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Author: Martina Kaňáková

Contributors: Jiřina Novotná, Zdeňka Šímová and Věra Havlíčková

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1. Introduction

In the Czech Republic, initial vocational education and training (IVET) is provided at the upper secondary (and post-secondary) level by the secondary vocational schools (*střední odborná učiliště – SOU*) and secondary technical schools (*střední odborné školy – SOŠ*). A specific type of secondary schools is conservatoires. At the tertiary level, IVET is provided by the tertiary professional schools (*vyšší odborné školy – VOŠ*) and higher education institutions (*vysoké školy – VŠ*).

The legal framework for IVET is provided by the School Act (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2004a). Pupils enter IVET after completing the nine-year compulsory schooling in the framework of general education (primary schools), i.e. generally at the age of 15-16. IVET, in the combined form of study, is intended also for adults who have completed compulsory education. Solely the schools are responsible for the provision of vocational education and training (VET). Although there is a relatively large proportion of theoretical education in relation to practical training in the IVET programmes, practical training ⁽¹⁾ constitutes the mandatory part.

In the Czech Republic, the teaching professionals facilitating the implementation of IVET (educational programmes at the level of lower secondary education (ISCED 253/ EQF 2/3)), higher secondary education (ISCED 353/ EQF 3 and ISCED 354/ EQF 4) as well as tertiary education, are teachers and trainers. In the area of continuing vocational education (CVET), the teaching force consists of CVET trainers.

Qualification and competence requirements for all teaching professionals, their working hours, continuing professional development (CPD) and career scheme are regulated by the Act No. 563/2004 Coll. on pedagogical staff and on the amendment to some other acts (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2004b). The Act states that a member of pedagogical staff is a person implementing direct activities in the area of teaching, education, special-needs education or pedagogy and psychology with immediate effect on learners. It applies to the teaching professionals at schools and educational

⁽¹⁾ The School Act (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2004a) divides the education provided by secondary schools into theoretical and practical training. Practical training is further divided into vocational training, practicum, practical training and professional or artistic practice and sports training according to individual fields of study. Practical training is mostly implemented already from the first grade at schools and school facilities or ideally directly at workplaces of physical persons or legal entities (in companies and enterprises where pupils get to know the real working environment) that hold authorisation for activities related to the given field of study and that concluded with the school an agreement on the contents, scope and terms and conditions of practical training. Practical training, thus, takes place at school workshops, school farms or other facilities, vocational training centres and in companies.

institutions listed in the Register of Educational Facilities, maintained by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT).

The approval of the School Act (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2004a) started the curricular reform in initial education, which in line with the definition set by the National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic, consisted in modification of objectives and contents of education. There is emphasis on the need for a closer cooperation and creation of functional links between schools and their partners from the world of work. The concept of centrally defining VET content had been abandoned and the schools acquired greater autonomy and scope for creating their own profile responding to the needs of employers and other social partners at the regional level.

The formal framework to the curricular reform is given by the transition from the uniform curricular documents to the framework educational programmes (national curricula, RVPs) ⁽²⁾ that have been gradually developed in the course of 2007-12. On the basis of the national curricula, schools design their own school educational programmes (school-based curricula, ŠVPs); teachers are also involved in this process.

Implementation of the curricular reform at all levels of education placed increased demands also on the teaching professionals, whether it was their involvement in the creation of school curricula or acquiring new skills in working with learning outcomes and improving teaching methods.

Also in CVET, there has been a noticeable transformation due to the Act on validation and recognition of the outcomes of continuing education (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2006) and the development of the National Register of Qualifications. The Act contributed to the process of the social partners' involvement in the development of educational programmes as well as in the preparation of the National Register of Qualifications. Some secondary schools commenced their transformation into lifelong learning centres and began to focus more on providing continuing education.

The reform of completion of three- and four-year programmes at secondary schools was aimed to secure comparability of learning outcomes and promote the quality of education. In four-year study programmes concluded with the *Maturita* examination, the final exam consists of the common (state) part and the so-called profile part. The schools are in charge of the preparation of the profile part of their *Maturita* examination, the teachers are involved in its development. The common part of the *Maturita*

⁽²⁾ For each field of study listed in the Regulation of the Government on fields of study in basic, secondary and tertiary professional education, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) issued an individual framework educational programme (RVP), in total there are 281 of them.

examination is prepared centrally and guaranteed by the state, it is uniform, which secures better comparability of the results. The reform of the final examination at the end of the three-year study programmes with a vocational certificate (without *Maturita*) is based on the so-called uniform assignments for individual study programmes.

