



Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe

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STRUCTURES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS IN EUROPE

LATVIA

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Prepared by

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with the support of

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INTRODUCTION: GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT

The Republic of Latvia regained its independence in 1991 after 51 years under the control of the Soviet Union. Since then, the Republic has had to accomplish several difficult tasks, such as consolidation of a sovereign state and the transition to democracy and a market economy.

Latvia is a democratic, parliamentary republic and the structure, authority and functioning of the public institutions of Latvia are set in the Constitution (*Satversme*) adopted on 1922. The people of Latvia hold the sovereign state power; they elect the parliament, the *Saeima*, the main legislative institution.

Last decade is characterized by the movement towards accession in the EU and NATO. Latvia became a full-fledged member state of both EU and NATO in May 2004.

Saeima, consisting of 100 deputies, elects the President of the state who chooses and invites the candidate to the post of Prime Minister to form the Cabinet of Ministers (Government) which subsequently shall obtain the vote of confidence at the *Saeima*.

The *Saeima* (parliament), the State President and the Cabinet of Ministers are the highest authorities of state power according to the constitution.

Legislative power and the right to take decisions concerning the national budget are vested in the *Saeima*. The *Saeima* also approves judges of courts of all the levels.

The Cabinet of Ministers is composed of the Prime Minister and the Ministers chosen by the Prime Minister. The Cabinet of Ministers holds executive power. All administrative institutions of the State are under the authority of the Cabinet. In order to fulfil their duties, the Prime Minister and other Ministers must have the confidence of the *Saeima* and they are also individually accountable to the *Saeima* for their actions.

The President of Latvia does not have extensive state powers and the main function is that of state representation. The President represents the State in international relations, appoints the diplomatic representatives of Latvia, and also receives diplomatic representatives of other states. The President implements the decisions of the *Saeima* concerning the ratification of international agreements.

However, the President designates the Prime Minister, who appoints the ministers and proclaims laws passed by the *Saeima* and the President has the right to initiate legislation.

After the re-establishment of the independence in 1990, democratization and decentralization of the state administration system was carried out. It was closely tied in with the establishment and development of a system for local governance. According to the Law on Administrative Territorial Reform the new territorial reform of local governments is implemented in 2009. The aim of this reform is to establish administrative territories (counties), which enable economic development and ensure qualitative services to their inhabitants.

At the moment there are 9 cities of republican subordination and 109 counties (*novadi*).

Area of Latvia is 64 589 sq.km.

Regions: Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme, Latgale. Population at the beginning of 2009: 2 261 294.

Ethnic composition (2009):

59.3 % Latvian,
27.8 % Russian,
3.6 % Belorussian,
2.5 % Ukrainian,

2.4 % Polish,
1.3 % Lithuanian,
0.4 % Jewish,
2.7 % other nationalities.

Largest religious confessions: Evangelic Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox.

The official language of instruction in public sector schools is Latvian. However residents of other nationalities have the right to education in other languages: in private schools or public sector schools implementing minority education programmes. 26.46 % of pupils in general education schools receive instruction in other languages. (Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia)

In Latvia, court cases are heard by district (city) courts, administrative courts, regional courts, and the Supreme Court. Everyone has the right to defend their rights and lawful interests in a fair court and everyone is innocent until their guilt has been established in accordance with law. Judges are independent and subject only to the law.

There are 34 district and city courts in Latvia, fulfilling the function of Court of First Instance. There are 6 regional courts in Latvia. These courts have been set up in four regions of Latvia and in the City of Riga. They fulfil the function of Court of First Instance and Court of Appeal.

A new type of court, called Administrative Court, has been established and started to work in February, 2004. Its task is to perform control over the rule of law and validity of the administrative act issued by an institution or the actual conduct of an institution.

Constitutional Court is not a part of the general court system; it is a special court reviewing the compliance of laws with the Constitution and the correspondence of legal issues in general to the acts with a higher legal force. It can declare laws or other enactments or parts thereof invalid.

The Law on Education was passed on 1991, and was one of the first laws adopted upon the restoration of independence.

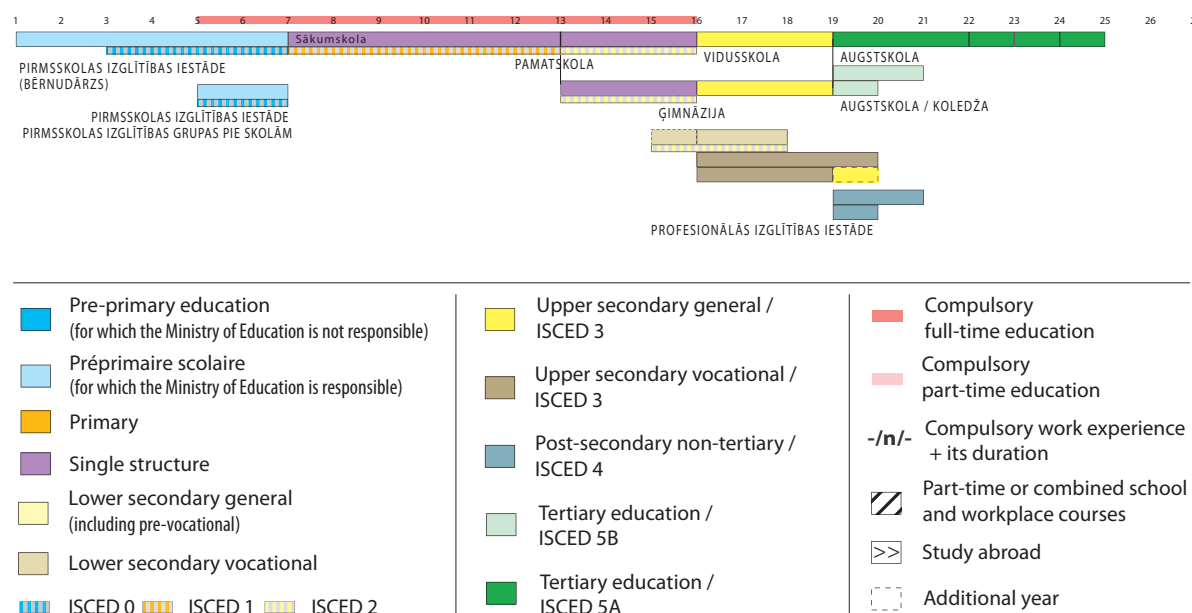
At the moment the legal basis for the educational system in Latvia is the Education Law, Law on General Education, Law on Professional Education, Law on Higher Education Institutions.

The goal of the education and training system of Latvia is to provide a possibility for every resident of Latvia to develop ones mental and physical potential, to become an independent personality, the member of the democratic state and society of Latvia. According to the age and needs of the individual, educational system of Latvia provides a possibility:

- For moral, esthetical, intellectual and physical development;
- To gain skills and knowledge in humanities, social, nature and technical areas;
- To gain skills, knowledge and experience of attitude in order to take part in the life of society and state.

1. INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: ORGANISATION, FUNDING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

1.1 Organisation of the initial education and training system



1.2 Distribution of responsibilities

National Level

At national level the main decision-making bodies are *Saeima* (Parliament), Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Education and Science.

Saeima passes laws and enjoys specific powers pointed out in the laws. *Saeima* delegates concrete competence to other institutions, which participate in administration of the education system.

The Cabinet of Ministers determines funding levels for all educational and training institutions, as well as minimum salaries and salary scales for institutional staff. Besides approving the samples and acquisition procedures regarding the licensing and accreditation documents required by educational and training institutions, as well as the certificates awarded by them, the Cabinet takes decisions regarding the setting up, reorganisation and closure of higher education institutions, research establishments or other educational institutions run by one of the central government ministries.

Most state education policy is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science. The Ministry issues the licenses and credentials needed to open mainstream educational institutions or change their status. It also determines educational standards, as well as teacher training content and procedures, and concludes international cooperation agreements in the field of education.

However, other ministries and departments, such as the Ministries of Agriculture, Welfare and Culture, also establish education and training institutions. In accordance with broad guidelines, they work out and approve their regulations, determine education content in certain specific subjects, and oversee the administration and financing of the institutions concerned. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, they also contribute to the licensing and programme accreditation of the educational institutions under its supervision.

Regional Level

Heads of the cities, towns and parishes forms the regional governments in conformity with the Law on Local Governments.

Regional governments:

- Are responsible for boarding schools, special education facilities, orphanages, vocational and professional educational institutions, extracurricular centres, except national or privately owned institutions;
- Organize adult education, vocational guidance for pupils, further education of teachers; coordinate the methodical work of teachers and questions on children protection in the area of education;
- Develop and maintain the database of information on education;
- Support financially educational institutions that are under their supervision.

Regional administration of education is organized through the Educational Board of Municipalities. Regions or republican cities establish and finance these Boards, appoint the director in co-ordination with MoES. Among the responsibilities of educational boards are to assist schools by providing teaching and methodological materials, organize education for adults, ensure possibilities for teachers to improve qualification. The most important functions are to implement the regional educational policy and allocate funds from the state budget to schools for salaries of pedagogical staff.

Implementation of The Administrative Territorial Reform has an impact on educational governance and administration. Each amalgamated local municipality has the Education Board or a municipal specialist responsible for education and, when the number of the amalgamated local municipalities grows, a new coordination and cooperation between the Boards or education specialists and the Ministry of Education and Science will be required, as well as a new subsidy's distribution system. The Ministry has developed "money follows pupil" subsidization principle implemented since the school year 2009/10.

Local Level

The local authorities (in liaison with the appropriate ministry) can establish, reorganise or close education institutions, while observing education legislation. Cities and districts are responsible for pre-school training institutions, basic (primary and lower secondary) and secondary schools, with the exception of education and training institutions run directly by the central government, or those that are privately maintained. Every municipality is obligated to provide children residing in its territory with the possibility to acquire pre-school and basic education at the educational institution, which is closest to the place of the residence. Municipalities are also obligated to provide youth with the opportunity to acquire secondary education, as well to provide possibilities to participate in interest-related education, support extracurricular activities and camps for children.

Institutional Level

Education institutions are relatively independent as regards organisation of their work, drawing up of internal regulations, appointment and responsibilities assumed by their teaching and technical staff and use of their resources. The director employed by the founder of institution runs an institution. The director hires the teaching and non-teaching staff, manages the financial resources, ensures the implementation of the normative acts concerning education.

Teaching staff decides what teaching and training methods to use and chooses teaching materials from the list recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science.

In every institution there may exist a board consisting of the director, the founder of the institution, representatives of pedagogues, municipality and sponsors. The board of an educational institution analyses the educational work and reviews suggestions of parents. The board of the school has an advisory function in the drafting of the school development plan; it works with organizing school's social life activities; manages accounting of received donations, decides on the use of these funds.

1.3 Financing

Costs for acquirement of pre-school, basic (primary and lower secondary) and secondary education in institutions founded by the state or municipalities are covered from budgets of the state and municipalities.

