

Development of the School System of the Czech Lands in 1918–2020. A View of the School Legislation after one Hundred Years of the Republic

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The paper presents a chronological outline of the development of school legislation and the school system of the Czech Lands from 1918 to the present. Captured are changes after historical breaks, as well as efforts for gradual conceptual changes. The topics addressed are as follows: The development of the Czechoslovak education system after the establishment of an independent democratic state in 1918; its form during the Nazi occupation and during more than forty years of the communist government; and the way of searching for the form of Czech education after the fall of the communist regime in 1989.

Key words: *Czechoslovakia; Czech Republic; education; school system; legislation*

Introduction

In 2018, we commemorated one hundred years since the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic. During the past one hundred and two years, our country has undergone a complicated development of changing regimes; we experienced a period of democracy, as well as communist and Nazi governments with all the associated characteristics. During this time, the whole of our society has changed fundamentally. Although education is a relatively static entity, it has also gradually changed, both through fundamental revolutionary interventions following regime changes and through gradual widely discussed (and more or less thoughtful) changes. In the following text I will try to briefly outline the development of the school system and most important school standards from the period of one hundred and two years of the Republic.¹ The text does not claim to be complete and exhaustive. Over a hundred years, countless laws, decrees, and other

¹ Jireček, M. (2014). *Vývoj vyučovacího předmětu dějepis v letech 1918–2013*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

educational standards have been issued. I will try to briefly outline the most important tendencies in the development of Czech education. As a basis, I mainly used the *Bulletins of the Ministry of Education* (whose names changed over time as the name of the Ministry changed), where the basic legislative standards from this area were published.

The First Republic

After the break-up of Austria-Hungary and the formation of independent Czechoslovakia (proclaimed on 28 October 1918), it was necessary to build the structure of the newly established state in all areas, including education. The basis of school legislation was taken over from the time of the monarchy. The organization of education was based mainly on the law of 1869 and its amendment of 1883.² Of course, the Republic tried to cut off ideologically from the previous monarchy – the paintings of the emperor or books that served the interests of the monarchy were removed.³ The influence of the Catholic Church on schools was significantly reduced. Religion was preserved as a compulsory subject, but pupils could be exempted from attending it.⁴ The female teachers were equalized with male colleagues; now, they could also teach in boys' schools, and the celibacy of female teachers was cancelled.⁵ Emancipation was also apparent in the case of girls whose access to higher education was made easier. The state also addressed the education of minorities in nationally mixed areas. It was made possible to set up minority schools (including Czech ones in predominantly German areas) if a condition of a certain number of pupils was met.⁶ An important progress in the discussion on the form of education was made at the Congress of Czechoslovak Teachers held in 1920.⁷ Austrian law, however, remained the basis of education

² Říšský zákon o školách obecných změněný zákonem ze dne 2. května 1883 s nařízením a informací v příčině provedení ze dne 8. a 12. června 1883: s příslušnými zákony o obecných právních občanů, o postavení školy k církvi a o uspořádání poměrů mezináboženských: doplněn a objasněn rozsudky soudu říšského a správního, dále výnosy zemské školní rady: s obsáhlým abecedním seznamem věcným. (1883). Praha: Jindř. Mercy-ho.

³ O prohlídce žákovských knihoven na školách obecných a měštanských. *Věstník Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty* (further *Věstník MŠANO*). (1918–1919). 1/1–6, 38.

⁴ O vyučování povinnému náboženství. *Věstník MŠANO* 1/13, 214–215.

⁵ O celibátu učitelek. *Věstník MŠANO* 1/1918–1919/9, 151; Zákon ze dne 24. července 1919, kterým se zrušuje celibát literních a industriálních učitelek na školách obecných, občanských (měštanských) v republice Československé. *Věstník MŠANO* 1/12, 197–198.

⁶ Zákon ze dne 3. dubna 1919 o školách národních a soukromých ústavech vyučovacích a vychovávacích. (1918–1919). *Věstník MŠANO* 1/5, 75–77.

⁷ Jůva, V. (2005). Historické konsekvence základní školy. In J. Maňák, T. Janík (Eds.), *Orientace české základní školy. Sborník z pracovního semináře konaného dne 20. října 2005 na Pedagogické fakultě MU v Brně*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 35.

until 1922, when the so-called “Small” Education Act came into force.⁸ It set out the main points concerning the structure of the school system, which, however, was still based on the monarchy system to a large extent. In many respects, the Act did not meet expectations and was frequently criticized in the First Republic press.

After the establishment of the independent Republic, the powers of the existing laws of the Austrian part of the monarchy were extended also to Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia, which became part of the state and where the laws of the Hungarian part of the monarchy were still in force. The state of education in Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia was not good.⁹ An important role in the renewal and building of the local education system was played by Czech teachers who were sent there.¹⁰

According to the 1869 law, compulsory school attendance began at the age of six and lasted eight years. However, the 1883 amendment to the law introduced some alleviations. In Slovakia, compulsory school attendance after 1918 was temporarily only six years. The Small Education Act abolished these alleviations and compulsory school attendance was extended to eight years from 1927/28 also in Slovakia. During the First Republic, primary education was divided into two stages. The basis was a five-year elementary school (called a folk school in Slovakia). After its completion, pupils could continue their studies at the upper elementary school, at the middle school (civic) or at one of the secondary schools (grammar school, real grammar school, reform real grammar school or the so-called “reálka”). Then the selected students could continue their studies at universities.

In most cases, there were eight-year elementary schools in villages, and five-year elementary schools and three-year middle schools in towns and larger municipalities.¹¹ Three-year middle schools were supposed to provide higher general education than that provided by the elementary school to pupils from grade 6 to grade 8. The extension of the middle schools to four-year schools was discussed, but never realized. However, the so-called one-year training courses were added to some middle schools for pupils who wanted to supplement their education. These classes were not added to the middle schools in Slovakia, because there the middle schools were initially for four years. The upper elementary and

⁸ Zákon ze dne 21. srpna 1922, č. 226, jímž se mění a doplňují zákony o školách obecných a občanských. (1921–1922). *Učitelské noviny*, 36(24), 255–260.