The Czech Republic deals with multiple challenges in the area of training, employment and professional development of teachers. The motivation for choosing teaching as a career is, on the part of the secondary schools' graduates, impacted by the relatively low social prestige of the teaching profession and also by relatively low remuneration, which is evident both in comparison with the salaries abroad as well as the average salary of tertiary educated population in the country. Moreover, the teaching profession has only limited opportunities for career development and growth. Other important issues within this occupational group are aging of teaching professionals and increasing gender imbalance in teaching staff in favour of women.

The introduction of the career scheme for teachers in kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary professional schools is long-awaited by the teaching professionals. Since 1990, there have been four attempts to prepare such a career scheme, however, all of them failed. Therefore, the Czech Republic is strongly committed to developing and introducing the career scheme that would provide guidance to all teachers in their CPD and would be linked to a motivating remuneration system based on transparent rules.

At present, a proposal of career scheme for teachers is being developed in the framework of the national project, 'Career Scheme', implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) in partnership with the National Institute for Further Education (NDIV). The original idea was to design a four-level system: the first level intended for the beginning teachers; achieving the second level mandatory and the following two higher levels would enable teachers to pursue their career growth and would guide their subsequent professional development (NÚV, 2014). The Czech Government confirmed its commitment to the preparation and launching of the career scheme for teachers in its Policy Statement (Czech Government, 2014).

The proposal of the career scheme is built on three career paths. It introduces the currently missing path allowing for the development of professional competences. The other two career paths, i.e. the path leading to specialised positions at schools and the path to functional positions have been operating over the long-term already and the career scheme as a whole is solely inter-connecting them with the emerging career path of professional competences development and with the standard for teacher qualifications. It introduces a new position of a mentor within the career path leading to specialised positions. The standard for teacher qualifications constitutes a basis of the career scheme summarising the requirements of the state in terms of socio-personal qualities of teachers, their professional abilities and their continuing development in the course of the entire teaching career.

The standard for teacher qualifications is built on professional abilities that are assessable, can be acquired, developed or enhanced by continuing education and practice. It constitutes a common professional standard for all teachers in all types of schools and all subjects, i.e. from the pre-school education to higher vocational education. Many secondary vocational schools have already specified, in the framework of their internal operation, their requirements for teachers in terms of content and standard of personal as well as professional competences.

Developing a system of training and professional qualifications acquisition for teaching staff is one of the objectives of the strategic document, 'New measures fostering vocational education and training' (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2012). The proposed measures include, e.g.:

- (a) securing the processing of standards of professional knowledge and skills for pedagogical staff including a system of criteria for their evaluation;
- (b) in cooperation with the employers in the relevant field, introducing a systemic support for acquiring professional qualifications by VET teachers and other pedagogical staff;
- (c) within the accreditation process of study programmes in the area of continuing education of pedagogical staff, taking into account domestic as well as foreign internships of VET teachers as a valid tool in the system of continuing education of pedagogical staff;
- (d) creating conditions for involvement of experts from practice in educational process and for continuing vocational education of teachers of vocational theoretical subjects.

The three key priorities, stipulated in the Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2014), include also promoting the quality of teaching and teachers particularly in the sense of completing and launching of the career scheme for teachers, improving conditions of their work and modernisation of pre-service training of teachers.

Tables 1 and 2 below provide some data on the number of teachers (in full-time equivalent) in secondary and tertiary vocational and technical schools ⁽³⁾.

⁽³⁾ The database of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is in charge of processing and regular publication of school statistics.

Table 1. **IVET teachers in Czech Republic**

	2005	2010	2013
IVET teachers at the upper secondary (and post-secondary, non-tertiary) level, total in FTE			
Teachers	28 506	26 146	23 109
Teachers of practicum	5 179	6 335	5 415
Total	33 685	32 481	28 524
Consisting of:			
IVET teachers – secondary vocational schools (SOU), including the centres of practical training (SPV)			
Teachers	11 079	8 123	6 031
Teachers of practicum	5 158	6 322	5 173
Total	16 237	14 445	11 204
IVET teachers – secondary technical schools (SOŠ) and conservatoires			
Teachers	17 427	18 023	17 078
Teachers of vocational training	21	13	242
Total	17 448	18 036	17 320

NB: Number of persons in full-time equivalent.

