Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours


With the creation of the Strategy for the Creation and Development of the National Curriculum for Preschool, General Compulsory and Secondary Education and with the adoption of National Framework Curriculum for Preschool, General Compulsory and Secondary Education (2011), structured through educational levels and educational cycles, the platform was created for deeper interventions in the education system. This is complemented by the Strategy on Education, Science and Technology (Official gazette No. 124/2014), which provides a holistic approach to education and is focused on several main goals which pervade the strategy: a quality, efficient and relevant education available to all under equal conditions. The strategy appreciates earlier strategic and developmental documents and foresees the flexibility and adaptability of the education system, as well as its disposition to continuous re-evaluation and periodic revision. The Strategy aims toward an education that actively stimulates a comprehensive individual development of each student. It promotes social equality and democratic values and strongly contributes to socio-economic development.

In its chapter Early Childhood Education and Care, Primary and Secondary Education, the Strategy defines eight developmental areas and defines a key strategic goal for each one of them. The key strategic goal of the second developmental area is the implementation of a comprehensive curricular reform. The first stage of such reform (February 2015 – January 2016) includes the creation of such curricular documents as, for example, the fundamental one - Framework of the National Curriculum, as well as the National Curriculum for Grammar School Education and National Curriculum for Vocational Education, which will be followed by the creation and adoption of subject curricula according to types of educational programs and years.

Starting from school year 2013/2014, a total of 25 vocational curricula are being carried out experimentally in specific vocational schools, and until the National Curriculum, subject and new vocational curricula are passed, the classes in vocational schools, aside from those following the 25 experimental curricula, will be taught in accordance with the teaching plans and programs.

Teaching plans and programs define the number of compulsory and elective class periods per week and per year, their distribution among class departments, the weekly number of class periods per subject and the total number of class periods per week and per year, as well as the goals, objectives...
and content of each subject. Elective subjects are compulsory throughout the school year for all students who opt for one or more elective subjects at the beginning of the school year.

Student can stop attending an elective subject upon the written request and explanation submitted by his/her parent and himself/herself to the teachers’ council before the beginning of the school year provided that his/her compulsory workload is replaced by another elective subject or activity.

Vocational schools’ teaching plans and programs are comprised of core general education, special professional-theoretical and facultative subjects. The core and professional-theoretical part of the curriculum is realized in vocational education institution and it is organized in class departments and educational groups pursuant to the state pedagogical standard of secondary education. The practical part of curriculum is realized in the institution and/or in a work organization, in another institution, in educational groups or individually.

In the core general education and special professional-theoretical part of the teaching plan and program, there are also elective subjects among which the student chooses one or more according to his/her interests and affinities.

The core part of the teaching plan and program for obtaining professional and lower professional qualification includes core subjects which are common and compulsory for the certain level of education, whereas the special professional part of the teaching plan and program includes vocational subjects (vocational-theoretical subjects and practical training) related to a certain profession.

The acquisition of core competences encompasses the following areas: Croatian language and literature, mathematics, foreign languages, information technology (IT), biology, chemistry, physics, history, religious education/ethics, geography, physical education and areas of art such as visual arts, music art and others.

Educational Work in Vocational Schools

A secondary school works on the basis of a school curriculum and the annual activities plan and program. The school curriculum and the annual plan are published on the school’s website, in accordance with the Act on Protection of Personal Information (Official Gazette No. 103/2003, 118/2006, 41/2008, 130/2011 i 106/2012).

School curriculum defines the long-term and short-term school plan and program and it is passed in accordance with the National Curriculum and vocational curriculum. It refers to the methods schools use to implement the curriculum framework taking into account educational needs and priorities of the students and school, as well as the local community. It is elaborated in cooperation with the faculty, students, parents and the local community. It refers to the offer of facultative subjects, modules and other educational programs and the implementation of supplementary and remedial instruction, as well as extracurricular and extramural activities. The school curriculum presumes the development of extracurricular and extramural programs and activities that the school must elaborate and adjust taking into account the inclinations and developmental capabilities of students and school situation, especially the optimal student workload. School curriculum must be adopted by the School Board until September 15 of the current school year based on the proposal made by the teachers’ council.

Annual activities plan and program is based on the vocational curriculum (teaching plan and program)
and school curriculum and it must be adopted by the school board by September 30 of the current school year. It defines the place, time, manner and responsible employees and it usually contains information on working conditions, the responsible employees, annual work calendar, information on daily and weekly organization of work, weekly and annual class periods by grades and forms of educational work, the principal, teachers and expert associates' plans, the school board and expert bodies' plans, continuing professional development programs in accordance with school’s needs, as well as information on other activities related to educational work and school business.

