no national standards for reading, it promotes certain aspects of reading through targeted funding. Currently, funding goes mainly to programs that will employ practices supported by rigorous research.

Reading Curriculum and Standards

The reading curriculum is determined at the state or local level. All but one of the states have state standards for reading achievement. However, the degree to which local districts use those standards varies from state to state. In addition to standards, two of the largest states have state-level textbook adoption laws that give the state a major role in determining curriculum. By 2001, 14 states had instituted reading assessments for students at all grade levels from grade 3 or 4 through grade 10 or 11.³⁶ The national No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires states to assess the reading achievement of all students in grades 3 to 8, beginning in the 2005-06 school year. These assessments can have major consequences for students, teachers, and schools. Where there are significant consequences attached to state tests, the content of the tests has a strong influence on the reading curriculum. In other areas, the district and/or the state provide curriculum guidelines for schools and classrooms.

Guidelines for reading instruction at the state and district levels and for federal grant funding have increasingly emphasized approaches proven by rigorous research. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that proposed reading projects focus on strategies and professional development based on “scientifically based reading research,” a phrase used throughout the text of the legislation. A recent publication, *The Report of the National Reading Panel*, identified some 100,000 studies of reading dating to 1966.³⁷ The Panel selected some 50 of these for a detailed analysis. This analysis focused on five major areas of reading instruction whose importance is confirmed by research findings: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. One, among the several, findings reported noted that phonemic awareness instruction promotes early reading

and spelling skills. Programs funded through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 must address all of the five components covered in the report.

State standards for reading differ in both content and level of specificity. Some provide standards or benchmarks of achievement at each grade level, K-12, while others provide standards for clusters of grades such as K-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. Aspects of reading frequently covered include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, literature, and habits and attitudes. In some sets of state standards, reading and writing standards are closely integrated. For example, an expectation might be that students use letter sound correspondence to “decode and use words in context.” All state standards have comprehension as the ultimate goal of reading instruction.

In many areas, kindergarten students are expected to be able to recognize or decode basic words and read books with easy words and short sentences.³⁸ Instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics usually begins in kindergarten. Students are also usually read to in kindergarten and first grade. A challenge for primary teachers is that students come to kindergarten with very different levels of language skills. Some 5-year-olds arrive at school having been read to for hundreds of hours, while others might not have ever heard a book read out loud. That means that many students have not yet developed the notion of a word or a story, much less of sounds in language. Others might already be reading when they enter kindergarten.

Phonemic awareness and phonics are emphasized in kindergarten and first grade but receive less attention in second and third grade and tend to disappear from the curriculum by fourth grade except for students who are not yet reading. Reading material is mainly literary, such as stories and poems, in the first two years of school. By grade 4, there is an appreciable amount of informational text being read during reading instruction, as well as during instruction in content areas such as social studies. Many schools emphasize reading for enjoyment, participating in a variety of programs to motivate students to read for pleasure.

Materials for Reading Instruction

Reading texts are produced by a handful of large publishing companies. The commercial programs

have an array of components that can be selected to build a program that has more or less emphasis on certain aspects of reading. There might be charts and workbooks on phonics and phonemic awareness, selections of text to be used in instruction, journals for writing about selections read in class, and leveled books for self-selected pleasure reading, to name just some of the more typical components. In many schools, reading instruction is integrated with writing instruction. This is reflected by the presence of writing instruction components in most commercially developed reading programs.

Technology is not widely used for reading instruction. Some school systems have purchased computer-based systems that provide materials for diagnosis, instruction, practice, and assessment. However, these are used in only a handful of districts, usually relatively affluent ones.³⁹

While most schools have texts for teaching reading, there is a wide variability in what is available to support the text and how much flexibility teachers have to adapt, add, or delete materials. Some districts can only offer schools the text and maybe workbooks. Others can offer computer-based instruction, diagnosis, and assessment, as well as an array of support materials. One major area of disparity is the availability of books to be read for enjoyment. Classroom libraries that give students access to books for pleasure reading are considered an important part of the context for successful reading instruction. However, districts whose students come from lower socioeconomic strata have significantly fewer books available for students to practice reading or for adults to read to young children and students.^{40,41,42} Some schools have reading programs that have been developed by teachers working individually or in grade-level or school-wide teams. In other locations, reading programs are highly scripted, with almost no room for teachers to exercise flexibility and professional judgment.