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2015). Table B5.3.13

Table 2. **Teachers at tertiary professional schools (VOŠ) (FTE)**

	2005/06	2010/11	2013/14
Teachers at tertiary professional schools (VOŠ) (FTE)			
Total of teacher	1 923	1 841	1 783
Consisting of:			
Women	1 201	1 156.6	1 139

NB: Number of persons in full-time equivalent.

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2105). Table B7.2.12.

2. Teaching and training professionals in school-based settings

Pre-service training of teachers (for the primary and secondary schools) is provided at the tertiary level of education – either by pedagogical faculties of relevant higher education institutions or universities or by technical, social sciences or natural sciences faculties. The prospective teachers need to pass the state final examination in pedagogy, psychology and didactic teaching. There are no unified profiles for the graduates from teacher training provided at the higher education institutions for the teachers of general or vocational subjects let alone the teachers of vocational and practical training. Individual higher education institutions and other educational institutions set their own profiles for the teacher training graduates and the contents of relevant study programmes are not comparable.

2.1. Teaching professionals at upper secondary VET schools

The teaching professionals at upper secondary VET schools ⁽⁴⁾ include teachers of general subjects, teachers of vocational theoretical subjects, teachers of vocational training and teachers of practicum. The position of instructor of practical training is not specified in the Act on pedagogical staff as the instructors are employees of companies and not members of pedagogical staff.

Teachers of general subjects acquire their professional qualification at a higher education institution by completing an accredited pedagogical Master study programme, i.e. in the field of pedagogical sciences focused on educating the general subjects' teachers for secondary schools or for the second grade of primary schools ⁽⁵⁾ or in the field appropriate to the nature of the general subject to be taught. It is possible to acquire a professional qualification through tertiary education.

Teachers of vocational theoretical subjects acquire professional qualifications at a higher education institution by completing an accredited Master study programme: either in the field of pedagogical sciences focused on educating the teachers of vocational theoretical subjects for secondary schools; or in the field of pedagogical sciences focused on educating the teachers of general subjects for the second grade of primary schools and of the general subjects at secondary schools in the field appropriate to the nature of the vocational theoretical subject to be taught; or in the

⁽⁴⁾ Upper secondary education is, in the CR, provided by secondary technical and secondary vocational schools. Conservatoires (drama, dance, music fields of study) represent a specific type of secondary schools.

⁽⁵⁾ Lower secondary obligatory education for pupils at the age between 12 and 15-16.

field of pedagogical sciences focused on educating the teachers of general subjects at secondary schools in the field of study appropriate to the nature of the vocational theoretical subject to be taught. A teacher of vocational theoretical subjects is qualified to guide the practicum or vocational training of pupils ⁽⁶⁾.

Teachers of practicum acquire professional qualifications at a higher education institution by completing an accredited study programme in a field appropriate to the nature of the subjects to be taught; or through tertiary professional education by completing an upper secondary accredited educational programme with *Maturita* in a field appropriate to the nature of the subject to be taught. A teacher of practicum is qualified to guide professional or vocational practicum of pupils.

Teachers of vocational training acquire professional qualifications at a higher education institution by completing an accredited study programme in the field; or through tertiary professional education by completing an accredited educational programme at a tertiary professional school in a field appropriate to the nature of the subjects to be taught in vocational training; or through secondary education with *Maturita* or vocational certificate in a field appropriate to the nature of the subject to be taught.

In addition to the achieved formal qualification in their field, all the above-listed professionals who wish to teach need to prove their pedagogical competence. This competence is achieved through tertiary education by completing an accredited Bachelor's degree programme in the field of pedagogical sciences focused on educating the teachers for secondary schools or for the second grade of primary schools; or by completing a lifelong learning programme organised by a higher education institution and focused on educating the teachers for secondary schools or for the second grade of primary schools; or through pedagogical studies ⁽⁷⁾.

Teachers of vocational training and practicum enhance their pedagogical, psychological and didactical competences in the study programme, '*Teacher of vocational education and practicum*', implemented at higher education institutions or at the National Institute for Further Education. Studies at this Bachelor study programme allow the graduates from secondary technical schools to acquire qualifications for teaching vocational training and practicum at secondary technical schools.

⁽⁶⁾ Practical training in cooperating companies can be guided or supervised also by an instructor who, however, always cooperates with the teacher or the principal teacher of practical training who conducts the overall assessment of pupils, also in cooperation with the instructor.

⁽⁷⁾ Studies in an accredited programme for continuing education of pedagogical staff organised by a higher educational institution or a facility for continuing education of pedagogical staff.