Education institutions may receive extra finances from following sources:

- Donations and sponsorship;
- Service provision;
- Other sources of income.

Local governments own public pre-school educational establishments. As founders they are responsible for the financing of educational institutions (salaries of teachers, administrative and technical staff, learning materials, maintenance of buildings and utilities). State budget is provided for the salaries of teachers who provide compulsory pre-school training for 5 and 6 year olds.

Local governments own schools of general education at both basic and secondary level. At these schools the salary for pedagogical staff is allocated from the state budget while the maintenance and utility costs are covered through the local government budgets.

The state provides all necessary finances for schools established for children with special needs, boarding schools, schools and classes of social correction.

State's Gymnasiums receive extra finances because they also fulfil other functions in the field of teachers' further education and as a regional centre of methodology.

The state directly supervises and provides funding for vocational and secondary vocational schools. It is foreseen to pass vocational schools owned by the state to local governments after the regional reform is completed. As far as schools remain owned by the state, they are financed through five ministries – Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Interior Affairs.

Financial resources of state higher educational institutions are funds from the basic state budget and income from other sources. Higher educational institutions founded by the state shall receive the following funding: from the state education budget – basic financing for the optimum number of lists of study programmes and the number of students covering resources to pay for public utilities, taxes, infrastructure maintenance, purchase of equipment and inventory, research and artistic creativity as well as salaries for the staff; from tuition fees, paid by the state or received as repayable or free loans which either have to be paid back or need not to be paid back according to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers on financing studies; from financing intended for use on specific goals.

1.4 Quality assurance

The head of the educational institution is responsible for functioning of the institution and implementation of the normative acts concerning education.

In Latvia quality evaluation of schools takes place during the accreditation process. According to The Education Law, all programmes provided by education institutions except interest-related education institutions (realization of the individual educational needs and desires of a person regardless of age and previously acquired education) have to be accredited. Accreditation should take place in a five years period after the launching of activities of education institution.

Accreditation is required for every education and study programme (school or higher education institution develops and may provide one or a number of education programmes). According to The Education Law, The General Education Law and The Vocational Education Law, both general/vocational education institutions and general/vocational education programmes have to be accredited in a two years period after the launching of programme. Higher education institution and College can be accredited if more than a half of study programmes provided by the institution are accredited already. Generally higher education institution can be accredited for a not fixed period of time; however, for a study programme accreditation ends in a six year time period. Accreditation period for a general education programme ends in a six years.

In 2005-2009 the General Education Quality Evaluation Agency was responsible body for accreditation of general education schools, education programmes, and certification of school heads. Accreditation of vocational education institutions and programmes was performed by the Vocational Education Administration. Since August 2009 after liquidating of these institutions and merging of the functions the State Education Quality Service is responsible body for organization of accreditation process. This institution monitors also the compliance of education processes with regulative framework.

Main institutions involved in evaluation at higher education level are: The Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre (HEQEC – responsible for organization of quality assessment in general), the Council of Higher Education (decision-making body on accreditation of higher education institutions), and the Accreditation Commission (decision-making body on accreditation of study programmes). The Ministry of Education and Science supervises the whole process in general. General principles of accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes are defined by the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. Only accredited higher education institution may issue the state recognised diploma on acquisition of higher education.

To guarantee accordance between the standards and the quality of education the unitary system of state tests has been established. Unitary state test system is one of the components of an educational quality evaluation mechanism.

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

2.1 Admission

Pre-school education (*pirmsskolas izglītība*, ISCED 0) for children less than seven years of age is a part of general education. Pre-school education was an option till the school year 2001/02, it became compulsory on 1st of September 2002 for five and six year old children who do not attend pre-school education institutions. Starting from school year 2009/10 pre-school education will be optional again.

The main aim of pre-school education is to prepare children for basic education. Main goals of the curriculum of pre-school education are:

- To advance the development of mental, physical and social abilities and to firm the understanding of general processes of nature and society, to build up moral and ethical values, to ensure development of initiative, inquisitive, independent and creative activities;
- To develop communication and cooperation skills;
- To favour formation of the harmonic personality of the child's;
- To form the understanding of the belonging to the State of Latvia and ensure possibility to learn about Latvia and values of democracy.

Education programmes are implemented by various pre-school type education establishments (*pirmsskolas izglītības iestādepirmsskolas izglītības konsultatīvais centrs/pirmsskolas izglītības grupas*) as well by family, receiving a methodical support from the municipality-established advisory centres for pre-school education.

The founder of the pre-school arranges how children are admitted in the institution. Pre-school educational institutions are prohibited to set up entrance tests. Usually children are enrolled in the pre-school institution when parents submit all the necessary documents and if there are accommodation capacity.

Institutions vary in size depending on the region and are coeducational. Pre-school education institutions if not attached to compulsory schools cooperates with them in educational work.

There are public and private pre-school education institutions. Public sector institutions require that parents make a financial contribution to cover the cost of meals and managing expenses, but access to educational activities is free of charge. The fee in the private sector institutions covers full costs of the programme, except for salaries of pedagogues teaching six year olds.

2.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

Founders of pre-school educational institutions are local governments, private person or legal entities. Municipalities establish pre-school institutions upon the request of at least 10 parents or 8 parents of children with special needs, living in the administrative territory of the municipality. The decision on foundation, reorganization and closing of the institution should be co-coordinated with the municipality's board of education and the Ministry of Education and Science.

Classes are organized every day; *pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde* operates all day long in premises adopted for children needs. This institution provides educational activities together with day care services.

Commonly pre-school institutions operate all year round with a break during the summer holidays lasting one to two months (usually in July and August). Whether or not the institution is opened during summer depends on the founder of the pre-school institution.

Children are organized in groups according to the school model (kids of the same age) or family model (kids of different ages). There can be both or either one of the models even in a single pre-school institution. Children may be organized also by nationalities. It depends on the demands of parents.

Admissible number of children is set according to the requirements of hygiene for the classroom space (for kids up to three years 2.5 sq.m/per one child in classroom and 1.8 sq.m./per one child in rest-room etc.).

Children in full- time pre-schools are provided with meals during a day and a possibility to take a nap.

Duration of time for intensive learning, daily:

- For children up to 2 years – 15 minutes;
- For 2-3 year olds – 25 minutes;
- For 3-4 year olds – 30 minutes;
- For 4-5 year olds – 45 minutes;
- For 5-7 year olds – 120 minutes.

2.3 Curriculum

Curricula of pre-school education issued by the Ministry of Education and Science sets up the main guidelines of the content of pre-school education. Every pre-school institution is responsible for drawing the curriculum, but it must include the subjects pointed out in the sample curricula issued by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The program of pre-school education includes formation of child's social skills, enhancement of the world of emotions and feelings, exercising of attention, development of senses, perception, thinking, memory and imagination; development of communication culture and life skills; familiarization with the environment, events taking place in social life and processes in nature; speech development, preparation of hand for writing, beginning of learning to read, formation of mathematical images, shaping/ plastering, working with appliqué, drawing, designing and working with different materials.

Curricula also include drawing, modelling, crafts, construction, sport and music. Besides learning, children also spend time outside taking walks and playing.

Play is the basic method in pre-school education and development of pre-school age children. By play children learn about the world and environment, develop imagination, creativeness, face a wide range of emotional experience thus developing the artistic taste and aesthetic feelings. Other methods are: practical method, verbal method, modelling, and experiment.

Age is the principle criterion for transition to compulsory basic education. Maturity is taken into account when parents want to enrol their child in basic school a year before or later the age of compulsory schooling. At basic level children are admitted to a particularly school on the basis of parental choice.

2.4 Assessment

The pedagogue is observing the child's progress and tells each child personally about his achievements. The pedagogue regularly consults parents on the child's development and gives recommendations on education of the child to be provided in the family.

Assessment has to be given orally, emphasizing the positive, significant aspects of child's activity, behaviour, achievements, thus encouraging the child to develop his/ her skills and abilities

2.5 Teachers

Teachers are allocated by a group as well by a subject for such specialized subjects as music and sport.

All teachers to be qualified to work in a pre-school institution should complete study programs at university level that lead not only to a diploma on higher pedagogical education but also to teacher qualification in the respective level of education. Academic education in Bachelor's programs in Latvia last 3 or 4 years. The group of professional programs at higher education institutions includes: 1-2 year programs to be completed after Bachelor studies leading to higher professional pedagogical educational (consecutive model) and professional study programs with integrated Bachelor study program of 4 or 5 years duration (concurrent model).

In order to facilitate teacher qualification requirements, at present also teachers with higher pedagogical education and professional pre-school teacher qualification obtained after completion of upper secondary vocational education are allowed to work as pre-school teachers.

Teachers are contracted on permanent basis. Employment conditions are included in the Education Law, the contract and the collective agreement if the latter exists. Teacher contracts are based on general employment legislation.

In-service training is compulsory in Latvia for teachers at all education levels. The teacher has a duty of further education according to the needs of his qualification of at least 36 programme hours in three years, and at least 12 programme hours a year.

3. SINGLE STRUCTURE EDUCATION

ISCED levels 1 and 2 comprise a single structure education called basic education (*pamatizglītība*). Basic education is compulsory. Please see subdivisions for more detail.

Education levels, types (incl. basic education), organisation, obligation as well as types of general education institutions are defined by the Education Law and the General Education Law.

3.1 Admission

In order to enrol to the 1st class the child needs to reach the compulsory education age. General Education Law sets out that basic education should be started in the calendar year when the child turns 7. Depending on the state of health and psychological readiness the child may start basic education programme one year earlier or later in accordance with the wishes of parents and doctor's conclusion.

Children who have reached compulsory education age are registered in a centralised way. It is carried out by Inhabitants Registry, local municipality, municipal education boards and education institutions.

Basic education institution may not organise entrance examinations except for enrolment into 7th, 8th or 9th classes of gymnasiums and state gymnasiums. In this case organisation of entrance examinations should be coordinated with education provider. Content of entrance examination should not surpass the requirements set out by the State Basic Education Standard.

Institutions vary in size depending on the region and are coeducational. Each municipality receives small amount of money in form of dotations for textbooks from the state. The rest of the textbooks are financed by municipalities if it has enough resources and if not – pupils are buying their own textbooks.

Each municipality has the task to provide a chance to acquire basic education for all children in their administrative territory in an education institution closest to their home. When the child reaches 7 years of age, parents have to register him in a school of their choice. The procedure is as follows: parents register the child at the school, and education provider determines the time and order for submission of documents for a compulsory education programme. In 10 days time the school informs parents about enrolment or refusal to enrol. In case of refusal school director gives to parents argumented response in writing and informs on refusal. Education provider informs parents on free places in other education institutions under its supervision.

3.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

Compulsory basic education programme starts at the age of seven and is completed after nine years. The first stage of basic education lasts for 4 (or 6) years while the second stage lasts 5 (or 3) years.