Instructional Time

As in all other aspects of reading education in the United States, instructional time varies from school to school. In a few cases, states issue guidelines for the amount of instructional time spent on

reading instruction. Usually, districts set the timeframes. Often, the timeframe of an hour and a half to two hours in the morning encompasses a language arts block. During that block, both reading and writing are taught. Sometimes, an entire hour and a half is devoted solely to reading. In the primary grades, in most schools, reading instruction is given far more time than other subjects, especially social studies, science, art, and music.

Classroom Organization and Size

Many districts have policies that discourage or forbid schools from tracking or grouping students by achievement and then keeping them in those groups throughout the day. However, regrouping students from heterogeneous groups into temporary, more homogenous groups for specific periods of instruction can be effective^{43,44} and is often recommended. Some schools regroup the entire school for reading, having teachers work with students from several grades who have similar instructional needs. In many schools, there is a combination of large and small group instruction. Stories are often read to and discussed by large groups, and skills are the focus for small groups of students who share similar achievement levels and skill needs.

It is widely recognized that class size is important, especially in the primary grades.⁴⁵ As a result some states and districts have made concerted efforts to reduce class size in grades 1 to 3. California is one such state. In California, the efforts to reduce class size have led to another problem, under-qualified teachers in classrooms.⁴⁶ Often kindergarten is not included in class size limitations. Fewer than 30 or 20 students per class is the goal in many cases.

Role of the Reading Specialists in Reading Instruction

The role of the reading specialist varies from school to school and district to district. In some schools, the reading specialist serves as a support for classroom teachers, providing materials and ideas, helping to organize students for instruction, assisting in diagnosis and assessment, and even providing staff development. In other situations, reading specialists work with individual students or small groups who are not achieving as expected.

Second Language Reading Instruction

The number of immigrants to the United States has increased continuously over the past two decades. Hispanics are the largest U.S. population for whom English is a second language. In the homes of some American Hispanics, even second-generation children hear only Spanish. There are differing views on how best to teach these students to read. Some favor immersion in English and learning to read at the same time. Others are convinced that students should be taught to read in their native language first and then learn to read in English when they are more proficient in it, where this is possible. When it is not possible for children to learn to read first in their native language, “the initial instructional priority should be developing the children’s oral proficiency in reading English.”⁴⁷ Reading instruction in the home language is difficult in many schools because students for whom English is a second language might represent more than 10 different home languages. Teachers have indicated a need for more training in working with these students, as well as for more effective materials.

Reading Disabilities

Screening for reading problems sometimes is directed by the state. More often, it is done at the school level with support and guidance from the district. When students are identified as needing instructional intervention, it is provided in different ways from school to school. Some schools use computers to provide additional instruction and practice. In some schools, reading teachers work with students having reading difficulties. In some situations, classroom paraprofessionals work with students who are achieving satisfactorily while the teacher works with a small group of those students needing extra help. Extra help is usually provided in a small group setting rather than one-on-one.

Literacy Programs



In 1998, the U.S. Congress passed the Reading Excellence Act, which set aside \$260 million to be given to states to promote effective instruction in beginning reading and to support teacher training for reading instruction. States were required to submit proposals for use of the money, and awards to the states were not automatic. By the end of 2001, 40 states had received Reading Excellence

Act Funds. Legislation recently enacted provides funds for a similar program, Reading First, and expands the focus to pre-kindergarten students in Early Reading First. This legislation provides competitive grants to improve readiness and reading achievement in high-poverty areas and where large numbers of students are not reading at grade level. Funds are provided to assist states and districts in establishing scientific research-based reading programs, establishing related professional development programs, and identifying students at risk of failing to achieve satisfactorily in reading.