⁹ Pešina, J. (1933). *Školství na Podkarpatské Rusi v přítomnosti*. Praha: Státní nakladatelství; Ludové školstvo na Slovensku. (1920–1921). *Věstník MŠANO* 3/9, s. 70–71.

¹⁰ Zákon ze dne 29. října 1919, jímž ustanovují se zásady, podle nichž lze učitelstvo škol obecných a občanských dočasně přikázati na kterékoliv služební místo v území Republiky československé. *Věstník MŠANO* 1/19, 384–385.

¹¹ Kuzmin, M. N. (1981). *Vývoj školství a vzdělávání v Československu*. Praha: Academia, 185.

the middle school provided different levels of education. In addition, elementary schools were often schools with classes grouped according to the number of pupils and teachers. The quality of elementary schools was often discussed; the quality of teaching staff of these types of schools also varied. This multi-dimensionality where elementary, middle and secondary schools existed side by side was criticized, and even from today's perspective must be seen as problematic, as the child's education was largely determined by where he or she was born. Criticism began to emerge already during the First Republic,¹² and a demand for a uniform school was often heard.¹³ In the period of the First Republic, there were many other proposals requiring a change in the school system. But no fundamental change was made. It was only on the basis of the act on domain middle schools of 1935 that the middle schools were opened even in large catchment municipalities at the expense of upper elementary schools.¹⁴ One of the proposals, which was realized, was the establishment of reform (experimental) schools.¹⁵

Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

A number of changes in our education system were made already after the occupation of border areas following the signing of the Munich Agreement and the establishment of the so-called Second Republic. The number of interventions in education was then multiplied after the occupation of the rest of the territory by German troops and the proclamation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939. The education system in the Czech Lands (Slovakia became independent) underwent a number of changes in terms of both organization and content. The German occupation administration tried to significantly suppress the Czech education system, while a negative role was played by Emanuel Moravec, the Protectorate Minister of Education.

Significant changes were made in the form of the school system. From the beginning of the 1941/42 school year, the elementary schools with Czech as the language of instruction in the school districts where the middle school had been

¹² Chlup, O. – Uher, J. – Velemínský, K. (1933). *O novou školu*. Praha: Čin.

¹³ Příhoda, V. (1928–1929). Jednotná škola. Její možnosti dnes a zítra. *Školské reformy* 10(1), 1–8.

¹⁴ Zákon ze dne 20. prosince 1935, kterým se mění a doplňují zákony o zřizování a vydržování veřejných měštanských škol, o docházce do nich a o jejich správě. (1936). *Věstník MŠANO* 18/1, 2–8.

¹⁵ Čeněk, J. (1924). *Z našeho pokusného školství*. Praha: Čsl. ped. ústav J. A. Komenského; Pražák, F. (1927). *Počátky české školy pokusné*. Praha: Kočí; Příhoda, V. (1930). *Racionalisace školství: funkcionální organizace školské soustavy*. Praha: Orbis; Šindelář, A. (1932). *Pražské pokusné reformní školy*. Praha: Státní nakladatelství; Vrána, S., & Císař, J. (Eds.). (1939). *Deset let pokusné práce na měštanských školách ve Zlíně*. Zlín: „Tisk“.

established were extended to eight grades in order to enable compulsory school attendance.¹⁶ The elementary level of the elementary school was newly shortened by one year – from grade 1 to grade 4. About 60% of the population were supposed to complete compulsory school attendance at an upper elementary school (after its completion, it was possible to continue the studies at continuing schools). Another option was to study at the middle school. The middle school with Czech as the language of instruction was becoming the four-class school (one-year training courses were abolished) and thus included school year 5 to 8. The middle schools were changed to selective schools. A maximum of 35% of pupils could be admitted to the first class of middle schools (after their completion, it was possible to continue at vocational schools). Only a limited number of children were thus to receive higher education. The designation “middle school” was later replaced by the designation “main school”.¹⁷ The third option was to study at one of the secondary schools. However, the number of secondary and vocational school pupils had been substantially reduced. During the Protectorate, the organization of secondary schools with the Czech language of instruction also changed.¹⁸ From the school year 1941/42, there were only two types of secondary schools – real and classical grammar schools.¹⁹ On 17th November 1939, Czech universities were closed.

The teaching of some subjects was restricted, the content of many subjects distorted; the teachers were re-trained in the Nazi spirit in the so-called Rankenheim courses (these characteristics mainly concerned the history lessons).²⁰ The permitted number of pupils in the classes of Czech schools increased; the number of classes was reduced; the schools were merged. The German language was gradually introduced at all types of schools as a compulsory subject. Subjects that commemorated the First Republic or those that could undermine respect for the German Empire were discarded from the school collections.²¹ The use of a number of textbooks was stopped. All pupils in the

¹⁶ Vládní nařízení ze dne 14. srpna 1941 o nové úpravě obecných a měšťanských škol s českým vyučovacím jazykem. (1941). *Věstník MŠANO* 23/9, 282.

¹⁷ Výnos MŠANO ze dne 27. srpna 1941, č. 105.179-I o přeměně označení „měšťanská škola“ na označení „hlavní škola“. *Věstník MŠANO* 23/9, 291.

¹⁸ Výnos MŠANO ze dne 6. srpna 1941, č. 98.445-I o změně v organizaci středních škol s českým jazykem vyučovacím. *Věstník MŠANO* 23/8, 270–273.

¹⁹ Váňová, R. (2009). Historický vývoj českého školství I. (do r. 1948). In J. Průcha (Ed.). *Pedagogická encyklopedie*. Praha: Portál, 43.

²⁰ Willinger, J. (1943–1944). Rankenheim – pohled zpět i kupředu. *Vychovatel v Čechách i na Moravě* 1(1), 17–20.