Basic education programmes are provided by the following institutions:

- *Sākumskola*, covers classes 1-4 or 1-6 (partial basic education programme)
- *Pamatskola*, covers classes 1-9 (full basic education programme)

In Latvia, especially Riga, basic and upper secondary education is often provided by one and the same education institution – *vidusskola* (upper secondary school).

Basic education may be obtained also in a vocational school, special education institution, evening (shifts) school, boarding school, social and correctional education institution or other school providing basic education programmes.

On the basis of General Education Law and in coordination with education provider, each school develops its statute setting out provider's name, school's legal status, mission and tasks, curriculum, organisation of learning process, economic activities, and rights and duties of pupils and teachers.

In 1st-4th or 1st-6th classes most subjects are taught by a teacher-generalist, and only some subjects are taught by specialist teachers of one or several subjects. Later, in 5th-9th or, respectively, 7th-9th class each subject is taught by teachers of respective subjects.

Class teacher supervises each pupil's learning process, follows the pupil's progress and his school attendance. Class teacher is a mediator between the pupil and other teachers or school administration, and also between school and the family.

Classes unite children of the same age except if a pupil has to repeat a year. Starting with school year 2009/10 limitations in grouping of pupils – minimum and maximum number of pupils in a class, possibility to form merged classes etc. – have been abolished. Thus schools have a possibility to group classes and make merged classes, in view of budget in their disposition. In basic education it is recommended to merge 1st-3rd classes, 4th-6th classes and 7th-9th classes.

Maximum permissible numbers of pupils in a class are regulated in accordance with sanitary requirements for basic education institutions.

Starting with 1 September, 2009 planned number of pupils for one teaching load (21 hour per week) is 8 pupils in regions and 10.2 pupils in republican towns. Continuing to carry out structural reforms in education, this proportion is planned to be raised and until 2012 it would reach on the average 12 pupils per 1 teaching load.

The length of school year in compulsory education is defined by General Education Law, see in subdivisions for further detail. School year's beginning and end dates are annually established centrally. The number of school year's days may differ (Cabinet of Ministers issues a respective order each year), and this may also depend on the school year in a row.

Education institutions are often open the whole year, and some of administration and school staff is always present in the school. In many communities, especially in the countryside, school's resources (library, sports ground, computer class etc.) may be used also during summer holiday for summer workshops or project activities. School's library may also carry out the function of public library.

School year usually starts on 1 September and lasts till the end of May except for the 9th class when qualification examinations may be organised also in June.

The length of school year for the 1st class is 34 weeks, 2nd-8th class – 35 weeks, and 9th class – 37 weeks.

In certain cases extension of school year is permissible in 1st-8th class if school hours have been let out, e.g. due to excessive cold, a strike, emergency situation in school etc.

School year has two semesters (from September till December and from January till May). Usually there are school holidays in each yearly season:

- Autumn holiday lasts one week.
- Christmas holiday lasts two weeks.
- Spring holiday lasts one week.
- Summer holiday lasts almost three months.

With the consent of education provider education institution may introduce additional holiday week in the second semester of the 1st class, and usually this period is in February.

Weekly and daily organisation of classes in compulsory education is set out in regulatory acts. During week there five school days, and classes start between 8 and 9 in the morning. School day may not exceed:

- 5 lessons in 1st-3rd class
- 6 lessons in 4th-5th class
- 7 lessons in 6th-7th class
- 8 lessons in 8th-9th class

Regulatory acts set out a definite weekly number of lessons for each subject, and also the minimum and maximum number of total lessons per week. The length of a lesson is 40 or 45 minutes, depending on the decision of the school's administration.

In accordance with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers the length of lunchbreak is 30 minutes.

Depending on the number of pupils, education institution may organise learning process in two shifts. In this case part of pupils attend school in mornings, and other part in afternoons. The second shift usually starts around 2 PM and lasts till 6 PM.

Many schools provide the so-called extended day groups where pupils stay (may stay) after class hours and do homework. Each institution sets out till what time such groups are open. For pupils who study in second shift, there are no extended day groups.

Completion of basic education or continuation of basic education until completion is compulsory up to 18 years of age.

Boarding schools and imprisonment places holding children up to 18 years of age have to provide possibilities of basic education. Pupils staying in a hospital for more than two weeks have to receive instruction on the spot. Home learning should be organised also for those children who are not able to attend school for more than one month due to their state of health.

In reference to economic situation in the country there is a discussion on closing or keeping small schools. E.g. in order to create optimum education offer in the country in general and provide education to each pupil independently from his place of residence; also, trying to ensure effective use of existing finance, municipalities are invited to consider optimisation of school network, taking into account the need to provide first stage of basic education as close as possible to one's home, establishing joined groups and placing the necessary number of groups in optimum rooming with minimum number of teachers. Basic schools with small number of pupils might be transformed into structural units of larger schools thus saving administrative costs and introducing optimum number of teaching loads.

3.3 Curriculum

Compulsory curriculum (education areas, subjects, main tasks, educational aspects, general curriculum and subject standards) is set out in the National Basic Education Standard and subject standards and programmes. These documents set out the aims to be achieved in this level of education and each subject, curriculum and learning load.

Curriculum (education programmes) is developed by implementers, and approved by school head and education provider.

School's curriculum reflects programmatic tasks and aims, and curriculum implementation plan. Each particular school's basic education curriculum before its implementation has to be licenced and registered in Education Institutions Register. The school's curriculum has to be accredited in two years time after its licencing.

In setting the compulsory subjects in the curriculum and number of hours to be dedicated to each subject as well as the minimum and maximum number of learning hours per week, schools make use of model school's basic education curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education and Science and model syllabus. Model school's basic education curriculum valid at present was adopted in 2009.

The aims of basic education programmes are:

- To provide learners with basic skills and knowledge necessary for social and personal life
- To create a basis for further learning
- To promote harmonious progress and development of the learner
- To teach responsible attitude against oneself, family, society, environment and state

Main tasks of basic education programmes are:

- Provide a possibility to learn basic language and mathematics skills
- Create insight into and understanding of main natural and social processes, moral and aesthetic values
- Provide a possibility to acquire knowledge and learn about values of democracy necessary to a Latvian citizen
- Provide a possibility to acquire basic learning skills and basic skills in using IT
- Provide a possibility to have creative action experiences
- Create basic insight into cultural heritage of Latvia, Europe and world culture
- Develop communication and cooperation skills.

In 2004 the number of compulsory subjects was supplemented by two new ones – Ethics and Christian Teaching – taught in 1st-3rd class. It is compulsory for parents to choose one of these subjects.

In 2005, starting with 1st, 4th and 7th classes, a new subject of Social Sciences was introduced. Since school year 2007/08 Social Sciences as well as the Latvian Language, Mathematics, Sports, Music, Visual Arts, Home Economy are taught in the whole period of basic education from 1st to 9th class. Natural Science is taught from 1st to 6th class.

In 2009 approbation of a standard for a new subject of Latvian History was finished. During Approbation the former subject of Latvian and World History was split into two separate subjects of History and Latvian History. It is planned that initially pupils would learn world history and its regularities in the 6th, 7th and 8th class, while Latvian history would be learned in 8th and 9th classes.

The first foreign language is learned in 3rd class, Literature – in 5th class, history and second foreign language starts in 6th class, geography and biology – in 7th class, but physics and chemistry – in 8th class. Informatics is learned in 5th-7th class.

In Latvia English is usually chosen as the first foreign language in school (schools with foreign language specialisation may teach another language as the first foreign one). In 6th class the second

foreign language is started to be taught. English, German, French and Russian languages are offered as compulsory subjects. School with foreign language specialisation start teaching foreign languages even earlier, in 1st class. Besides, often pupils may choose the second foreign language, because the school offers several of them. In later classes one may choose to learn a third foreign language if the school can provide it.

Apart from total learning load curriculum may include also individual activities recommended for talented children and children in need of specific advice in learning particular subjects. The school may also offer out-of-school activities, e.g. choir, dancing group, sports, orchestra etc. Out-of-school activities are not compulsory.

Teachers have the right to choose teaching methods except if the school follows a special educational direction, e.g. Waldorf or Montessori approach. Choice of teaching methods depends on the number of pupils, pupil abilities and available technical equipment.

Teachers have the right to choose textbooks from a list confirmed by the Ministry of Education and Science. At present textbooks and other learning materials are available for all basic education subjects. Each year in May school's task is introduce parents to the list of textbooks and learning materials to be used the following year. The list should contain information whether the respective book will be available at school library, or parents will have to purchase it. Although school receive state block grant for purchasing text books, it is insufficient and does not cover all expenses for providing pupils with learning materials.

Learning process is structured in learning hours. Chosen teaching methods should conduce to activity and participation of pupils, develop learning habits, motivate pupils to learn learning habits, involve pupils in creating learning activities, change the role of teacher to become an observer, tutor and participant of learning process. Teaching methods should be chosen taking into account skills to be acquired by the pupil.

The methods most often used in lessons are as follows: narration, discussion, individual work, group work, exercises, learning trips, role plays, heuristic teaching methods, methods imitating problematic situations, experiments, projects.

One has set out maximum time – 6 hours- to be spent for homework, however it is hard to evaluate and estimate time necessary for doing homework therefore observation of this regulation is hard to control.

In order to encourage pupils and teachers to use project method, schools organise a project week since school year 1997/98.

3.4 Assessment, progression and certification

National testing in basic education, including tests and examinations, is regulated.

Teachers carry out regular assessment of educational achievement using 10-grade scale and no-marking system (pass/fail or descriptive assessment). Descriptive system means that teacher provides pupil with short spoken or written assessment of his/her progress describing the development of pupil's knowledge, skills and attitudes against learning and participation in lessons. Assessment criteria include volume and quality of acquired knowledge, acquired skills, attitude against learning process and educational achievement development dynamics.

Grade	Explanation	Criteria
"10"	Outstanding	the knowledge and skills have been acquired at a level where the learning content is perceived, memorized, reproduced, understood and can be used independently for acquisition of new knowledge and solving of creative tasks; the pupil can solve various problems, substantiate his or her opinion by logical argument, perceive and explain regularities; the pupil can express independently his or her opinion, define evaluation criteria, anticipate consequences; the pupil is able to respect and value different views and encourages co-operation in solving educational problems.
"9"	Excellent	
"8"	Very good	the pupil can fully reproduce the educational content, understand it, perceive regularities and problems, differentiate between vitally important and insignificant matters; the pupil can use the knowledge and skills according to a model, analogy or in a familiar situation; can do standard and combined educational tasks; the pupil can express his or her personal attitude regarding the basic issues of educational content at a statement level; the pupil has acquired co-operation and communication skills.
"7"	Good	
"6"	Almost good	
"5"	Satisfactory	the pupil is familiar with the specified content of education, can differentiate between vitally important and insignificant issues, knows and can define concepts and basic laws, can formulate recognition rules, solves standard problems; the presentation of learning content is sufficiently clear and understandable; conventional cognition methods are used in learning, following the teacher's instructions; the pupil has acquired basic skills of communication and co-operation.
"4"	Almost satisfactory	
"3"	Poor	the pupil can only perceive and recognize the learning content, but the memorized and reproduced amount of the content to be acquired is insufficient (less than 50 %), the pupil can do only primitive tasks according to a model in a fairly familiar situation; only part of the tasks is done without mistakes; the pupil can present the learning content, but the presentation is difficult for the others to understand, vitally important issues are seldom differentiated from insignificant issues; co-operation skills are poorly developed.
"2"	Very poor	
"1"	Very, very poor	

Descriptive assessment of educational achievement is practiced in 1st class. In 2nd and 3rd class it is used in native language, mathematics, Latvian language (in minority education programmes). In the rest of subjects 10-grade scale is used. In 5th-9th class 10-grade scale is used in all subjects.