Amendment to the Act on pedagogical staff (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2014) in force since January 2015 regulates the requirements for professional qualification in specific cases and opportunities for further performance of pedagogical activities by persons who have not acquired a teaching qualification. If the persons without professional qualification wished to continue teaching, they were obliged, by the end of 2014, to commence studies leading to a professional qualification in the area of direct pedagogical function, which they perform. The Amendment introduced a general exemption from the requirement of professional qualification for persons who have reached at least 55 years of age by 1 January, 2015, and who have been performing a direct pedagogical function at the relevant type of school or educational facility for at least 20 years. The Amendment to the Act allows a headmaster of a secondary school to recognise professional qualification, granting thus the status of a teaching professional to the so-called renowned expert in the field (artists and trainers, persons from the corporate environment). The work load of such a pedagogue shall not exceed a half of the weekly working hours and they must continue their activities in the field.

2.2. Types of continuing education and training of teachers

The types of continuing education of pedagogical workers ⁽⁸⁾ are defined in the Decree No. 317/2005 Coll. on the continuing training of pedagogical staff, the accreditation commission and the career scheme of pedagogical staff. The Decree (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2005b) identifies three types of continuing education of pedagogical workers:

- (a) studies leading to the fulfilment of qualification requirements,
- (b) studies leading to the fulfilment of additional qualification requirements and "
- (c) studies enhancing professional qualifications.

The following types of studies are relevant for the VET teachers.

2.2.1. Studies leading to the fulfilment of qualification requirements

This type of studies includes, e.g.:

- (a) studies in the field of pedagogical sciences; the studies are carried out in the framework of a lifelong learning programme at a higher education institution in the scope of at least 250 hours of instruction;

⁽⁸⁾ The pedagogical staff includes also non-teaching staff (e.g. pedagogical assistants, school psychologists, etc.) who perform direct educational, but not necessarily teaching activity.

- (b) pedagogy studies; the studies, in the scope of at least 120 hours of instruction, are intended for the teachers of vocational theoretical subjects at secondary schools, teachers of practicum at secondary schools, teachers of vocational training at secondary schools, teachers of artistic vocational subjects at elementary artistic schools, secondary schools and conservatoires and the teachers at language schools authorised to organise state language examinations. The studies may be provided by a higher education institution or by a facility for continuing education of teachers;
- (c) studies enhancing professional qualifications and leading to the fulfilment of the prerequisites:
 - (i) to teach at a different type of school or a different level of education ⁽⁹⁾ (200 hours of instruction);
 - (ii) to teach additional subjects (250 hours of instruction);
 - (iii) to perform a direct function in the field of special pedagogy in the school setting intended for the children with special needs (disabled children or children with other type of handicap).

2.2.2. Studies leading to the fulfilment of additional qualification requirements

These studies include, e.g. studies required for performing special activities such as:

- (a) coordination activities in the field of IT and communication technologies,
- (b) development and subsequent co-ordination of school-based curricula and educational programmes of tertiary professional schools,
- (c) prevention of socio-pathological phenomena,
- (d) specialised activities in the field of environmental education,
- (e) activities of special pedagogue in the field of speech therapy at schools, or
- (f) specialised activities in the field of spatial orientation of children with visual impairment.

The studies last at least 250 hours of instruction.

⁽⁹⁾ For example, for teachers with qualification for the second grade of primary schools who want to teach at a secondary school.

2.2.3. Studies enhancing professional qualifications (in-service training, continuing education)

Continuing education focuses on current theoretical and practical issues related to the process of education and training. The content of continuing education consists primarily of new findings in the field of general pedagogy; pedagogical and didactical psychology; theory of education; general didactics; scientific, technical and artistic fields and their relevant didactics; prevention of socio-pathological phenomena and workplace safety. Continuing education may also include foreign languages training for pedagogical staff. These studies usually take the form of a seminar or course and last at least four lessons.

2.3. Requirements for professional development of VET teachers

Provision 24 of Paragraph 3 of the Act on pedagogical staff (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2004b) explicitly stipulates the duty of the headmaster of a public school to organise continuing professional development of pedagogical staff in line with the CPD plan. However, the contents of the plan are not regulated by any provision. It is mandatory for all public schools, i.e. the schools founded by the ministry, regional authorities, municipalities or associations of municipalities, to have a CPD plan. The plan is usually updated at the end of academic year in relation to the successful (or unsuccessful) fulfilment of the long-term objectives of continuing professional development. A headmaster of the school is obliged not only to create a CPD plan but also to ensure, monitor and assess the whole process of continuing education. The aim of the plan is to ensure the quality of teaching in all subjects; it needs to respect the educational needs and interests of teachers while setting up strategic guidance for the further development of the school.