The core and special vocational part of the curriculum implemented in the institution are interlinked regarding the content and organization which is set in the executive teaching plan and program. In the executive teaching plan and program of the professional-theoretical part of the curriculum, it is necessary to define the teaching content preceding the implementation of the practical part of curriculum, necessary for the successful acquisition. The total annual number of class periods of the core, professional-theoretical and practical part of the curriculum is planned by the executive teaching plan and program, depending on the type of curriculum and conditions of the environment, usually following the model of one week of theoretical teaching and one week of practical training or the day to day model, or for some qualifications seasonal model.

Before implementation of the practical part of curriculum, students must acquire the basics of work safety practices prescribed by the vocational curriculum and take the exam before a qualified person from the institution. The records thereof are kept in the class register or the practical training portfolio. When carrying out each individual exercise within the practical part of the curriculum, the student must be familiarized with the sources of danger; he/she must acquire the procedures of safe work and apply protection equipment pursuant to regulations defining safety at work. The student attending practical curriculum can work solely with the professional guidance of the trained teacher at school or the mentor in the work organization. The procedure of determining the conditions for implementation of practical training in the work organization is carried out appropriately, as well as the procedure of determining the conditions for the beginning of the program implementation at school. One or more adequately qualified teachers are appointed to organize and implement the practical part of the curriculum.

Vocational curriculum for students with disabilities is organized by implementation of individualized procedures in vocational schools or other institutions implementing education of students with disabilities while the practical part can be implemented in the work organization.

In cooperation with the vocational education institution and other stakeholders, the founder ensures vacancies for practical training implementation in work organizations six months prior to the beginning of the school year, taking into account the suitable vacancies for students with disabilities.

In cases where instruction is carried out mainly in the form of exercises and practical work, the school year for certain qualifications takes 38 week at most. The acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences is implemented by practical training and exercises. The total number of class periods and material conditions for implementation of practical training and exercises are defined by the curriculum.

The rights and obligations of the vocational education institution, students and work organizations carrying out the practical training and exercises are set by the apprenticeship agreement.

Regular students enrolled in the first grade can have no more than 4 hours a day of practical training and exercises, and 20 hours a week, respectively. Daily duration of practical training and exercises for students enrolled in higher grades is stipulated in accordance with regulations defining labor relations and other regulations. If the practical training and exercises continuously take 4 or more hours daily,
the students set out in paragraph 2 of this article must be enabled to have at least thirty-minute break every day. Vocational education institution and work organization must ensure at least 45 work days of holidays for students during the school year.

Vocational education institutions keep records on students regarding their practical training and exercises performed in work organization. The records must include information on work organizations where students have their practical training, students' medical fitness documentation, evidence of work safety competence, agreement with the work organization, evidence of fulfillment of contractual obligations, as well as records on implementation of that part of curriculum.

Vocational education for privileged crafts enables the acquisition of competences and vocational qualifications of a certain level, scope, profile and quality which ensures the entry into the labor market or the continuation of education. Education for acquisition of vocational qualifications in privileged crafts is carried out in accordance with vocational curriculum composed of the core part and apprenticeship. The apprenticeship includes the professional-theoretical part and practical training and exercises.

Vocational curriculum for privileged crafts defines the core subjects, professional and apprenticeship learning areas, the forms, human resources and material conditions of implementation, its duration, weekly and annual number of class periods. Vocational curriculum for privileged crafts is passed by the minister competent for education in his decision with prior consent of the minister competent for trades and crafts. The core and professional-theoretical part of the apprenticeship is carried out in school. Practical training and apprenticeship exercises are carried out in school, in work organization or a legal entity (company, institution or cooperative).

The craftsman or legal entity must have a license issued by the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts to implement the practical training and exercises. Practical training and apprenticeship exercises are carried out by persons who passed the master craftsman's exam. Practical training and apprenticeship exercises can be carried out by persons with rights recognized in accordance with the Trades and Crafts Act.

In the exam proving the basic knowledge of teaching and acquired pedagogical competences, the examinee proves he/she possesses the practical skills and competences, as well as professional theoretical knowledge necessary for teaching. The special program for the acquisition of basic knowledge in teaching and pedagogical competences is passed by the ministry competent for education in accordance with special regulations stipulating vocational education. The student can be accepted for apprenticeship by the craftsman or legal entity provided he/she has completed primary education and has necessary medical fitness for the profession in question.

The craftsman or legal entity who accepts the student for practical training and apprenticeship exercises concludes the apprenticeship agreement, in writing, with the student or his/her parent/guardian if the student is underage. The agreement is concluded in accordance with the provisions of the Trade and Crafts Act, as well as provisions on minimal conditions for apprenticeship agreements prescribed by the minister of trades and crafts, after previously acquired opinion of the minister competent for education.

Teaching Methods and Materials

For information on this topic please refer to article 6.1 Organisation of General Upper Secondary Education.
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