At the end of 3rd, 6th and 9th class pupils take national tests in certain subjects. Results of 3rd and 6th class tests influence pupil's annual grade, while results of 9th class tests do not.

After each semester pupils receive a school report with assessment in each subject. At the end of 9th class pupils receive reports only once a year – after 1st semester. Model school reports are approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Usually progress to next class is automatic. School director carries out an inscription in the pupil's record on his/her transition to next class. However the pupil may be retained in the same class for another year if assessment of his/her educational achievement does not comply with subject plan's requirements.

Starting with 1 September 2009 in the period of 5th-9th class the pupil will not be allowed to be transferred to next class if he will have received assessment not complying with results set out by the subject standard or less than grade 4 in more than two subjects.

In order to receive general basic education certificate, at the end of 9th class pupils take national examinations and tests. Materials and procedure are developed by the State Education Centre. Tests may be written or combined (written and spoken or involving practical work). Examinations may be written, spoken or combined.

Examinations have to taken in mathematics, Latvian language (or other native language), Latvian language (for pupils taking minority education programmes) and history.

Tests have to be taken in a foreign language, natural science, sports.

Pupils who have received assessment in all subjects and national tests, receive a basic education certificate and attainment record. If the pupil has not received an assessment in any of subjects or in any of national tests, or has received assessment under grade 4 in more than three national tests, he/she receives a school record. Such pupils have not completed basic education. In order to complete it, the pupil may be retained in 9th class for another year in the same or another school, or complete a educational correction programme. In difference from retainment, educational correction programme starts with 2 months adaptation period when teachers assess levels of pupils' knowledge in each subject. Pupils do not have take all subjects but only those that are not completed on a sufficient level.

Dates of national tests are set by the Ministry of Education and Science. If the pupil has been sick in this period or has been learning abroad, he/she may take the tests in other dates.

At the completion of 9th class pupils have seven (or – in minority education programmes – eight) national tests. Since 1 September 2009 9th class pupils do not have to pass tests in natural science and sports, and the test in foreign language has been replaced by an examination in the same.

Basic education certificate gives access to general (upper) secondary education.

3.5 Guidance and counselling

In basic education level all pupils have access to career guidance. Most often this matter id discussed in class hours. More attention to the choice of profession is paid in 8th and 9th class – last years of basic education.

In all classes at least one hour per week has to be organised as class hour (it is not counted into teaching load and is organised by class teacher). In class hours the following themes are discussed: learning values, behaviour and communication culture, patriotic education and civic participation, basics of healthy lifestyle and dependency prevention, action in extreme situations and traffic safety, career education etc.

Support to pupils is available in different forms, e.g. services of psychologist or social pedagogue to pupils, teachers, parents. There is support to pupils who have difficulty in catching up with curriculum. Schools offer voluntary individual lessons or group lessons to such children on the basis of application from their parents.

3.6 Teachers

Qualification of a basic school teacher may be obtained in two types of teacher training programmes – academic and professional. The teacher may get qualification either for the first stage of basic

education (*sākumskola*), as a generalist teacher or a subject teacher, or for the whole of basic education, as a subject teacher.

In Latvia teacher training is carried out in university level according to consecutive or parallel model.

Academic higher education has two levels. At the completion of first level Bachelor degree is conferred, at the completion of the second one – Master's degree. Bachelor's studies in Latvia last 3 to 4 years. Master's programmes usually last two years, and Master's degree provides a possibility to continue studies at doctoral level.

Professional higher education studies are organised in two levels – first and second. Teacher training is usually provided in the so-called second-level professional higher education programmes but there also are certain first-level programmes providing professional qualification but no rights to enter Master's studies.

Professional programme group in higher education institutions includes:

- Programmes after Bachelor studies in 1-2 years of lengths providing higher professional pedagogical education (consecutive model)
- Professional programmes with integrated bachelor study programme lasting 4-5 years (parallel model)

Completion of these programmes gives access to Master studies.

In teacher training parallel model is mostly used.

In Latvia practical placements is a compulsory part of initial training corresponding to 39 credits of the total 240 credits (according to ECTS system). However this type of placement may not be considered as “on-the-job” stage. In Latvia student received teacher qualification and the right to work as teacher only after completion of initial teacher training programme. No other type of transition period is required to pass from the status of a student to the status of an employed person.

At present a reform is planned in relation to teacher academic studies, in the context of Bologna process. Academic Bachelor degree does not give the right to work in the school; in order to do one needs also a professional teacher qualification. The main idea is to approximate academic and professional teacher study programmes.

A reform in relation to teacher career development is carried out. In the future teacher will have a possibility to be qualified in five levels – junior teacher, teacher, senior teacher, regional expert and national expert. 19 quality criteria and four competence areas have been developed. The new model has been approbated in 192 schools of Latvia, and 1408 teachers were voluntarily trying out this pilot model. Professional qualification assessment system will be introduced joining teacher payment system with state officials payment system, at the same time introducing teacher work load of 40 hours a week.

In-service training is compulsory in Latvia for teachers at all education levels. The teacher has a duty of further education according to the needs of his qualification of at least 36 programme hours in three years.

4. UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

In Latvia ISCED 3 level is called *vidējā izglītība*. In English the term “(upper) secondary education” is used. Please see subdivisions for more detail.

4.1 Admission

Everybody with completed basic education in Latvia has a chance to start general or vocational (upper) secondary education in full-time or part-time settings. Thus pupils may choose which school is most appropriate for their needs. The whole of (upper secondary) education may be acquired in the same school if only the pupil does not decide to change school or is forced to stop attending school.

Those who have finished vocational school may start acquiring vocational (upper) secondary education.

In order to start general or vocational (upper) secondary education, one needs to present a basic education certificate and achievement record.

Vocational (upper) secondary schools may also enrol children without vocational basic education or vocational education. There are no access age restrictions to vocational education programmes, except no earlier than in the calendar year the child turns 15.

Pupils may choose in which school to apply. The school may set its own admission criteria coordinating it with education provider and in accordance to basic education standard, except for subjects in which enrollees are certified. It also concerns schools offering vocational (upper) secondary and vocational post-secondary programmes. Admission is usually organised as competition on the basis of subject assessment in achievement record. Children with special needs, orphans and children without parent care are admitted out of competition.

Decision on admission to (upper) secondary school has to be taken in 5 working days after entrance examinations. If the pupil does not get enrolled, he/she may require a transcript from entrance examinations protocol containing entrance examination results.

In Latvia general and vocation (upper) secondary education in state and municipal schools is free of charge, and there is no registration and no tuition fee. Some schools have established support foundations, and both individuals and institutions as well as pupils, parents and school leavers may donate to the respective school.

Vocational (upper) secondary schools may also organise pay groups, usually in two cases: if the offered study programme is not financed by state, and if demand exceeds offer, i.e. if the number of people wishing to study in the programme exceeds state-financed study places. The number of such places in accredited vocational education programmes is set by the Ministry of Education and Science and other field ministries.

4.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

General (upper) secondary education covers age group 16-19 and lasts three years. It is voluntary since 1991 Education Law (in the Soviet period it was compulsory).

Institutions providing general secondary education are as follows:

(Upper) Secondary School (*vidusskola*) (10th-12th class),

Gymnasium (*ģimnāzija*) (10th-12th class),

Evening School (*vakara (maiņas) vidusskola*) (10th-12th class).

In school year 2009/10 two distance learning (upper) secondary schools were opened.

In Latvia, especially Riga, basic and general (upper) secondary education is often provided in the same school – *vidusskola*. Thus pupils may complete both basic education (1st-9th class) and (upper) secondary education (10th-12th class) in the same school.

Gymnasium basically provides only general upper secondary education, however it may also provide a part of basic education programme starting with 7th class. Gymnasiums have an obligation to provide at least 2-3 study streams. Pupils of the same class acquire curriculum of one and the same study stream.

School premises are used for one set of pupils per day but schooling may be organized also in shifts if there are too many pupils. The length of the school-day depends on the number of lessons for a given form. General secondary schools offering full time educational programmes may as well offer evening classes.

In the classes 10 and 11 the school year last 35 weeks, but in the class 12 the school year lasts 38 weeks. Study load for classes 10-12 may not exceed 36 lessons (teaching periods) a week. *Gan vispārējā, gan profesionālā izglītībā mācību nedēļā ir 5 dienas*. The school day may contain a maximum of 8 lessons. Length of lessons is either 40 or 45 minutes, it is upon the decision of the school head. Minimal study load of pupils in general secondary programme is 3 150 lessons, maximum – 3 780. Pupils choose courses from the subjects offered by a school so that the total of lessons during three years of studies stay within these numbers.

Vocational education is provided by various vocational schools. The age of students is 16 to 20 years of age. The title of school depends on education level and curriculum:

1. *arodskoarodskola* (vocational school) offers partial (upper) secondary education, un its completion does not provide access to higher education (some *arodskolas* offer educational catch-up programmes including provision for completing unfinished (upper) secondary education.
2. completion of *profesionālā vidusskola/amatniecības vidusskola* (vocational (upper) secondary school / crafts (upper) secondary school) provides access to higher education studies.

Arodvidusskola (may also be called *arodģimnāzija* or *tehnikums*) provides vocational (upper) secondary education curriculum with duration of studies 3-4 years (after compulsory basic education) or 1-2 years (after vocational education).

In vocational (upper) secondary schools total number of lessons per week for pupils younger than 18 is 36, but for older pupils – 40. Study year lasts 40 weeks. It longer due to practical placements and may differ depending on the particular programme. For this very reason summer holiday is shorter for vocational students than for pupils in general (upper) secondary pupils.

In both general and vocational education pupil's learning process is supervised by class teacher who follows pupil's progress and school attendance. Class teacher is a mediator between pupil and other teachers or school administration, and also between school and family.

Number of pupils in class may differ depending on subject in case individual training is employed, e.g. for foreign language learning. Usually class (group) is divided into two or three parts in order to secure that everybody receives the necessary attention. In vocational school class is divided into groups also during practical placements.

Classes unite children of the same age, except if a pupil is retained for another year in the same class.

Starting with school year 2009/10, with the new financing model “Money follows the pupil”, there is no more minimum number of pupils in class. Maximum permissible number of pupils in class is 30.