Provision 24 of Paragraph 7 of the Act on pedagogical staff (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2004b) stipulates the right to a study leave for the purpose of self-study in the framework of professional development in the scope of 12 working days per academic year; the way of its use is regulated by Paragraph 5 of the Labour Code for Pedagogical Staff (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2007). A study leave for the purposes of self-study constitutes an obstacle in performing the job on the side of an employee; when using such a leave, an employee is entitled to salary compensation in the amount of lost salary.

2.4. Forms, types and the actual subject of CPD of pedagogical staff

Regular training is carried out in the following areas:

- (a) professional qualifications: updating the knowledge of their field and its context, application of new findings in individual subjects, practical activities and methodological seminars;
- (b) pedagogical competences – enhancing, development and strengthening: the use of modern technologies in teaching; didactical planning, defining learning outcomes; didactical communication, etc.;
- (c) environmental education – education promoting healthy lifestyle, career orientation (including career guidance and counselling);
- (d) programmes promoting equal opportunities in education – education for pupils with special needs.

The contents or the topic of the training may be determined by:

- (a) recommendations of the Czech School Inspectorate (ČŠI) based on the assessment of the school;
- (b) various methodical guidelines set by the MŠMT (existing or urgent issues related to the problems arising in education of pupils): education of pupils from disadvantaged social environment; prevention in the area of socio-pathological behaviour (drug prevention, protection from other types of addictions, bullying prevention – including cyber-bullying, environmental education, etc.).

Digital literacy of teachers including the use of ICT in teaching is based on the Digital Education Strategy (2014) and the Education Policy Strategy of the CR up to 2020 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2014).

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports controls the activities of educational institutions in the implementation of accredited study programmes, accreditation may be withdrawn. Accredited educational institution is responsible for complying with the standard and contents of education in training courses in line with the assessed and approved training programme.

Further education of pedagogical staff is realised in the framework of formal and non-formal education. It is usually provided by:

- (a) universities and higher education institutions,
- (b) state institutions for further education of pedagogical workers – primarily the National Institute for Further Education (directly managed by the MŠMT) operating in all regions of the CR and the National Institute for Education (NÚV),
- (c) regional facilities for further education of pedagogical workers (usually semi-budgetary organizations established by regional authority), other accredited institutions (educational institutions) commercial as well non-profit organisations (NGOs, museums, libraries, technology and science centres),

- (d) companies accredited to provide education – allow the teacher to familiarise themselves with innovations in practice,
- (e) teacher organisations and associations.

The most commonly used method in continuing training of teachers is blended learning – combination of direct training and self-study, seminars, workshops but also coaching or e-learning.

The so far implemented European Social Fund (ESF) projects (e.g. IQ Industry, POSPOLU ⁽¹⁰⁾, Internships in Companies 2, Curriculum S, Help Tech, etc.) proved that the teachers of vocational theoretical subjects and vocational training benefit primarily from repeated internships in companies.

Continuing education is organised for individual teachers according to their field, interest or for the whole teaching teams and it is implemented in educational institutions or directly at schools.

The schools can provide trainings to one another's staff in the framework of networking (sharing experience); the members of the teaching staff can educate each other within the whole team and individuals can gain new knowledge through observations in the colleagues' classes (the use of analysis of video studies is for the moment limited mainly to projects).

Teachers widely use the methodological portal (<http://rvp.cz/>). This online platform was developed in the framework of an ESF project and allows teachers to share experience, get teaching materials, create their own digital educational materials, record video-observations and follow web-seminars on various topics.

Also the MŠMT development programme, 'Fostering continuing education of VET teachers and trainers in real work environment' adopted in 2014, is focused on further education of teaching professionals in VET. The programme was particularly promoting the training of teachers of vocational subjects and practical training in the workplaces of employers. The development programme focused mainly on technical fields.