²¹ Výnos MŠANO ze dne 11. září 1941, čís. 110.045/41-I/1, o úpravě obrazů a užívání jich při vyučování na školách národních, středních, učitelských ústavech a na školách odborného směru s českým jazykem vyučovacím. (1941). *Věstník MŠANO* 23/10, 334–336.

Protectorate were supposed to know the anthem of the German Empire.²² The employees belonging to the Protectorate were supposed to salute with an outstretched right hand at playing the imperial anthems and on other occasions mentioned in the Regulation.²³ Another decree, however, governed that the use of this greeting was a matter of inner belief.²⁴ It was recommended to buy the brochure *Peace Work of Adolf Hitler* for school libraries and for pupils.²⁵

Czech teachers and students were subjected to persecution during the war – they were expelled from schools, many of them were sent to forced labour or war production facilities; many experienced concentration camps, died in prisons or were executed.²⁶ In the schools, also Jewish pupils were subjected to harsh persecution. In addition to reducing the level of education, the Nazis also tried to influence the youth in an ideological way (the so-called *Curatorium for Youth Education* was established). A number of schools were moved to unsuitable buildings.

Post-war period

After the liberation from the German occupation, it was necessary to eliminate the distortions and damage inflicted on the education system during the war. Basic opinions of (not only) school policy were formulated still during the war period in the so-called *Košice Government Programme*.²⁷ Schools were supposed to become accessible to the widest possible population. The relation to German and Hungarian culture was to be revised, Slavic orientation strengthened, and the relationship to the Soviet Union newly established (Russian should have been the first of all foreign languages; young people should have been “duly informed” about the Soviet Union). The schools should have been cleared of persons cooperating with the occupiers, and textbooks and books published during the occupation should have been removed. German and Hungarian schools were to be closed until the final decision.

Efforts to rectify the damage caused by war events in the field of education fully developed after the liberation of the Republic. Lessons at all types of schools

²² Výnos MŠANO ze dne 9. dubna 1941 o hymnách Velkoněmecké říše. (1941). *Věstník MŠANO* 23/6, 190–193.

²³ Vládní nařízení ze dne 7. srpna 1942 o služebním poměru veřejných zaměstnanců. (1942). *Věstník ministerstva školství* (further *Věstník MŠ*), 24/9, 292–293.

²⁴ Výnos presidia MŠ ze dne 17. září 1942, č. 5914 pres., o pozdravu zaměstnanců školské správy. (1942). *Věstník MŠ* 24/10, 337–338.

²⁵ *Věstník MŠ*. (1942). 24/6, 255.

²⁶ Vacek, J. (1980–1981). Příspěvek k historii perzekuce českých vysokých škol v době nacistické okupace. *Společenské vědy ve škole* 37(3), 70–73.

²⁷ *Program první domácí vlády republiky, vlády Národní fronty Čechů a Slováků. Sběrka dokumentů*. (1945). Praha: Ministerstvo informací.

were resumed as early as in May 1945 (only universities were opened from the next school term only). For the temporary period, the teachers themselves were obliged to correct distortions in teaching. German language lessons were stopped. Capable pupils of grade 6 to grade 8, who had to stay in elementary schools during the war, were transferred to the middle schools. The expelled pupils returned to secondary and vocational schools.²⁸ A national congress of teachers was held in July 1945 to set up new requirements for education.²⁹ Of the defined requirements, the following were implemented: the university education of teachers³⁰ and the building of the *Research Institute of Education*.³¹ Despite numerous discussions on this topic (this period is sometimes referred to as the period of “fights for a uniform school”),³² the requirement of a uniform single school was not implemented. After the war, the position of the Communist Party became strong; it promoted transformation of education in the name of the ideas of popular democracy and the creation of an undifferentiated uniform school. The influence of the Communist Party on education was helped by the fact that Zdeněk Nejedlý was appointed a post-war minister of education. According to the ideology of this Party, education was supposed to be made available to the broadest levels of population.

After the liberation, pre-war types of schools were restored. The middle school attendance was prolonged to four years. For children aged 14 to 16, who completed their eighth year of elementary school attendance, a course was to be set up in the 1945/46 school year – unless they were educated at other schools.³³ In practice, a nine-year school attendance was thus introduced, but according to applicable law, it remained eight-year (courses were not compulsory, but the exemption from attendance had to be justified and approved³⁴). In this period, general education schools were designated by three levels: 1st level (elementary school), 2nd level (lower secondary and middle school), and 3rd level (higher classes of secondary schools). During this period, the middle schools and the

²⁸ Učitelstvu všech druhů škol a všem ostatním zaměstnancům školské a osvětové správy (1945). *Věstník ministerstva školství a osvěty (dále pouze Věstník MŠO)* 1/1, 5.

²⁹ Váňová, R. (2004). Václav Příhoda a jeho poválečné snahy o školskou reformu (1945–1948). In A. Vališová, et al., *Historie a perspektivy didaktického myšlení*. Praha: Karolinum, 77–87.

³⁰ Dekret presidenta republiky ze dne 27. října 1945 o vzdělání učitelstva and Zákon z 9. dubna 1946, kterým se zřizují pedagogické fakulty. (1946). *Věstník MŠO* 2/11, 203.

³¹ Dekret presidenta republiky z 27. října 1945, kterým se zřizuje VÚP JAK. (1945). *Věstník MŠO* 1/1, 10.

³² Walterová, E. (2011). Vývoj primární a nižší sekundární školy v českém kontextu. In E. Walterová, et al., *Dva světy základní školy? Úskalí přechodu z 1. na 2. stupeň*. Praha: Karolinum, 16–50.

³³ Obnovení právního pořádku na obecných a měšťanských školách a odčinění křivd, způsobených žákům těchto škol v době nesvobody. (1945). *Věstník MŠO* 1/5, 48–50.

³⁴ Přijímání žáků do měšťanských škol ve školním roce 1946/47. (1946). *Věstník MŠO* 2/10, 193.

lower secondary schools converged. In some places, organisation of these schools was unified.³⁵ At universities, pre-war students could complete their studies within shortened periods of time.