Pupils are not divided into classes as it is in general (upper) secondary schools but in course groups like in higher education institutions. In order to start a programme financed from state or municipality, provider (Ministry of Education and Science or municipality) sets the minimum number of students in group coordinating it with Vocational Education Cooperation Board. Usually there are 25 students in a course.

Talented children have the chance to learn in specialised (upper) secondary schools (e.g. music, arts and sports schools) where, along with vocationally oriented education, also general education curriculum is at place. Graduates of such schools may continue education in the respective area in higher education studies. Besides, some sports schools provide (upper) secondary education. These schools offer vocational (upper) secondary education and provide a basis for professional life in the respective area.

There are two semesters in a school year (September to December and January to May). The Ministry of Education and Science issues an annual order on pupil holidays. There are school holidays in each yearly season:

- Autumn holiday lasts one week.
- Christmas holiday lasts two weeks.
- Spring holiday lasts one week.
- Summer holiday lasts almost three months.

4.3 Curriculum

The curriculum for general (upper) secondary education is set at the national level.

General aims of general (upper) secondary education are: to provide pupils with knowledge and skills that enable them to prepare for further education; to encourage the development of their personality and of their physical and mental capacities, and to develop their understanding of health as a condition for the quality of life; to develop their ability to study independently and improve their knowledge, as well as create motivation for life-long learning and purposeful career.

Provision of general education is regulated by the Education Law and General Education Law. Matters relating to curriculum are set out in the National General (Upper) Secondary Education Standard, subject plans, model (upper) secondary education curriculum and model core curriculum. These documents set out education aims, tasks to be completed in each subject, description of subject content and learning load. Procedure of national testing and examinations is set out in special regulations issued by the Cabinet of Ministers.

General (upper) secondary curriculum is defined by:

- National general (upper) secondary education standard
- Subject plans.

Model subject plans are developed by State Education Centre, but also teachers themselves may draw their own subject plans.

Schools may offer and carry out curriculum in the following study streams:

- general education stream

- humanitarian and social stream
- mathematics, science and technical stream
- vocational stream.

General (upper) secondary curriculum in the respective stream may be combined with the native language of a minority (e.g. Lithuanian, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian etc.) and subjects related to minority identity and integration into Latvian society.

The main aims of general (upper) secondary curriculum are defined in General (Upper) Secondary Education Standard:

- provide the pupil with knowledge and skills providing a possibility to prepare for continuation of education
- promote the growth of the pupil into a morally and physically well-developed personality, create understanding on health as a condition for better life quality;
- promote positively critical and socially active attitude in the pupil and create understanding of rights and tasks of a citizen of Latvia;
- Develop a skill to learn independently, to motivate for lifelong learning and purposeful career.

Core curriculum in general (upper) secondary education in schools with the Latvian language of instruction consists of 1) Latvian language 2) first foreign language 3) second foreign language 4) Mathematics 5) Informatics 6) Sports 7) Latvian and world history 8) Physics 9) Chemistry 10) Biology 11) Literature 12) Music or Visual Arts; and at least three optional subjects choosing from Economics, Philosophy, Geography, Psychology, Politics and Rights, Home Economy, Ethics, Culturology.

In minority education programmes at least five subjects are taught in Latvian each school year, apart from Latvian language and literature. Pupils who learn in minority education programmes, have a compulsory subject of the respective minority language and literature.

Vocational (upper) secondary education curriculum focuses on learning knowledge and skills necessary for the 3rd professional qualification level. Curriculum involves also general education subjects to the level of competency allowing access to higher education studies.

Vocational (upper) secondary education curriculum is set out in the national vocational (upper) secondary education standard and professional standards. Vocational (upper) secondary education curriculum is developed and taught in accordance with all economy fields in Latvia. Vocational education and vocational (upper) secondary education curriculum is regulated by:

- national vocational education and vocational (upper) secondary education standard,
- professional standards.

Strategic aims of vocational (upper) secondary education and vocational programmes are as follows:

- to prepare the pupil for activity in a certain profession, supporting his/her development into a morally and physically well-developed, free, responsible and creative personality;
- promote learning of knowledge and skills, creation of attitudes, thus ensuring acquisition of 2nd or 3rd level professional qualification, and promote his/her competitiveness in changing socio-economic conditions;

- to promote positive attitude against peers and the state, promote self-confidence and ability to undertake tasks of a citizen of Latvia;
- create motivation for professional growth and further training, ensure a possibility to get prepared for continuation of studies in professional higher education

In vocational (upper) secondary education both in schools and real work environment in companies students undergo practical training. Local municipalities cooperate with employers in order to ensure pupils with placements. National Tripartite Cooperation Board's Sub-Board – the Tripartite Vocational Education and Employment Cooperation Board – is an advisory body that develops suggestions for national policies and strategies in vocational education area. Employer representatives are involved in the development of professional standards and participate in qualification examinations commission.

Curriculum (education programmes), in accordance to regulatory acts, are developed by the school, and approved by school head and education provider. When setting out compulsory subjects and number of hours to be dedicated to each subject, schools may use model (upper) secondary education curriculum and model core curriculum. School's curriculum (education programme) reflects its aims and tasks, education content in accordance to the state standard, and curriculum implementation plan.

Each particular curriculum (education programme) has to be licenced and registered in Education Institutions Register. The programme has to be accredited in two years time after registration.

School's administration set out the number of hours for each subject as well as lesson schedule. Yet this autonomy is limited by the regulations on subject and lesson plan on the number of hours to be dedicated for each subject and also on minimum and maximum number of hours per week on the whole.

If pupils wish, they may attend 1-2 individual or group lessons per week. Individual lessons are recommended for:

- especially talented children;
- children who need advice for learning certain subjects.

The school may also offer out-of-school activities, e.g. choir, dancing group, sports, orchestra etc.

Learning process is structured in learning hours. Teaching methods should conduce to activity and participation of pupils, develop learning habits, motivate pupils to learn learning habits, involve pupils in creating learning activities, change the role of teacher to become an observer, tutor and participant of learning process. Teaching methods should be chosen taking into account skills to be acquired by the pupil.

Teachers are free to choose their teaching methods and textbooks from the list approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. The teaching methods most frequently used during lessons are following: narrative, discussion, debate, individual work, group work, exercises, educational excursions, role-plays, heuristic teaching methods, problem situation methods, experiments and projects.

4.4 Assessment, progression and certification

In order to carry out assessment the principle of variety of assessment forms is employed. In assessing education achievements one employees written, spoken and combined testing, individual and group achievement assessment, diagnostic testing, project works, tests and examinations. In (upper) secondary education, in 10th-12th class, pupils' education achievements are assessed in

10 grade scale (see 3.4.) or with “pass/fail” method. Descriptive assessment means that pupils receive a short spoken or written evaluation by the teacher on his/her progress describing the development of pupil’s knowledge, skills and attitude against learning and participation in lessons. In assessing learning achievements criteria are volume and quality of obtained knowledge, skills learned, attitude against learning process and learning achievements development dynamics. Teachers carry out regular assessment of pupil’s education achievements.

At the end of each semester pupils receive record sheet with marks in each subjects. 12th class pupils receive record sheet only once a year – at the end of first semester. Model record sheets are approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

At the end of (upper) secondary education level there are at least five national examinations: 1) centralised examination in the Latvian language, 2) centralised examination in a foreign language, 3) centralised examination in mathematics, 4) examination set by the school in a subject learned in the

Pupils who have gained assessment in all general (upper) secondary education subjects and national examinations, receive a general (upper) secondary education diploma and achievement transcript. Assessment in subjects in which a centralised examination is organised, is attested by general (upper) secondary education certificate.

These documents attesting general (upper) secondary education give access to continuation of education in any higher education programme. If the pupil has not received assessment in some subject or some of national examinations, he received a school report.

In centralised examinations (content developed and their assessment is carried out in a centralised way, not on school level) assessment of achievements is carried out according to another system. Pupil achievements are assessed in six levels (A, B, C, D, E, F where A is the highest and F the lowest level). Assessment levels in foreign language examination are defined in accordance recommendation by the Council of Europe while in the rest of subjects assessment levels are developed by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Also in vocational (upper) secondary education competence in subjects, practical training and national testing is assessed using 10 grade scale.

Qualifying placement and tests set out in curriculum are assessed by “pass/fail”.

Vocational (upper) secondary education and vocational education is completed by national testing. Qualification examinations are centralised and are carried out the state language.

Starting with 1 September 2009 regulations on admitting pupils to school and transfer to next class came into force. Consequently, pupils who have received an assessment lower than grade 4 in any of subjects, are not transferred to next class.

Along with general (upper) secondary education diploma the graduate gets also an achievement transcript containing final marks in all subjects and examination results.

In order to receive state-approved qualification (document) on the completion of vocational education or (upper) secondary vocational education, pupils have to receive assessment (at least “4” – almost satisfactory) in all subjects, practical training, qualifying placements and have to pass national testing. In professional qualification examination of both vocational education and (upper) secondary vocational education pupils have to receive the assessment at least “5” – satisfactory. If the pupil has fulfilled all requirements of curriculum (education programme) but has not passed professional qualification examination, he received only achievement transcript.

The national testing in vocational schools and vocational (upper) secondary schools includes the following:

- In vocational programmes – professional qualification examination
- In vocational (upper) secondary programmes:
 - Professional qualification examination
 - Four examinations set out in the curriculum (programme) (the same centralised examinations as in general (upper) secondary education).

Qualification examination consists of two parts: theoretical test and practical test. Vocational Education Administration at the Ministry of Education and Science organises development of theoretical examinations and their attesting in professional associations.

After completion of accredited vocational education programme or vocational (upper) secondary education programme the following documents are received: Vocational Education Certificate or Vocational (Upper) Secondary Education Diploma and Achievement Transcript. Professional Qualification Certificate testifies to a definite professional qualification.

4.5 Guidance and counselling

At least one hour per week has to be organised as class hour (it is not counted into teaching load and is organised by class teacher). In class hours the following themes are discussed: learning values, behaviour and communication culture, patriotic education and civic participation, basics of healthy lifestyle and dependency prevention, action in extreme situations and traffic safety, career education etc.

Vocational guidance and information on higher education possibilities available to all pupils. Also other support, e.g. support in learning, health care and informal education, is available.

The bodies officially responsible for vocational guidance in both general and vocational schools are education providers, i.e. municipalities, and the schools themselves. They carry out guidance activities with the methodological support provided by the State Education Development Agency, Information and Career Development Department and local unit of Euroguidance network.

Within the framework of “Standpoints of Education Development for years 2007-2013” State Education Development Agency has been commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science to administer and develop a national database of learning possibilities in Latvia called NEED.LV. The database is already available in the web for wider public. The Agency also developed career adviser programmes as in-service training modules for working teachers.

Because the purpose of (upper) secondary education is to provide the pupil with knowledge and skills in order to continue education, schools do not organise activities to provide pupils with access to labour market. However, some schools provide job shadowing possibilities in order to help pupils acquire the first knowledge and skills in labour market, or, in cooperation with Junior Achievement, support establishment of pupil firms.