2.5. Training in skills needed for curriculum adjustments and shaping of schools

2.5.1. Training for the implementation of the reform of school curriculum

The new concept of curriculum and creating curricular documents required the teachers to learn to create, themselves as a team, the individual school-based curricula

⁽¹⁰⁾ More information available at: <http://www.nuv.cz/projekty/narodni-projekty>.

for all study programmes taught at their school. The framework for the study programme structure, objectives, contents and learning outcomes is regulated by national curricular programmes for individual fields of education. Training in creating school curricula was offered to VET teachers in the framework of projects (e.g. Kurikulum S in 2009-12, see section 5.2.1.).

2.5.2. Training for preparation and implementation of final examinations: the new *Maturita* and final examination

Vocational schools prepare the vocational part of the *Maturita* examination on the basis of centrally specified requirements. Therefore, teachers of general core subjects included in *Maturita* (Czech language, mathematics, foreign language) and teachers of vocational theoretical subjects were obliged to learn how to prepare the specific school-based part (oral part) in line with the centrally assigned requirements as well as how to conduct written and oral testing and evaluation of the results according to the centralised system that was totally new in terms of organisation as well as contents. Seminars were organised within national projects *Kurikulum S* (2009-12) and POSPOLU (2012-15) (see Section 5.2.).

Within the framework of a national project, New Final examination (2009-2012) ⁽¹¹⁾, teachers of vocational theoretical subjects and vocational training and practicum were involved in shaping assignments of the final examination tasks and learned how to conduct and evaluate them; how to use this new tool and apply it to the context of the school. Companies and enterprises were also involved in shaping assignments for the examinations.

2.6. Mentoring for teachers

Mentoring is not part of the commonly provided support to teachers. There is not a dedicated position of a mentor within the school structure; teachers perform the function of a mentor outside the established structure, informally. The concept of the mentor's function and its governance and implementation vary depending on the culture of a specific school; some schools establish the position of a mentor based on the headmaster's decision.

Within the continuing education of pedagogical staff, there are accredited training courses in mentoring – however, they are not specifically intended for VET teachers.

In teaching practice in general, there is a strong demand for reinforcing such elements as mentoring, supervision, sharing examples of good practice and promoting

⁽¹¹⁾ Information is available at: <http://www.nuv.cz/nzz>.

continuing education of pedagogical staff, the current offer of which does not sufficiently cover the needs of the teachers. The current offer in the area of teachers' CPD is inaccessible for a significant proportion of schools due to the organisational (primarily the lack of replacement teachers) and financial reasons (the cost of replacements and lack of resources to cover training costs). In the upcoming years, it is necessary to promote measures aimed at:

- (a) fostering effective methods of experience sharing among pedagogues; mapping and publishing inspiring experiences of Czech schools with this form of improvement;
- (b) establishing the position of a mentor at higher levels of the career scheme for those teachers who have achieved proficiency in the professional field (regardless of age or length of service) and prove to have potential in terms of pedagogical guidance; and creating a system to develop teachers' mentoring skills;
- (c) securing that every beginning teacher is guided by a mentoring teacher with adequate mentoring skills;
- (d) establishing, within the system, support for educational leaders, including adequate remuneration and possibility to reduce their direct teaching load so that they are able to perform their mentoring function at their own school or also at other schools (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2014).

2.7. Monitoring continuing education of VET teachers

The number and types of training courses for teachers or their time scope are not regulated in any way. These data have not been even centrally monitored in the past five years ⁽¹²⁾; however, they are published in the annual reports of individual schools, various partial studies or databases – yearly overviews of training courses and their participants within individual implemented projects (e.g. database of NÚV, NIDV or of the regional centres of the National Institute for Further Education).

The number of teachers participating in continuing education within a specific monitored school, types of training programmes and teachers' interests in terms of the focus of training are centrally monitored by the Czech School Inspectorate in the framework of the quality control of education in schools.

⁽¹²⁾ Data were collected and processed in thematic sample surveys by the Institute for Information on Education, in 2011, the MŠMT decided to abolish the Institute and took over its agenda.

3. Practical training instructors in companies (work-based settings)

The importance of the role of a practical training instructor increases with the growing proportion of vocational training implemented at workplace in companies; this is especially important taking into account the fact that teachers of vocational training only supervise the practical part and are not present in companies. According to Paragraph 12 of the Decree on secondary education (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2005a), an instructor of practical training is an employee of the contractual company, authorised by the company to guide learning activities of pupils at the premises of the company. The instructor of practical training is responsible for the pupils, including their safety at workplace. A specific definition of requirements for performing the function of instructor is one of the mandatory features of the Agreement on the contents, scope and terms and conditions of practical training concluded between the school and the company.