After “Victorious February”

The Communist Party’s rise to power in February 1948 brought significant changes to our education system. The changes were reflected in the Education Act³⁶, which came into effect on 1st September 1948. The Education Act introduced a uniform undifferentiated school for all children aged 6 to 15. The uniform school was supposed to get to the level of the former lower secondary school, so the education of the nation should have been raised to this level.³⁷ It is beyond any doubt that the Education Act brought the unification of various existing standards to the education system (e.g. differences between the Czech and Slovak school systems).³⁸ Indeed, the introduction of the uniform school had already been discussed during the First Republic. The principle of the uniform school can be regarded as democratic.³⁹ The problem is that when the law was being adopted, the idea of an internally differentiated school was not accepted.⁴⁰ The reason for this is that the uniform school was not established as a result of discussions or educational research, but by political power.

After the coup in 1948, a significant ideological abuse of education started to occur. The influence of the Soviet Union and Soviet pedagogy became apparent.⁴¹ Increased emphasis was placed on teaching the Russian language⁴² and the study of Soviet works. Marxist (Marxist-Leninist) ideology became the official ideology. In schools, the aims of communist education were to be followed and met. Political

³⁵ Jednotné školy druhého stupně (měšťanské a nižší střední). Přestup žáků ve školním roce 1945/46. (1946). *Věstník MŠO* 2/4, 76.

³⁶ Zákon ze dne 21. dubna 1948 o základní úpravě jednotného školství (školský zákon) (1948). *Věstník ministerstva školství, věd a umění* (further *Věstník MŠVU*) 4/9, 184–198.

³⁷ Nejedlý, Z. (1948). Projev ministra školství Z. Nejedlého. In *Školský zákon. Projev ministra školství a osvěty prof. Dr. Zdeňka Nejedlého a text zákona o základní úpravě jednotného školství*. Praha: Státní nakladatelství, 5–7.

³⁸ Chlup, O. – Kahuda, F. – Král, K. (1949). *Školský zákon*. Praha: Orbis, 35–36.

³⁹ Průcha, J. (2009). Historický vývoj českého školství II. (1948–1989). In J. Průcha (Ed.). *Pedagogická encyklopedie*. Praha: Portál, 46.

⁴⁰ Váňová, R. (2004). Václav Příhoda a jeho poválečné snahy o školskou reformu (1945–1948). In A. Vališová, et al., *Historie a perspektivy didaktického myšlení*. Praha: Karolinum, 86.

⁴¹ Gottwald, K. (1949–1950). Po boku SSSR pevněji než kdy jindy. *Společenské nauky ve škole* 5/2, 49; Nejedlý, Z. (1949–1950). Dny československo-sovětského přátelství na školách. *Společenské nauky ve škole* 5(3), 97–99.

⁴² 35. výročí Velké říjnové socialistické revoluce a Měsíc československo-sovětského přátelství na (1952). *Věstník MŠVU*, 8/27, 350.

education was supposed to permeate all subjects, by which the pupils' world view was to be shaped.⁴³ Active cooperation with the regime was required from teachers under the threat of punishment. The uniformity of the school system was to be ensured by nationalizing all schools. Religion was pushed out of schools.

The school system was fundamentally changed. The uniform system consisted of a kindergarten (3–6 years), a national school (i.e. the first-level school, 6–11 years), a secondary school (i.e. the second-level school, 11–15 years) and third-level schools (from 15 years of age, which included grammar schools, vocational schools and apprentice schools). Then universities followed. Nine-year compulsory education (6–15 years) was enacted. When pupils were enrolled at a selective school, their social and class origin was taken into account; the aim was to prepare “intellectual levels” associated with the working class.⁴⁴ During this period, curricular documents were filled with propaganda phrases.

The way in the wrong direction

Another milestone in the history of education was the year 1953, when the new Education Act was issued.⁴⁵ Compulsory school attendance was shortened to eight years. This was justified by the needs of the economy and the need to provide all young people with secondary education in the future. Pupils were thus admitted to selective schools already at the age of 14, and to universities at the age of 17. The pace of building a socialist school was to be increased – ideological and political work of schools was to be enhanced, and schools were to become a radical tool for building a socialist and communist society. To achieve these goals, the experience of Soviet pedagogy was used.

The school system consisted of a kindergarten (3–6 years), two types of schools providing basic education – an eight-year secondary school and an eleven-year secondary school (the first eight years provided basic general education, three consecutive years were selective; grammar schools were abolished), vocational schools, apprentice schools, schools for youth with special needs and universities. Thus, the organizational unification of the first- and second-level schools took place; in the case of eleven-year secondary schools, it also applied to the third-level schools. The principle of a uniform school was to be promoted. Specific criteria for the admission of applicants to study at selective schools continued. Workers were also allowed to expand their education.

⁴³ Angelis, K. (1948–1949). Společenské nauky v nových osnovách. *Společenské nauky ve škole* 4(1), 2–5.

⁴⁴ Závěrečné zkoušky na středních školách a přijímání žáků do výběrových škol třetího stupně (1951). *Věstník MŠVU*, 7/8, 78.

⁴⁵ Zákon ze dne 24. dubna 1953 o školské soustavě a vzdělávání učitelů (*školský zákon*). (1953). Praha: SPN.

Shortening school attendance without revising the curriculum resulted in excessive loads and overcrowded textbooks, causing the overloading of pupils and their consequent failures, after which they had to attend the same class again in the following year. We can identify many other problems in the school system during this period.⁴⁶ Therefore, this period was sometimes referred to as a “stain in the development of our education” and a “period of error”.⁴⁷ This again was caused by the fact that the changes were made from above – by political force – regardless of pedagogical considerations.