Education fairs are organised in several Latvian towns where schools and other education institutions inform about their offer. Information on education institutions may also be found in an annual publication “Kur mācīties tālāk?” (Where to Continue Learning?)

Every spring higher education institutions organise Open Doors to provide information about their offer.

4.6 Teachers and trainers

Schools are responsible for recruitment and employment of teachers: they publish job announcements in local, regional or national newspapers, or in the specialised newspaper for teachers *Izglītība un kultūra*, invite candidates for teaching posts and carry out selection. Besides, school administration often keeps direct contact with teacher training institutions and place announcements there.

In order to start working in teaching profession, general education teachers need to be educated and qualified in level set out in regulations. Since 2003/04 only teachers with higher education are qualified to work in schools, i.e. teachers with an academic degree in pedagogy or with a professional teacher qualification obtained after completion ISCED 5B and 5A programmes. Teachers who no more have the right to teach according to the new regulations may obtain the new qualification through in-service training (further education) programmes. E.g. (upper) secondary education teacher may have academic education in certain science area and a teacher qualification, or they may start acquiring the qualification in two years time after taking up the post. This condition was introduced in order to raise competition and fill up vacancies for certain teaching posts, which could possibly emerge due to ageing of teaching staff.

Teacher employment relationships have to be register in a work contract. In accordance with Labour Law, schools have to sign working contracts with teachers for an unspecified period of time.

Please see other details in 3.5.

All teachers to be qualified to work in vocational secondary education (*profesionālā vidējā izglītība*) level should obtain professional higher education in the specific field and pedagogical education at university level. In order to work in vocational education (*arodizglītība*) level, teachers should hold at least diploma on vocational secondary education or qualification of craftsman issued by Latvian Chamber of Crafts and pedagogical education obtained at university level.

5. POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION

Post secondary (ISDED level 4) education in Latvia

After acquisition of general (upper)secondary or vocational secondary education a person can be enrolled to vocational further education programme (from one to three years long) or vocational in-service training programmes (not less than 160 teaching hours what can be also a part of qualification). This level of education internationally is recognised as post-secondary non-tertiary education, however, in Latvia these programmes are recognised as a part of (upper) secondary education. Above mentioned programmes are focused on acquisition of vocational knowledge and skills corresponding to requirements of vocational qualifications' level. Education process and assessment of achievements are organised similarly to of programmes of vocational (upper)secondary education – 3 to 4 years. Organization principles, conditions for acquisition of vocational qualifications, the rights and duties of institutions, teachers and students, ways of acquisition of vocational education, education content, and funding principles are defined by the Vocational Education Law.

5.1 Admission

Legal framework for vocational training which is not mainly provided in schools is Law on Craftsmanship. There are regulations on the crafts in which professional activities are regarded as craftsmanship. Responsibilities on organisation of craft education lays on professional associations and their union organisation – Latvian Chamber of Crafts. Council of Crafts established by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts works out and approves examination programmes, organises and supervises crafts training and awards qualification of craftsman.

Training programmes depends on the craft. Objectives of the programmes are to prepare a person for working in a certain craft and to motivate for the professional development and further education. These programmes may also take place within a framework of vocational education provided in vocational schools at basic and secondary level.

Trainees should be at least 15 years of age. No prior qualification or work experience is necessary, however trainees all are subject to theory courses if not relevant education is gained before entering a trainee position. As well a trainee should bind himself to attend compulsory schooling in the form of evening courses if he has no certificate on the completion of basic education (*apliecība par pamatizglītību*).

Training is free of charge for those receiving training in vocational schools. Ministry of Education and Science enters in contract with schools who want to provide craftsman educational and allocates them resources. Training under the guidance of master may be free of charge or paid by students; or their work done behalf of the enterprises of craftsmen is understood as a payment in other cases. Masters can pay salary to the trainees; it is recommended to take care of life and health insurance.

5.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

It is possible to gain craft education in schools and centres of craftsmanship, vocational and vocational secondary schools, centres of craftsmen, as well in enterprises of craftsmen under the guidance of master. Pupils obtaining vocational or vocational secondary education (described in the chapter 4.2.) may as well choose to receive training in the craft. Enterprises of craftsmen are registered under the rules set for enterprises and has to be owned or headed by a craftsman. Trainees sign contract of training either with a school or with a master whoever is providing training.

5.3 Curriculum

Balance between theory and practice depends on the respective craft, this is as well true about the length of a training. If provided in schools, theoretical courses respective to the craft should be obtained there; professional associations also organises theoretical courses for certain crafts. Training programmes concentrates on development of specific skills necessary for the craft, basic skills relevant to life-long learning and ICT should be obtained through compulsory schooling. Training methods are used taking account the respective craft and mainly includes individual work and practice.

5.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Progress is measured by teachers in courses necessary for a certain craft by 10-point scale. Trainees should pass qualification examination to receive craftsman qualification. Diplomas are issued by Latvian Chamber of Crafts.

There are such craftsman qualifications:

- 1) Journeyman (*amata zellis*),
- 2) Craftsman (*amatnieks*),
- 3) Master (*amata meistars*),
- 4) Academically educated master (*akadēmiski izglītots amata meistars*).

Journeyman is the first qualification. Craftsman is the one who has practiced at least five years in the craft. Master is one who has passed examinations of master of the particular craft. Master who has obtained respective higher education is rated as academically educated master.

5.5 Teachers and trainers

Only enterprises of craftsmen that are certified by Latvian Chamber of Crafts or its authorized professional associations are rightful to engage trainees into the training.

Teachers should be with a master qualification or with an equivalent qualification and should hold a license issued by Latvian Chamber of Crafts.

Trainers are permanently or temporarily employed on full-time or part-time bases by educational institutions or hold a master position in an enterprises of craftsmen or are registered as individual masters. In-service training and upgrading of qualifications is not regulated.

6. TERTIARY EDUCATION

Higher education (ISCED level 5) in Latvia is provided by higher education institutions. Students can complete higher academic education programmes (ISCED 5A) or higher professional education programmes (ISCED 5B and 5A), and doctoral programmes (ISCED level 6).

The Law on Institutions of Higher Education draws distinction between university type higher education institutions and non-university type higher education institutions. While non-university type institutions run professional programmes, universities often offer both academic and profession programmes. The Law defines four criteria for awarding the status of university to a higher education institution:

- 1) implementation of bachelor, master and doctoral study programmes; the defence of doctoral study programme promotion works occur every year,
- 2) at least half of persons elected to academic positions shall have doctoral degrees,
- 3) publishes scientific periodical publications,
- 4) in the main scientific sectors, which are implemented in study programmes, institution of higher education structural units or scientific institutions have been established.

Proportion of academic staff with doctoral degree in non-university type higher education institutions describes section 6.6.

College is education institution where first level professional higher education programmes are provided.

Colleges are most recent type of vocational education institution in Latvia. Colleges are developing as autonomous institutions or within the higher education institutions. In higher education institutions Colleges can be independent structural unit or HE institution can provide first level professional education programmes as “college” programmes. Completion of college programmes whether in College or in higher education institution gives equal access to the labour market or further studies.

Higher education institution implements second level professional higher education programmes and academic higher education programmes. Higher education institution may also obtain status of university if corresponds to above mentioned criteria. Universities are focused on research activities in science fields, while non-university type HEIs are focused on providing of students with vocational training and skills. In these HEIs research activities are performed in distinct fields of science, economy or art.

Professional higher education is divided in first level professional higher education (*pirmā līmeņa profesionālā augstākā izglītība*) called also college programmes and second level professional higher education (*otrā līmeņa profesionālā augstākā izglītība*). These programmes can, where possible and feasible, be organised in two cycles having a college programme as the first cycle.

First level professional higher education programmes allow gaining level IV professional qualifications; these college programmes are mainly established to train specialists for the labour market. College programmes last two or three years.

Second level professional higher education programmes are aimed at level V professional qualifications (the highest professional qualification of a specialist, that provides planning and research possibilities in the respective branch). These programmes last at least four years.

In 1862 the Riga Polytechnic was founded what served as a basis for development of the University of Latvia, now the largest university in Latvia. In 1919 University of Latvia, the State Conservatory

(Academy of Music) and the Art Academy of Latvia were founded. During the years of occupation functioning of higher education institutions and research centres was maintained.

Reforms initiated in 1991 provided autonomy for higher education institutions. New education law introduced bachelor and master programmes as well as professional programmes instead of five years diploma studies. The new law provided legal ground for establishing of private higher education institutions. The Law on Institutions of Higher Education (1995) introduced evaluation system of higher education in Latvia and rules for recognition of qualifications acquired in other countries.

Rules of governance of HE institution are defined by the constitution of the institution. The Parliament of the Republic of Latvia approves constitutions of state founded HEIs. Constitutions of other HEIs and Colleges have to be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers.

Completion of academic higher education programmes leads to bachelor academic degree in any distinct field of science (education sciences, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, agriculture, health and environmental sciences).

Bachelor study programme is 3-4 years long. After obtaining of bachelor degree a person can continue his/her studies at master's level study programme or in higher education Professional programmes.

Master level study programme and professional higher education study programme after completion of bachelor programme is 1-2 years long. Completion of master's level studies and obtaining of master's degree gives the right for a person to continue his/her studies at doctoral level.

Completion of professional higher education programmes leads to professional qualification and Professional bachelor degree. Professional higher education bachelor degree can be awarded only if full time study programme is at least four years long.

Holder of bachelor professional degree can continue his/her studies at professional master study level.

Awarded master's degree gives the right to continue studies at doctoral level. Doctoral studies are 3-4

6.1 Admission

Every citizen of the Republic of Latvia as well as holder of passport of non-citizen of Latvia, and every holder of permanent residence permit who has also certificate on completed (upper)secondary education has the right to study in higher education institutions in Latvia. Age census does not exist.

If international agreements do not state otherwise, the rules of admission of foreign citizens are the following:

- correspondence of (upper)secondary education certificate;
- correspondence of knowledge and skills to requirements of respective higher education institution;
- knowledge of study language;
- tuition fee according to the agreement with HEI.

For citizens of the European Union member states and their children acquiring education in Latvia the tuition fee is specified and covered according to the same procedures as for citizens of Latvia. State or municipality founded HEIs generally provide studies in the state language. However, there are three cases when other languages can be used as study languages:

- implementing study programmes offered to foreign students or in study programmes implemented according to the EU programmes or in the framework of international agreements;
- in study courses taught by guest lecturer from HEI outside Latvia;
- in language and culture study programmes where using of other language is necessary condition for reaching the aims of study programme.

Basic regulation on admission rules is issued by the Cabinet of Ministers, HEIs draw up their admission rules on the basis of national rules. Number of enrolled students depends on agreement between the HEI and the Ministry of Education and Science, and a maximum number of study places are determined by individual HEIs.