Appropriate professional qualification and practical experience in the relevant profession constitute the prerequisite for the performance of the role of instructor. Instructors need to prove their professional competences and qualification (e.g. completed vocational education in the relevant field or acquired vocational qualification within the National Register of Qualifications, completed training courses, etc.) and practical experience with their employer at whose premises practical training is implemented. Instructors, as experts authorised by the company, co-operate with relevant pedagogical workers of the school – mainly with the teachers of vocational training and practicum – in meeting the objectives of the school educational programme or e.g. in evaluating the students or recording their attendance. Given that instructors are not pedagogical workers and are not authorised to perform classification of pupils, they submit their evaluation of pupils to the teachers of vocational training and those subsequently use these evaluations for the purposes of pupils' evaluation.

Some schools provide training courses to the instructors from cooperating companies; some schools prefer to work with instructors who have been trained somewhere else. The time scope of these courses is usually several hours. The training courses focus primarily on information of legislative nature and safety and health protection at workplace.

In order to enhance the quality of pedagogical guidance provided to pupils at companies, the project POSPOLU initiated the development of a qualification of a practical training instructor (EQF 4) within the National Register of Qualifications

(NSK) ⁽¹³⁾. The inclusion of the mentioned qualification in the NSK enables the instructors (constantly engaged in this activity) or the candidates for this role to take an examination, under the Act on validation and recognition of the outcomes of continuing education (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2006) and verifying their pedagogical competences required for educating the pupils at workplace in companies. Participating in the training course developed and validated in the framework of the project POSPOLU, in the scope of 40 hours, can help master and complement competences required by the NSK qualification standard ⁽¹⁴⁾. The course covers the following topics: pedagogy, psychology and teaching methodology of practical training, work with curricular documents, valid legislation, practical training in guidance of pupils, etc. If a school becomes the 'authorised person' ⁽¹⁵⁾, it is entitled to verify itself the competences of the practical training instructors employed in cooperating companies, required by the qualification standard for this occupation.

4. Cooperation and partnerships between the world of education and the world of work in support to teachers and trainers' CPD

The implemented ESF projects showed that teachers of vocational theoretical subjects as well as teachers of vocational training particularly benefit from repeated internships in companies. Most teachers have never worked in corporate environment in practice. The internships allow the teachers to familiarise themselves with companies in their field while learning, from a different perspective, about new technologies, materials and work organisation. On the basis of their own experience, it is subsequently easier for them to transfer the acquired knowledge into teaching.

The national project, 'POSPOLU – fostering cooperation between schools and enterprises (2012-2015)', based also one of the proposed systemic measures on the popularity of internships.

⁽¹³⁾ National Register of Qualifications is a publicly accessible register of full and partial qualifications identified, validated and recognised in the Czech Republic that can be acquired in line with the Act No. 179/2006 Coll. on validation and recognition of the outcomes of continuing education and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2006). For more information see: <http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/>.

⁽¹⁴⁾ The project is over, but the course is still available on request. Within the project POSPOLU, in September 2015, 83 instructors (in cooperation with 9 schools in the Czech Republic) completed this course.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Authorised persons are licensed by the awarding bodies, which are organisations of state administration relevant to the given field (ministries or the Czech National Bank).

Teachers of vocational subjects are often able to update and develop their technical knowledge and skills only by means of self-study or by direct contact with the world of practice solely in their spare time. Training courses organised in the framework of continuing education of pedagogical staff are not relevant for that purpose. Schools and the cooperating companies should jointly create conditions allowing the teachers to participate in such internships, which could be coordinated by relevant professional associations.

Companies should organise internships that would meet teachers' needs in terms of timing, scope and other aspects. At the same time, the company needs to provide a mentor who will guide the intern. Schools need to make sure that the teachers are available for the required scope of time, i.e. during the period of no teaching obligations (holidays and vacations, period of time dedicated to self-study, pupils' longer vocational training or practical training in companies) or they need to secure replacement teachers (NÚV, 2015).

The conceptual study produced in the project POSPOLU proposes to make it obligatory for teachers of vocational theoretical subjects to participate in internships in companies within the specified time for self-study or as a new type of continuing professional development and at the same time to make it mandatory for the schools to enable the teachers to participate in such internships. The project proposed to include the internships in companies as a new type of continuing professional development in the Act on pedagogical staff (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2004b). The internship in company is defined as a period of time that the teacher spends in a real working environment under the guidance of a mentor and with pre-defined objectives and outputs (e.g. teaching materials) appropriate to the relevant area of national curricula or the subject taught. At the discretion of the headmaster of the school, such an obligation could be extended also to other members of the teaching staff, including teachers of general subjects. Internships in companies should be included in the agreements on cooperation concluded between the schools and companies and their organisation should be entrusted to a co-ordinator of the company-school co-operation, i.e. a new function/position also proposed by the project. As for the time scope, a minimum time allotment of 6 days per year appears to be optimal, with the possibility of accumulation, e.g. 18 days every three years.