Efforts to redress and the way of further search within the socialist limits

The changes that were made in our education system after the Education Act was issued in 1953 were subjected to frequent criticism. Further adjustments in education were thus called for. The basic principles of changes were outlined in the document “*On the topic of close connection of school with life and further development of education in Czechoslovakia*” from April 1959.⁴⁸ All-round and harmonious youth development was required; the same applied to an extension of compulsory primary education to nine years again, close links between the lessons, life and production (emphasis on polytechnical and vocational training, work education, combination of physical and mental work), opportunity for all children to receive full secondary education, the right career choice, or the development of workers’ studies. The aim of educating youth building socialism and communism was to continue.⁴⁹ The extension of compulsory education to nine years was also contained in a new constitution issued in 1960, noting the establishment of socialism.⁵⁰ Now all efforts were aimed at building communism, which also involved education and the school system.

On these bases, a new Education Act was issued in the same year.⁵¹ Compulsory education was extended to nine years. The school system was thus changed again. Kindergartens were followed by a nine-year elementary school (6–15 years; the first stage lasted five years, the second stage four years). In places where there were no conditions for the establishment of all nine grades, elementary schools with only

⁴⁶ Mikulčák, J. (1968). Padesát let vyučování matematice v naší republice. *Matematika ve škole* 19(1), 21–23.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, 20.

⁴⁸ Hendrych, J. (1959). *O těsném spojení školy se životem a o dalším rozvoji výchovy a vzdělání v Československu: referát Jiřího Hendrycha na zasedání ÚV KSČ dne 22. dubna 1959 a usnesení ÚV KSČ ze dne 23. dubna 1959*. Praha: ÚV KSČ.

⁴⁹ Angelis, K. (1959). Nové cesty naší školy. *Dějepis a zeměpis ve škole* 1(6), 161.

⁵⁰ Ústavní zákon č. 100/1960 ze dne 11. července 1960. *Ústava Československé socialistické republiky*. (1960). Praha: Mladá fronta.

⁵¹ Zákon ze dne 15. prosince 1960, č. 186 Sb., o soustavě výchovy a vzdělávání (školský zákon). (1961). *Věstník Ministerstva školství a kultury* (further *Věstník MŠK*) 17/1–11, 1–7.

lower grades could be established. It was possible to receive secondary education at secondary general education schools (from 1969 grammar schools), secondary vocational schools, vocational schools and apprentice schools. In addition, there were secondary schools for working people and company schools and institutes. The school system was roofed by universities.⁵² Schools providing basic education were thus again separated from secondary general education schools. Competent children from “politically and class-conscious families” continued to be admitted to secondary schools. In contrast to this, the Education Act declared the possibility of acquiring secondary education by all those who showed interest in it and had the prerequisites for it. Attention continued to be paid to the educational activities of the school.⁵³ Every citizen was supposed to understand the connection between building socialism and defending the homeland. The whole educational process was to be penetrated by the military training.⁵⁴

Since 1964, after the release of another resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party⁵⁵, we could see a certain liberalization in the Czechoslovak education system. Voluntary differentiated teaching was introduced. Differentiation was supposed to imply an individual approach to pupils while observing collective teaching. The concept of the uniform school remained valid, but its principles were no longer to be equated with the requirement of uniformity for all pupils. From 1st September 1965, external differentiation of pupils was also made possible – gradually, for some classes and subjects, the establishment of study and practical classes or groups according to the level of pupils’ rational abilities and interest in further study and occupation was made possible.⁵⁶ Teaching of optional subjects and work of tutorial groups or interest groups were also to take place in the form of differentiated care for pupils of grade 6 to grade 9.⁵⁷

Another manifestation of changes included the changes in the area of foreign languages. Russian language remained to be taught as a compulsory subject at all

⁵² Kovářiček, V. – Kovářičková, I. (1989). *Vývoj školských soustav v českých zemích*. Olomouc: PdF UP, 84–87.

⁵³ Ke zvýšení úrovně komunistické výchovy na školách I. a II. cyklu a na školách vysokých. Usnesení ÚV KSČ z 28. srpna 1962. (1970). In J. Trajer (Ed.), *Stranické a vládní dokumenty o škole*. Praha: VÚP, 115–147.

⁵⁴ Metodický návod pro brannou výchovu žáků 1.–9. ročníku základní devítileté školy (1976). *Věstník Ministerstva školství a Ministerstva kultury České socialistické republiky* (further *Věstník MŠ a MK*) 32/6, 126–129.

⁵⁵ K úkolům dalšího rozvoje školství a k výchově mládeže na školách. Usnesení ÚV KSČ z 22. října 1964. (1970). In J. Trajer (Ed.) *Stranické a vládní dokumenty o škole*. Praha: VÚP, 150–157.

⁵⁶ Pokyny pro poloodborné a pro diferencované vyučování na základních devítiletých školách (1965). *Věstník MŠK* 21/17, 169–173.

⁵⁷ Zřizování doučovací skupin na základních devítiletých školách. (1964). *Věstník MŠK* 20/30, 340–341.

schools. However, English, French, Spanish and German were also taught as optional subjects. At selected nine-year elementary schools and schools of the 2nd cycle, extended language teaching was experimentally introduced.⁵⁸ The establishment of not only classes, but also of schools with extended language teaching was allowed. In fact, selective classes or schools were thus created.⁵⁹ Another manifestation of changes was the experimental renewal of multi-year grammar schools and the establishment of other experimental schools.⁶⁰ The change in the education system was also reflected in the publication of the *Action Program of the Ministry of Education* after the January Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1968.⁶¹ The program highlighted the distortions that had occurred in our school system, expressing the need to create conditions for a creative and free atmosphere in schools.⁶²

After the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia when Czechoslovakia was occupied by the troops of the five Warsaw Pact states, education was also hit by normalization: “consolidation measures” were introduced⁶³, the socialist character of education restored, and the Marxist-Leninist approach again fully applied. Some previous changes were criticized for their “inconspicuous deviation” from the goals of the socialist school system; it was criticized that what had occurred was “*the factual liquidation of teaching Marxism-Leninism at universities and underestimating and limiting civic education and the Russian language; the stirring up of nationalist and anti-Soviet sentiments among teachers, students and pupils; the reviving of Masarykism, the Štefánik legend, social democratism, and other suburban and bourgeois ideologies; and abandoning the principles of proletarian internationalism. Considerable part of teachers and tutors lost their class view of the social situation, ignoring the fact that our world is part of the world socialist system and as a sovereign socialist state, it can only develop within it.*”⁶⁴ Extensive purges were carried out within the teaching staff. Teachers were forced to participate in

⁵⁸ Pokusné zavedení rozšířeného vyučování jazykům na vybraných základních devítiletých školách a školách II. cyklu. (1965). *Věstník MŠK* 21/1, 3.