The admission to the study programme is organized according to the principles of competition. Student admission is generally based on grades attained in the centralised examination and on the general upper secondary school leaving certificate together with the results of an entrance examination. In addition, some HEIs may place additional emphasis on previous education, studies, practical training, etc. Entrance examinations are designed by the HEI to assess the applicants' motivation, suitability and aptitude in respective study programme.

Upper-secondary education certificate/diploma obtained outside Latvia has to be recognised by Academic Information Centre (<http://www.aic.lv>)

6.2 Students' contributions and financial support

All higher education institutions set registration fee (around 5-20 LVL).

In Latvia higher education studies are state subsidised or privately financed. Each year the Ministry of Education and Science sets the number of state subsidised study places. In recent years, in compliance with needs of labour market and Latvia's development strategy the proportion of state subsidised study places is growing in study areas of natural sciences, mathematics and engineering.

Around one fourth of students study in state subsidised study places while others are paying for their studies. HEIs are free to decide on amount of study fee for the rest of study places. The size of tuition fees varies quite considerably from one institution or study programme to other. Some HEIs recently introduced rotation principle – a contest among students for the right to move from privately funded place to the state subsidised study place depending on their study accomplishments and results. Each HEI develops its own regulations concerning rotation.

Students are provided financial support in the form of scholarships, grants and loans as well as indirectly by discount of travelling costs in public transport. Students from low income families can pretend to a monthly stipend, other form of support for all students are loans for covering living expenses and loans for covering study fee for full time studies. Loans may be received by students who study in the HEIs offering accredited study programmes.

Employed students each year can apply for income tax refunding from a certain sum of income for their study expenditures. Students from distant regions can be provided with living rooms in student dormitories.

6.3 Organisation of the academic year

Higher education institutions are autonomous in terms of organization of the academic year.

Beginning of the academic year occurs generally in the first week of September, but may differ among institutions which are autonomous. Institutions fix periods of teaching activity and holidays. Teaching

activity usually is organised from September-December and from February-May. As regards holidays, there is normally one week around Christmas/New Year and another one at Easter. Institutions fix periods of examinations. Usually examinations conclude the teaching activity period and take place in January/February and June/July. The academic year generally ends after the last examination of spring or summer semester.

In accordance with the law, academic year consists of 40 credit points. One credit point corresponds to one week of studies. Thus the academic year lasts 40 weeks. The length of intervals is not specified, but normally they are divided in two equal parts. Latvia's system of credits is comparable with ECTS credits (by multiplying number of credits with coefficient 1.5).

Full-time studies correspond to 40 credits of the academic year and not less than 40 academic hours per week.

Time amount of part-time studies corresponds to less than 40 credits per academic year and less than 40 academic hours per week.

Academic hour corresponds to 45 minutes. Direct contact hour between a student and teacher also corresponds to one academic hour.

HEIs have the rights to develop their own study programmes independently. Then, study programmes have to be licensed by the Ministry of Education and Science. Licensing is an initial phase of quality evaluation of study programme. Study programme has to be applied to accreditation in a three years period after licensing.

Amount of bachelor study programme part-time studies and full-time studies is 120-160 credits; of them at least 10 credits is development of bachelor theses. Full-time studies are six to eight semesters long. Bachelor study programme comprises compulsory part (at least 50 credits), so called compulsory option part (at least 20 credits) and free choice part.

Compulsory part of study programme comprises acquisition of basic principles, structure and methods of study field in question (at least 25 credits), history and topical problems of study field (at least 10 credits), and multidisciplinary issues in relation to the field of study (at least 15 credits).

Amount of master's programme studies is 80 credits with at least 20 credits of them for development of master's theses. Compulsory content of master's study programme comprises acquisition of concepts of study field in question (at least 30 credits) and approbation of concepts in particular aspect of the study field (at least 15 credits).

During the studies it is possible to change the field of study, but the conditions of change depend on the study programmes in question and the decision of higher education institution.

Content of study courses and practical training in professional higher education is determined by corresponding Professional Standard. Total length of professional higher education is at least 5 years. Total length of studies for acquisition of Professional qualification is at least 4 years.

Amount of first level professional higher education programme (college programme) is 80-120 credits. Study courses (lectures, seminars, laboratory and practical training, counselling and independent work) comprise at least 56 credits but not exceed 75 % of total amount of the study programme. Practical training comprises not less than 16 credits, qualification Project – not less than 8 credits. Independent work of a student comprises 35-40 % of total amount of study courses.

Amount of professional higher education bachelor programme (second level professional higher education programme) is at least 160 credits. The study programme comprise: study courses, practical training outside the HEI, and state tests, including development and defence of bachelor

theses or diploma work. Practical training comprises at least 30 % of study courses. Student also develops at least three study works/projects.

Amount of professional higher education master's programme (second level professional higher education programme) is at least 40 credits. Study courses comprise recent developments in the theory and practice of the chosen study field, management and research courses, courses on pedagogy and psychology. Mandatory study content includes also development and defence of master's theses or diploma work as a part of state tests and practical training.

Amount of doctoral study programme is 120-160 credits, of them 40-60 credits are awarded for teaching of some courses. Study programme includes also compulsory and optional courses, and development of independent research theses with original and valid results. Doctoral student, guided by a supervisor and mentor, elaborates individual study plan.

During the studies doctoral students acquires:

- recent research methodologies and applications in science field in question;
- recent approaches in ICT, research planning, data processing and presentation;
- in-depth studies of theory of the field of science;
- basic experience of lecturer's and project manager work (through participation in implementing of bachelor and master's study programmes and research projects);
- participation in panels of international scientific conferences and seminars;
- traineeship in other HEIs and publications of results on joint research project;
- processing and presentation of the results of research in scientific periodicals.

6.4 Assessment, progression and certification

General assessment principles of acquiring of academic and professional study programmes:

- principle of mandatory evaluation – it is necessary to acquire positive assessment on the content of mandatory part of study programme;
- different methodologies used to determine assessment;
- adequacy of evaluation – students can prove their analytical and creative skills, acquired knowledge and competencies.

10-scale grading system is used to evaluate academic performance on all levels of higher education:

- very high level of acquiring (10 – "outstanding", 9 – "excellent");
- high level of acquiring (8 – "very good", 7 – "good");
- medium level of acquisition (6 – "almost good", 5 – "satisfactory", 4 – "almost satisfactory");
- low level of acquisition (3 – "poor", 2 – "very poor", 1 – "very, very poor").

The lowest „pass” grade is 4 „almost satisfactory”. „Pass” and „not pass” are used for assessing tests and practical training periods.

The main form of evaluation is end-of-semester tests, when students receive credits for every successfully acquired study course and practical training. However, continuous evaluation during the semester also can be carried out by teachers.

In doctoral study programmes professors of the corresponding study branch and the theses supervisor monitor academic progress. The student reports about the results of his/her studies and research twice in a year participating in research seminars and conferences where a special decision is made about the conformity of results with the individual study programme. The decision is documented and submitted to the programme director.

Progression to the next year is automatic if the student has fulfilled all requirements of the study programme. Higher education programmes do not envisage the repeating of the study year. Scholarships and part of transportation costs are provided from the state budget in state subsidised study places, therefore the organisation of higher education demands either fulfilment of programme requirements (with the chance to leave some not-passed courses to next semesters) or to leave studies. There are no regulations regarding number of times the student can attempt to pass an examination, but a mechanism has been developed by several institutions to raise students' motivation – an extra payment must be made in order to pass an examination repeatedly.

It is possible to interrupt studies for a short period of time. Each higher education institution defines provisions regarding the length of study break, possible reasons, procedure etc.

A state-recognized diploma is issued to persons who have completed accredited study programme. Only accredited higher education institutions providing state-accredited study programmes have the right to issue state-recognised diplomas.

In conformity with a state-recognised study programme it is possible to receive:

- academic education resulting in the following degrees:
 - bachelor (academic degree),
 - master (academic degree),
 - doctor (scientific degree);
- fourth and fifth-level Professional qualification and the following Professional degrees:
 - bachelor,
 - master.

Diploma Supplement is issued to each graduate (except those of doctoral programmes) automatically and free of charge. The diploma supplement corresponds to the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES and covers information regarding the nature, level, context and status of the pursued and completed studies. The supplement is issued in Latvian and English, and its purpose is to promote international transparency and fair academic and Professional recognition of qualifications.

Students of first-level professional higher education programmes (college programmes) pass state qualification examination at the end of studies. Part of examination is presentation of qualification theses. Graduates receive a diploma on first-level Professional higher education if the programme is completed and the state qualification examination is passed with the assessment at least 5 – „almost satisfactory”.

Students of second-level Professional higher education programmes (professional higher education bachelor study programmes, professional higher education master study programmes, professional higher education study programmes) also pass state examinations at the end of studies. Part of final examinations is development and defence of bachelor, master or diploma theses. Graduates receive:

- professional bachelor degree and fifth-level professional qualification (after professional higher education bachelor study programme);

- professional master's degree, and graduates with previous academic education also obtain fifth-level Professional qualification (after professional higher education master study programme);
- fifth-level Professional qualification (after professional higher education study programme).

Academic bachelor and master study programmes end with final examinations, including the development of bachelor or master's theses. Graduates receive diploma certifying bachelor's or master's degree with diploma supplement.

Doctor degree internationally recognized as PhD can be conferred only after completion of doctoral study programme and defence of doctoral thesis. Doctoral thesis may consist of a dissertation, or also of a group of thematic papers or a monograph. A foreign expert is involved in the evaluation of thesis. A person, who has obtained the scientific degree, receives a doctor's diploma.

6.5 Guidance and counselling

Students may seek assistance and advice concerning study process in counselling centres of HEIs and administrative units of respective faculty. Several higher education institutions offer a wide range of services, not only career counselling, but also training on how to apply for a job (consisting of general information, information on vacancies, and supplementary training).

In Latvia students have taken initiative to run the Career Days, in order to learn about potential employers, Exchange information between students and companies, learn how to present oneself in labour market and investigate what kind of skills and knowledge employers want to expect from their future employees.

6.6 Academic staff

Main selection criteria for academic staff are their qualifications – previous education and experience. For academic appointments the following education is necessary:

- professor – doctor's degree and at least 3 years experience in position of associated professor,
- associated professor – doctor's degree,
- docent – doctor's degree,
- lecturer – doctor's or master's degree,
- assistant – doctor's or master's degree,
- academic staff of professional study programmes – since the most important is to deliver practical skills and knowledge from teachers to students then persons with completed higher education level and sufficient practical experience in teaching subject but without scientific degree can be appointed to positions of docents, lecturers and assistants.

Amendment (in 2005) of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education introduced so called permanent academic position in higher education institutions in order to avoid nominal provision of necessary number of teachers and for facilitating of attraction of doctors to HEIs, developing and broadening also research activities. However, the amendment does not exclude possibility for higher education teacher to be employed by more than one higher education institution.