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) is a non-profit organization partially funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide inexpensive book distribution. In 2000, it provided 14 million books to 4 million children. It provides books and incentives to read to children, parents, and care providers. In addition, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 provides continued funding for RIF’s Inexpensive Book Distribution Program. RIF activities also include motivating children and families to read and generating community support for literacy.

Several programs promote reading for enjoyment. Some commercial groups encourage reading by providing rewards for reading books or by providing places and books for reading. There are programs through which business people spend time reading to students at lunch or before or after work. A coalition of groups, including a teachers’ union and business entities, use the birthday of the children’s book author Dr. Seuss to promote reading across the country. Some education professional groups provide materials for parents to read to their children in pediatricians’ offices.

There are television programs aimed at giving young children some background for reading including phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, phonics, and story understanding. These are supported mainly by public funds and grants from commercial entities and foundations. One of the newest such programs, Between the Lions, is supported by both the U.S. Department of Education and private sector companies. It provides supplemental materials for parents and teachers and has a Web site, <http://pbskids.org/lions>. The public interest in reading is in evidence in pharmacies and grocery stores, where books and games to teach beginning reading skills are on racks of popular materials.

The International Reading Association and its state and local affiliates provide professional

literature; state, regional, and local conferences for reading educators; a newsletter; and a Web site, <http://www.reading.org>.

Assessment



Classroom Assessment

Classroom assessment of reading is often part of a package of materials purchased with the textbooks. Some highly prescriptive reading programs have assessments that teachers are required to use. Some districts, and even some states, provide classroom assessment tools but it is usually up to the school or teacher to decide whether to use those tools. There is continuing interest in portfolio assessment and teacher-developed assessment activities that blend into instruction. Cumulative records of the oral reading achievement of individual students are popular in many schools.

National Assessments

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as “the Nation’s Report Card,” is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas. Since 1969, these sample-based assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and the arts. NAEP provides results for populations of students (e.g., fourth graders) and subgroups of those populations (e.g., female students, Hispanic students). It does not provide scores for individual students or schools.

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), an independent, bipartisan group established by Congress to set policy for NAEP, has established performance standards in NAEP reading for 4th, 8th, and 12th graders. The levels pertinent to grade 4 are described in Exhibit 2.

Some students score below the defined basic level though these are not necessarily non-readers. While they do not meet the criteria and

Exhibit 2: Description of NAGB Reading Achievement Levels for Grade 4

Reading Achievement Level	Description of NAGB Reading Achievement Levels for Grade 4
Advanced	<p>Fourth grade students performing at the Advanced level should be able to generalize about topics in the reading selection and demonstrate an awareness of how authors compose and use literary devices. When reading text appropriate to fourth grade, they should be able to judge texts critically and, in general, give thorough answers that indicate careful thought.</p> <p>For example, when reading literary text, Advanced-level students should be able to make generalizations about the point of the story and extend its meaning by integrating personal experiences and other readings with ideas suggested by the text. They should be able to identify literary devices such as figurative language.</p> <p>When reading informational text, Advanced-level fourth graders should be able to explain the author’s intent by using supporting material from the text. They should be able to make critical judgments of the form and content of the text and explain their judgments clearly.</p>
Proficient	<p>Fourth-grade students performing at the Proficient level should be able to demonstrate an overall understanding of the text, providing inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to fourth grade, they should be able to extend the ideas in the text by making inferences, drawing conclusions, and making connections to their own experiences. The connections between the text and what the student infers should be clear.</p> <p>For example, when reading literary text, Proficient-level fourth graders should be able to summarize the story, draw conclusions about the characters or plot, and recognize relationships such as cause and effect.</p> <p>When reading informational text, Proficient-level students should be able to summarize the information and identify the author’s intent or purpose. They should be able to draw reasonable conclusions from the text, recognize relationships such as cause and effect or similarities and differences, and identify the meaning of the selection’s key concepts.</p> <p>Fourth-grade students performing at the Basic level should demonstrate an understanding of the overall meaning of what they read. When reading text appropriate for fourth graders, they should be able to make relatively obvious connections between the text and their own experiences and extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences.</p> <p>For example, when reading literary text, they should be able to tell what the story is generally about – providing details to support their understanding – and be able to connect aspects of the stories to their own experiences.</p>
Basic	<p>When reading informational text, Basic-level fourth graders should be able to tell what the selection is generally about or identify the purpose for reading it, provide details to support their understanding, and connect ideas from the text to their background knowledge and experiences.</p>