⁵⁹ Směrnice pro zavádění rozšířeného vyučování jazykům na vybraných základních devítiletých školách (1965). *Věstník MŠK* 21/35, 349–351.

⁶⁰ Organizační zásady pro činnost experimentálních škol (Čj. 41 955/61-II/4, dne 4. října 1961). (1966). *Věstník MŠK* 27/33–34, 373–375; Směrnice pro experimentální činnost pedagogických a jiných vědeckých institucí na školách a výchovných i vzdělávacích zařízeních. (1966). *Věstník MŠK* 22/4, 13–15.

⁶¹ Akční program ministerstva školství. (1968). *Učitel'ské noviny*, 18(26), 5–7.

⁶² Walterová, E. o. c., 38.

⁶³ *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po 13. sjezdu KSČ; rezoluce o aktuálních otázkách jednoty strany schválená plenárním zasedáním ÚV KSČ v prosinci 1970.* (1971). Praha: ÚV KSČ.

⁶⁴ Vývoj, současný stav a další úkoly československého školství. (1973). In Kujal, B., et al. (1979). *Třicet let československé jednotné školy.* Praha: SPN, 210.

“party or ideological-political education”.⁶⁵ Internal differentiation and optional subjects continued to be allowed, but the establishment of study and practical classes (dividing pupils according to their results) was prohibited.⁶⁶ Experimental multi-year grammar schools were cancelled.⁶⁷

At that time, the teaching cycle also changed to an eleven-day teaching cycle, which was introduced since the 1967/68 school year.⁶⁸ Until that time, lessons had also taken place on Saturdays; newly, every second Saturday should have been free. A year later, the eleven-day teaching cycle was cancelled and a five-day teaching week was introduced instead.⁶⁹

The last phase of the communist rule over the field of education

An important milestone in the history of Czechoslovak education in 1976 was the publication of the document *Further Development of the Czechoslovak Education System*.⁷⁰ The main tasks included the improvement of the educational process, ensuring its connection with production practice (strengthening the polytechnic part) and with the life of society, and the modernization of the content and methods of school work. These changes were meant to modernize our education system (the so-called new concept of educational work). The experience and developments in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries were to be taken into account. The socialist character of education was confirmed. The gradual introduction of ten-year secondary education for all and the gradual expansion of twelve-year secondary education were planned. These propositions were put into effect by the Education Act, issued in 1978.⁷¹

The form of the school system was changed. The main change was to shorten the basic education school attendance to eight years (the first level and the second

⁶⁵ Zabezpečení ideově politického vzdělávání učitelů, výchovných i školských pracovníků škol I. a II. cyklu organizovaného ministerstvem školství ČSR ve školním roce 1972/73. (1972). *Věstník MŠ a MK* 28/8, 129–131.

⁶⁶ Organizační směrnice pro základní devítileté školy – změny a doplňky. (1970). *Věstník ministerstva školství, kultury a informací* (further *Věstník MŠ a MKI*) 26/8, 73–74.

⁶⁷ Vývoj, současný stav a další úkoly československého školství. (1973). Publish In Kujal, B., et al. (1979). *Třicet let československé jednotné školy*. Praha: SPN, 210.

⁶⁸ Směrnice o organizaci školního roku na školách I. a II. cyklu a na odborných učilištích. (1967). *Věstník MŠ a MK* 23/23, 203–204.

⁶⁹ Pokyny k práci škol a výchovných zařízení 1. cyklu v souvislosti se zavedením pětidenního vyučovacího týdne. (1968). *Věstník MŠ a MKI* 24/36, 431–432.

⁷⁰ *Další rozvoj československé výchovně vzdělávací soustavy. Projekt a důvodová zpráva*. (1976). Praha: SPN.

⁷¹ Zákon ze dne 21. června 1978 o opatřeních v soustavě základních a středních škol. (1978). In *Sbírka zákonů. Československé socialistické republiky*, 14, vydaná dne 23. června 1978, 258–267. Retrieved from <http://aplikace.mvcr.cz/archiv2008/sbirka/1978/sb14-78.pdf>.

level comprised four grades each). The name “elementary nine-year school” was changed to “elementary school”. After completing the elementary school, pupils were obliged to continue at least two years of study at secondary schools (secondary vocational schools, secondary apprentice schools, or grammar schools). Compulsory school attendance lasted ten years (6–16). The optimum length of full secondary education was set at 12 years. These changes were accounted for by improved conditions in socialist society leading to faster intellectual development and maturity of children, expanding pre-school education, rational choice of curriculum, and the use of appropriate educational methods and forms.⁷² All those streams of secondary education were supposed to be equal (secondary general and secondary vocational education were not to be differentiated; the content should have been integrated on the basis of polytechnical education).⁷³ Universities remained the peak of the education pyramid.

It was also possible to set up classes developing pupils’ gifts and talents in some subjects.⁷⁴ Later on, it was allowed to establish sports schools.⁷⁵ Experimental verification of the organization, forms and content of education was also made possible at schools.⁷⁶ Development of military education was supposed to be continued at elementary schools.⁷⁷ In 1984, a new Education Act came into force.⁷⁸ However, the existing system of schools was to be preserved.

⁷² *Další rozvoj československé výchovně vzdělávací soustavy. Projekt a důvodová zpráva.* (1976). Praha: SPN, 4.