The rector of higher education institution concludes an employment contract with professor, docent, lecturer or assistant elected in respective academic position for duration of 6 years. The contract can be prolonged. However, when a staff vacancy or temporary vacancy occurs, the senate of the institution concerned may, instead of inviting competitive applications, employ a visiting professor, assistant professor or lecturer. Teaching staff are obliged to undergo in-service training once in a term of office. The main teaching methods used at higher education institutions are lectures and seminars.

In order to improve academism of studies, it is planned to introduce a requirement for a definite proportion of academic staff to hold doctor's degree – in academies (*akadēmija*) the required proportion would be least 30 %, while in other higher education institutions *augstskola* – at least 20 %. This requirement came into effect in July, 2010.

7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

7.1 Policy and legislative framework

Satversme (the constitution) of Latvia declares the right to education for every resident of Latvia. There is no separate law on adult education in Latvia; the legal basis is the Education Law and the national policy paper Basic Standpoints on Lifelong Learning 2007-2013 defining the target groups of adult education – unemployed, youth, people with special needs, women, retirees, families, and professionals of different occupations.

The main institutions responsible for implementation of provisions relating adult education are the Ministry of Education and Science as regards general education, and the Ministry of Welfare regarding training of unemployed and job seekers. Both ministries share the responsibility of providing career information, guidance and counselling services.

Regional municipalities are responsible for organizing adult education within its territory.

Formal education programs including basic, secondary and higher education is regulated through specific laws (Law on General Education, Law on Professional Education, and Law on Higher Education Institutions) and regulations. The Education Law regulates informal education programs.

In 2003 Latvian Adult Education Association, together with the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments and the Ministry of Education and Science, elaborated a procedure for licensing non-formal education programs in local municipalities. Although this procedure has a recommending nature, majority of local municipalities follow it.

Adult education is also regulated by the Law on Support for Unemployed and Job seekers, aiming to develop the support system for the unemployed and job seekers, to help them return or enter the labour market. The State Employment Agency (an institution under the authority of the Ministry of Welfare) deals with vocational training for changing qualification and improvement of professional skills. It provides also guidance and counselling services for the unemployed including such aspects as psychological consultations, vocational guidance legal advice etc.

Guidance and counselling services are also provided by the Professional Career Counselling State Agency (operates under supervision of the Ministry of Welfare), the National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance (operates under supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science).

According to the Education Law adult education (*pieaugušo izglītība*) is a multifarious process that ensures the development of a personality and competitive capacity in the labour market during lifetime. Further education (*tālākizglītība*) is continuation of previously acquired education and improvement of professional skills in conformity with the requirements of the specific profession. Interest-related (*interesešu izglītība*) education is realisation of the individual educational needs and desires of a person regardless of age and previously acquired education.

Education Law distinguishes between formal and non-formal education programmes which can be offered to adults. Formal education is the system which includes basic, secondary and higher education levels, and the completion of formal education programmes is confirmed by a nationally recognised certificate of education and/or vocational qualification. Non-formal education is organised outside the framework of formal education and is based on demand.

7.2 Distribution of responsibilities

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the formal adult education that includes – general, vocational, and higher education. The Ministry of Welfare is responsible for the vocational training and re-qualification of the unemployed and job seekers.

The Law on Education determines that it is the competence of regional governments to organise adult education. 27 Adult Education Centres were opened following the Recommendation of the Cabinet of Ministers “Model regulations on adult education centres” in 1995. Centres are institutions founded and run by local governments, which oversee and coordinate adult education in each respective town or region. The main purpose of the centres is to coordinate adult education in the region, compile information about adult educational opportunities and assure the availability and dissemination of this information.

Professional societies, associations and chambers are responsible for the professional growth of their members, since in many cases they confer the right to practice in a certain profession (provide certification).

The Latvian Adult Education Association (LAEA) was established in 1993; this group consists of legal entities and individuals actively involved in the field of adult education. The aim of the LAEA is to promote development of non- formal adult education systems and to participate in the creation of a lifelong learning policy, thereby promoting development of civic, democratic and open society in Latvia. The LAEA has created a co-operative network of adult education providers from all towns and districts of Latvia, prepared trainers, elaborated and approved training programmes, training and methodological materials.

In 2000 and 2001, within the framework of the EU program Socrates, adult education and human resource development plans were developed in 12 districts in Latvia. The Latvian Association of Adult Education headed this work. This work served to dissolve a few myths concerning the situation in education for adults and allowed each local government to become aware of priorities in human resource development.

7.3 Financing

Law on Education states five sources for the financing of adult education:

- 1) The budget of the state or municipalities,
- 2) Resources of employers,
- 3) Resources of participants,
- 4) Donations and grants,
- 5) Other resources.

According to the data provided by the Latvian Adult Education Association, the adult education is being financed by:

- Payments made by training participants – persons who are aware that additional knowledge will help them to maintain their employment or favour their career;
- Employers' contributions – investments in education are made by those enterprises who consider training as a tool for improving competitiveness, predominantly, these are enterprises who employ over 50 persons, as well as those that have been founded through foreign investment;

- Non-government organizations – these are organizations that are interested in education of their members or of society as a whole;
- Local governments – support training that meets local needs; there are local governments which earmark a certain percentage of income for adult training;
- The government – funds adult training in two ways – through the State Employment Service training for the unemployed, and through the institutions under the authority of various ministries that hold responsibility for the further education of persons employed in certain sectors.

There is no tax relief for those employers who invest in the further education and training of their employees.

7.4 Programmes and providers

Adult education and training programs are offered by:

- Private education establishments;
- Professional associations, for example, the Latvian Chamber of Crafts, the Latvian Union of Medical Doctors, etc.;
- Ministries and organizations under their authority, such as the Teacher Training Centre of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Medical Professional Education Centre of the Ministry of Welfare;
- Further education centres at higher education institutions;
- Higher education institutions;
- Adult Training Centres established by municipalities at regional level;
- Folk schools and other institutions that provide interest-related education. Folk schools are operating mostly in rural regions with the goal of providing rural residents with a well-rounded education. The folk schools try to continue the traditions established in the period before occupation, i.e. the development of civic education;
- Schools of general education. Some of the evening schools have started to provide general education and correspondence courses explicitly for adults.

In 2009 the Career Guidance Association of Latvia was established. The aims of this body are to consolidate, guide and train those of interest in career guidance activities in Latvia. The association plans to facilitate the development of Latvia's economy and to make closer both education institutions and employers and employees, as well as to enhance involvement of Latvia's people into acquisition of career competences (choice of career and career management).

Adult education is open to every person at least 15 years of age all life long irrespective of previous education. There are several professions involving regular continuing education in order to maintain and/or improve professionalism such as doctors, teachers and civil servants. Academic or job-related formal adult education programs require previous education or qualification.

Unemployed persons eligible for qualification courses are chosen by State Employment Service. They shall be at least 18 years old and having no or not an adequate professional qualification to find an appropriate job.

In cases, when the profession in question in Latvia is regulated, holders of foreign qualifications need official recognition. In all other (non-regulated) professions it is up to the employer to decide whether to employ holder of foreign qualification or not. (A regulated profession is a profession which by law or regulation requires authorization, registration or the equivalent. This authorization or registration is often connected with the requirement of a particular, specified education and training. Some of the regulated professions in Latvia are sworn notary, doctor, teacher, architect.)

The main goal of adult education programs is to provide individuals with the opportunity to complement education based on their needs and interests irrespective to previous education and age, to supplement inadequate previous education and knowledge due to social and economic changes, to resolve questions of social adaptation and integration. The main goal of formal further vocational education is the qualification upgrading.

Studies are carried out in the form of courses, study circles or any other form suitable for students. Formal education which covers the acquisition of basic and secondary education is implemented in evening courses, distance or external forms. The length of the education and training depends on the programme. A venue depends on the education providers.

Institutions that implement adult education programs work out the curricula of the adult education programs; the programs are worked out taking into account the target group and the development problems of the state and municipalities. The content of general and vocational programs should be harmonized with the national standards of education.

Adults can attend study courses offered to students in higher education institutions having a status of listeners. In that case curriculum and methods are the same as for the university students.

Law on Vocational Education determines that a programme of further vocational education contains not less than 30 % of the compulsory professional subject matter contained in the national education standard for vocational education or secondary vocational education programmes, or not less than 30 % of the compulsory content of the national standard for first level higher professional education programmes.

Education programs for the unemployed have to include the obligatory part of the curriculum for the particular level of qualification as defined in the standard of the vocational education.

Pedagogical work of adult education is based on andragogy methods. Andragogy means that instruction for adults needs to focus more on the process and less on the content being taught. Strategies such as case studies, role-playing, simulations, and self-evaluation are most useful. Instructors adopt a role of facilitator or resource rather than lecturer or grader.

There are provided trainings that should benefit in job searching for disadvantage adult groups who are unemployed. There are no basic skills programs for disadvantaged adult groups except of those provided within basic, secondary and vocational education design for people with special needs.

7.5 Quality assurance

The quality assurance methods on the state level are accreditation of educational programs and educational institutions. State supervision of quality assurance and the function of supervision are carried out by the State Service for Quality of Education. Officials of the service check if adult education providers observe the normative acts related to education.

The State Service is competent to participate in the state accreditation of general and vocational educational programmes and institutions and lead the work of an expert commission. The State Service is rightful to suggest inflicting a demerit to the head of the educational institution or

pedagogues, to discontinue a labour contract in the case of an offence stated in normative acts. Under certain circumstances the Service is competent to inflict an administrative penalty.

7.6 Guidance and counselling

The State Employment Service and the Career Counselling Centre provides guidance and counselling services free of charge to everybody. Unemployed persons are also welcome to seek guidance services on possible training and retraining for the unemployed in the State Employment Service.

Formal adult education is evaluated in the 10-point scale, the criteria and methods on evaluation are defined in the state standards of education. Persons who complete further vocational education programs should take centralised qualification examinations.

Qualifications and certificates awarded after the acquisition of the specific education level are equivalent to those awarded to pupils or students in the respective level of education. Adults receive state acknowledged certification on education only if the programs are accredited by the state.

The providers of non-formal adult education programs work out provisions of evaluation. Non-formal adult education programs may provide students with certificate on completion of the program.

Prior learning is recognized (as well if obtained in the form of self studies) and leads to formal qualifications if a person passes qualification examinations.

7.7 Teachers and trainers

Only qualified persons with theoretical and practical knowledge and skills in respective subject can work as adult trainers.

Training of multipliers as further education teachers is well-developed in Latvia. For present, national level regulation on training and qualifications of multipliers does not exist. They are trained in special professional development courses and, after completion of the courses a multiplier certificate is awarded to the students.

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Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra

Valsts izglītības satura centrs

Izglītības likums

Vispārējās izglītības likums

Noteikumi par valsts vispārējās vidējās izglītības standartu un vispārējās vidējās izglītības mācību priekšmetu standartiem

Profesionālās izglītības likums

Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās vidējās izglītības standartu un valsts arodizglītības standartu

Noteikumi par valsts vispārējās vidējās izglītības standartu un vispārējās vidējās izglītības mācību priekšmetu standartiem