cut-off score for the basic proficiency level, many of them demonstrate some fundamental reading skills. They can, for example, complete such tasks as identifying a defining character trait, recognizing explicitly stated information, recognizing the genre of a story, and identifying a character's main dilemma.⁴⁸

Because these achievement levels are reported only at the state and national levels, the impact of the assessment on individual students, schools, or teachers is minimal except in the degree to which states construct their own assessments and standards to reflect the NAEP reading assessment. A group of large cities is participating in a trial of reporting NAEP scores for large urban areas.

New legislation, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, requires that NAEP reading assessments be given to samples of students in grades 4 and 8 every two years, beginning in 2003. Results are reported for the nation, regions, and the states. Results include the state of reading achievement at the national level at the time of the test, trends in reading achievement across time, and comparative achievement of fourth graders in the states. Benchmarks or achievement levels have been set for Basic, Proficient, and Advanced performance on the assessment. Results are reported as the percentages of students scoring at those levels for the nation, genders, socioeconomic and cultural groups, geographical regions, and the states. Several state assessments of reading and at least one commercial assessment use a framework and format similar to the one used on NAEP.

NAEP "examines students' abilities to construct, extend, and examine the meaning of what they read...in different reading situations – reading for literary experience, reading to be informed, and reading to perform a task."⁴⁹ The NAEP reading assessment is designed to examine the outcomes of reading instruction rather than its components and to reflect the increasingly rigorous literacy demands of employment, citizenship, and personal development.

NAEP uses only "naturally occurring text," that is, text that has been taken from the environment without editing or abridgement. Intact stories, articles, and functional documents are all included. The tasks include multiple-choice and open-ended items.

There is also a National Adult Literacy Survey that was last conducted in 1992. This assessment focuses on prose literacy, document literacy, and

quantitative literacy. The last involves the use of arithmetic embedded in print.

International Assessments

Through its participation in the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), the United States has taken part in three international reading assessments: a 15-nation survey in 1970-71,⁵⁰ the IEA Reading Literacy Study in 1991,⁵¹ and the Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) conducted in 2001. In addition, participation in the OECD-sponsored Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000 provided a reading literacy assessment of 15-year-olds.⁵² Results from these studies are made available at conferences, in reports, and on the Internet.

State Assessments

New legislation, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, requires states to test all students in grades 3 through 8 in reading as well as mathematics by the year 2005-06. Federal funds will be available to help improve low performing schools. In some states, the consequences of the state assessments are high – for students, promotion to the next grade; for teachers, pay and promotion; for schools, monetary rewards or sanctions and even takeover by the state. The new legislation requires states to use state assessments to monitor the progress of schools and to meet state-level requirements for adequate yearly progress. Federal money is available to help states and districts improve the performance of poorly performing schools and to develop state assessments. Many states have developed their own tests, and some of these resemble NAEP. Others use commercial tests. Where states use open-ended items on their assessments, teachers are sometimes hired for scoring. This provides an opportunity for teachers to examine student work in the light of state performance standards for reading.

Standardized Tests

Commercial standardized tests are frequently used by states and districts for the purposes of determining student achievement and holding schools and teachers accountable. These tests vary in format, using traditional short pieces of text with multiple-choice questions as well as longer passages with some open-ended questions.

Diagnostic Tests

Although computer-based diagnostic tests are available, most schools use a battery of tests administered by a teacher, specialists, or a school psychologist. Sometimes states require records confirming that students have been screened for reading difficulties and that remediation has been provided for students who need it.

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