⁷³ Směrnice ministerstva školství ČSR a ministerstva zdravotnictví ČSR, kterými se stanoví podrobnosti o středních školách, střediscích praktického vyučování a učňovských střediscích (1979). *Věstník MŠ a MK* 35/8, 109–129; Instrukce ministerstva školství ČSR ze dne 18. července 1985 a ministerstva zdravotnictví ČSR ze dne 25. července 1985, kterou se stanoví podrobnosti o středních školách. (1985). *Věstník MŠ a MK* 41/8, 114–126.

⁷⁴ Zákon ze dne 21. června 1978 o opatřeních v soustavě základních a středních škol (Č. 63/1978). (1978). In *Sbírka zákonů. Československé socialistické republiky*, 14, vydaná dne 23. června 1978, 263. Retrieved from <http://aplikace.mvcr.cz/archiv2008/sbirka/1978/sb14-78.pdf>.

⁷⁵ Směrnice ministerstva školství ČSR, č. j. 21 963/85-33 ze dne 15. července 1985 o školách pro mimořádně nadané a talentované žáky v oblasti sportu (sportovní školy). (1985). *Věstník MŠ a MK* 41/8, 97–105.

⁷⁶ Zásady pokusného ověřování organizace, forem a obsahu výchovy a vzdělávání v základních školách, v základních devítiletých školách, ve školách pro mládež vyžadující zvláštní péči a ve středních školách. (1980). *Věstník MŠ a MK* 36/12, 157–159.

⁷⁷ Metodický návod pro brannou výchovu žáků 1. až 8. ročníku ZŠ. (1983). *Věstník MŠ a MK* 39/7–8, 76–79.

⁷⁸ Zákon č. 29 ze dne 22. března 1984 o soustavě základních a středních škol (školský zákon). In V. Kovářiček (1986). *Soubor předpisů pro základní a střední školy*. Olomouc: PdF UP, 5–30.

After the fall of the communist regime

The year 1989, when the Communist regime fell, became an important milestone for society as a whole, including education. After the revolution, a rapid reform of the whole school system was required. A number of changes was therefore made, some of which can now be seen as problematic.⁷⁹ A number of materials were prepared, dealing with the transformation and reforms of the education system.⁸⁰ Documents, however, mostly remained only in a proclamative form. No new Education Act was prepared. An amendment to the Education Act issued in May 1990 thus became the basic norm.⁸¹ Compulsory school attendance was shortened to nine years; it was possible to establish private⁸² and religious⁸³ schools, and the multi-year grammar schools were renewed⁸⁴. This fact meant the end of the uniform school.

According to the amendment to the Education Act, the system of primary and secondary schools consisted of elementary schools, elementary art schools, apprentice schools, secondary vocational apprentice schools, grammar schools, secondary vocational schools and special schools. The elementary school had nine grades (the four-year lower grade was retained). However, only pupils who did not continue their studies at secondary school after completing the eighth year of elementary school continued their compulsory education in grade 9. In places where there were no conditions for the establishment of schools with all nine grades, an elementary school could be established with fewer grades. In order to develop the pupils' extraordinary gifts and talents, elementary and secondary schools could be set up under joint administration.

⁷⁹ Spilková, V., et al. (2005). *Proměny primárního vzdělávání v ČR*. Praha: Portál, 15.

⁸⁰ Tupý, J. (2014). *Tvorba kurikulárních dokumentů v České republice. Historicko-analytický pohled na přípravu kurikulárních dokumentů pro základní vzdělávání v letech 1989–2013*. Brno: MU.

⁸¹ Zákon ze dne 3. května 1990, kterým se mění a doplňuje zákon č. 29/1984 Sb., o soustavě základních a středních škol (školský zákon). (1990). *Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky*, 30, 1990, 673–681.

Retrieved from <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/sbirka.sqw?cz=171&r=1990>.

⁸² Vyhláška MŠMT ČR o soukromých školách ze dne 22. července 1991. *Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky*, částka 68, 1991, 1602–1604. Retrieved from <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/sbirka.sqw?cz=353&r=1991>.

⁸³ Vyhláška MŠMT ČR a MZR ČR o zřizování a činnosti církevních škol a škol náboženských společenství. (1991). *Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky*, částka 86, 1991, 2110–2112. Retrieved from <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/sbirka.sqw?cz=452&r=1991>.

⁸⁴ Pokyn MŠMT ČR pro zřizování tříd gymnázií s osmiletým cyklem (dále třídy osmiletých gymnázií) a tříd gymnázií s výukou předmětů v cizím jazyce (dále dvojjazyčných tříd) v pětiletém studijním cyklu (1991). *Věstník Ministerstva školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy a Ministerstva kultury České republiky (further Věstník MŠMT)* 47/3, 8.

After 1989, there were many other changes in education. A number of distortions and interventions introduced into the school system over the past 40 years were eliminated – schools were made apolitical, the aims and content of education were cleared of ideological passages, compulsory teaching of Russian language and military training were abolished, lessons of other foreign languages added; optional religious lessons were introduced, and some alternative pedagogical concepts and reform initiatives emerged.⁸⁵ On 1st January 1993, the existing state was divided into the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, which means that also the area of education was divided.

Searching for a new concept of Czech education

By the Act of 1995⁸⁶, all elementary schools were compulsorily extended to nine-year schools (they had to be completed by all pupils who did not switch to multi-year grammar schools). The first level consisted of grades 1 to 5, the second level of grades 6 to 9 of studies. Compulsory nine-year school attendance was retained. Higher vocational schools were newly included in the network of schools.⁸⁷

The so-called “standards” were developed for individual levels of education.⁸⁸ They were to replace curricula. These framework documents set out the objectives, content (the so-called core curriculum) and competences that pupils should acquire in schools. The standards formulated cognitive goals, but also skills, competencies, values and attitudes. The core curriculum was divided in the standards into educational areas and subsequently into educational fields that replaced traditional subjects. Based on the standards, educational programmes⁸⁹ were created, from which schools had to choose. The programmes differed in focus, concept and means to achieve the objectives.

With the advent of the standards and educational programmes, schools gained some autonomy in the choice of curriculum. For the level of elementary schools, the *Standard of Basic Education* was approved.⁹⁰ In connection with this

⁸⁵ Walterová, E. o. c., 41.

⁸⁶ Zákon ze dne 22. června 1995, kterým se mění a doplňuje zákon č. 29/1984 Sb.... (1995). In *Sbirka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky*, částka 37, 1995, 1899–1906. Retrieved from <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/sbirka.sqw?cz=138&r=1995>.

⁸⁷ Pokyn ministra školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy ČR k zařazování vyšších odborných škol do sítě škol, předškolních zařízení a školských zařízení. (1995). *Věstník MŠMT* 51/12, 5.

⁸⁸ Tupý, J.: o. c.

⁸⁹ Pokyn ministra školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, kterým se stanovují rámcová pravidla a postup při schvalování vzdělávacích programů základní školy. (1996). *Věstník MŠMT* 52/6, 8–9.

⁹⁰ Standard základního vzdělávání. (1995). *Věstník MŠMT* 51/9, 2–49.

document, educational programmes – *General and Civic School*⁹¹, *Elementary School*⁹² and *National School*⁹³ – were approved in 1996–1997. Although there was a significant shift in the understanding of educational objectives, despite the proclamations, the definition of the curriculum remained in the form of detailed lists; “*the hopes that were placed in the Standard of Basic Education mainly by teachers striving for reforms were not fulfilled*”.⁹⁴

The emergence of a new curricular policy

Following a series of discussions on the form of Czech education, the *National Programme for the Development of Education* (the *White Paper*) was published in 2001.⁹⁵ It outlined the main principles of education: Respect for differences and needs of pupils, development of thinking, competences, attitudes, values and personal qualities of pupils, preparation for life in a changing world, the need for pupils not to be divided into selective schools, etc.⁹⁶ The document called for the introduction of two levels of curricular documents – state and school. In 2004, a new Education Act was adopted.⁹⁷ The main features of the school system remained unchanged.

A fundamental novelty codified by the Education Act is the introduction of two levels of documents. At the national level, they are constituted by Framework Educational Programs (FEPs) for individual stages of education (they define binding frameworks and specify requirements for these stages). The FEPs do not place emphasis on curriculum, but on learning outcomes – universal development of children is to be achieved not only in a cognitive area, but also in the sphere of competencies, attitudes and values. Educational content in the FEPs is divided into the so-called educational areas and subsequently into the educational fields, on the basis of which individual schools divide educational content into teaching subjects. In the FEPs, the curriculum is further structured into individual thematic

⁹¹ *Vzdělávací program Obecná škola. Pojetí obecné školy. Učební osnovy obecné školy.* (1996). Praha: Portál.

⁹² *Vzdělávací program Základní škola včetně osnov Ekologického přírodopisu, Osnov volitelných předmětů, Úprav a doplňků, Učebních plánů s rozšířeným vyučováním.* (1998). Praha: Nakladatelství fortuna.

⁹³ *Vzdělávací program Národní škola. Vzdělávací program pro 1.–9. ročník základního vzdělávání.* (1997). Praha: SPN.

⁹⁴ Spilková, V.: et al., o. c., 18.

⁹⁵ *Národní program rozvoje vzdělávání v České republice: bílá kniha.* (2001). Praha: Tauris.

⁹⁶ Walterová, E. o. c., 45.

⁹⁷ Zákon o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání (školský zákon). (2004). In *Sbírka zákonů České republiky*, 190, 2004, 10 262–10 324. Retrieved from <http://aplikace.msmt.cz/Predpisy1/sb190-04.pdf>.

areas and is understood as a means of achieving the so-called expected outputs. These represent the required learning outcomes and are binding; at the FEP level, the curriculum is set as recommended (it becomes obligatory only at the choice of the school). Time allocations are also only outlined in the Framework Educational Program. A *Framework Educational Program for Primary Education* was created for elementary schools.⁹⁸

At the school level, the new system of documents is represented by the so-called School Educational Programmes (SEPs), which individual schools had to create on the basis of the respective FEPs, taking into account the conditions and needs of specific schools. The Education Act thus enshrined a multi-level creation of basic curricular documents. The new system of documents replaced the traditional curricula (or educational programs). This resulted in the increase of school autonomy, but also of its responsibility for the quality of education. Elementary schools started gradually to teach according to their respective SEPs from the school year 2007/08.

FEPs are continually supplemented and updated; if changes are made, schools must bring their SEPs into line with the amended FEPs. The elementary education FEPs were gradually supplemented by the so-called *Standards of Basic Education*.⁹⁹ The Standards specify the content and intensity of binding expected outputs – they set the minimum level of knowledge and skills the pupils should achieve at the end of the first and second level of primary education (i.e. in grade 5 and grade 9). They should help teachers to fulfil their educational goals and provide support for pupil assessment. The Standards also constitute the basis to learn educational outcomes across all the schools. As of 1st September 2017, another novelty in the Czech education system occurred: the last year of pre-school education became compulsory in the Czech education system.

In conclusion

Just as the political situation and the life of the people of the Czech Lands was changing – sometimes slowly and sometimes dramatically – from 1918 until the present, the school system and legislation also changed. For almost half of that time, it was influenced by the ruling totalitarian regime (whether Nazi or Communist). I have described a number of changes that were made in the education system of the Czech Lands after the regime changes; I have also captured efforts for conceptual changes. It is obvious that it was the process of trying to find how the school system and relevant laws should look like. The question is whether the ideal state can be achieved. After all, even the current form

⁹⁸ *Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání*. (2005). Stařeč: Infra.

⁹⁹ Standarty RVP ZV. Retrieved from <http://www.nuv.cz/t/zarazeni-standardu-do-rvp-zv>

of our education is widely criticized. Last year, we commemorated the thirty years since the so-called Velvet Revolution when the Communist regime was overthrown. The Czech Republic is experiencing a unique situation in the form of a stable democratic society (already now lasting more than a decade longer than the entire existence of the First Republic). So, we have a unique opportunity to continue our quest for the ideal form of our education system. It is quite obvious that it will be a path with many intersections and obstacles.