5. National and EU-funded projects to support VET teachers' and trainers' professional development

5.1. International cooperation

VET teachers have the opportunity to participate in continuing education abroad within the framework of the EU cooperation. Until 2013, they could participate in the Lifelong

learning programme and its various programmes, e.g. Comenius for professional development of pedagogical staff, Grundtvig in adult education and mobility programmes within Leonardo da Vinci.

Since 2014, in the new programming period of Erasmus+, they can participate, within the area of professional development, in the Key Action 1, mobility of individuals. In the field of school education staff mobility, these activities include primarily training courses; in the field of VET staff mobility, it is e.g. job-shadowing. Teachers' participation in international courses is supported by the Centre for International Cooperation (*Dům zahraniční spolupráce*)⁽¹⁶⁾. In the field of VET, 216 teachers participated in the staff training (job-shadowing, experience exchange) in 2014 and 174 teachers in 2015. In the field of school education, 126 teachers participated in mobility in 2014 and 18 teachers in 2015. 80% are courses and 20% is job-shadowing.

5.2. ESF projects

In 2015, the Ministry of Education launched a Call No. 56 inviting to submit applications for funding under the Operational Programme Education for Competitiveness. The call is intended for primary and secondary schools and aims to promote reading as well as reading literacy and the teaching of foreign languages, mathematics, natural sciences and technical fields. A school-friendly method of funding (unit cost) has been selected for financing of the projects. Teachers can choose from the templates of key activities, e.g. a language course abroad. This national ESF project aimed to provide direct assistance to secondary vocational schools, their teachers and other pedagogical workers in terms of providing information, methodological counselling and consultations for the purposes of shaping and implementation of school educational programmes in the form of consultations, seminars and workshops.

The so far implemented ESF projects (e.g. IQ Auto, IQ Industry (2010-12) etc.)⁽¹⁷⁾ showed not only the need for internships in companies for the teachers of vocational training and vocational theoretical subjects but also their popularity. The aim of the projects was to develop and implement continuing education programmes in line with the educational legislation as well as the interests of the companies.

5.2.1. Kurikulum S (Curriculum S) (2009-12)

The project was intended for persons managing and co-ordinating development of school educational programmes at secondary schools. During the implementation of

⁽¹⁶⁾ An organisation established and directly controlled by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

⁽¹⁷⁾ More information available at: <http://www.nuv.cz/projekty/ukoncene-narodni-projekty>.

the project, regional consultation centres ⁽¹⁸⁾ were established, which – together with the project administrator, National Institute for Vocational Education (NÚOV) provided free assistance to teachers and other members of pedagogical staff at secondary vocational schools with information and methodological counselling and guidance in the area of shaping, implementation and innovation of school educational programmes (ŠVP).

5.2.2. UNIV2 Regions (2009-12)

The project promoted, among others, the transformation of schools into institutions implementing the concept of lifelong learning. One of the innovations introduced by the project was training of secondary schools' teachers to work with adult students, which had not been previously implemented in the CR. The project UNIV 2 Regions included 3 250 teachers who were able to acquire a certificate of adult teaching skills.

In the framework of the previous project – UNIV Recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning in the networks of schools providing adult education (2005-2008) as well as the follow up UNIV 3 (2012-2015) – teachers (evaluators in the process of recognition) were given opportunity to get trained in teaching, testing and evaluation of adult students including the creation of examination assignments on the basis of the standards specified by the National Register of Qualifications in the framework of continuing education implemented under UNIV. Teachers (mentors in the process of recognition) could, under the same project, get trained in diagnostics, conducting diagnostic interview and providing psychological and pedagogical support to adults.

6. Conclusions

Due to the declining demographic curve, many secondary schools have gradually become centres for lifelong learning exploiting thus their potential in this area. Teachers of secondary schools are more frequently fulfilling the role of adult students' lecturers. Since 2013, it is possible to acquire the professional qualification under the NSK – continuing education lecturer (EQF7).

Companies cooperate with schools in providing practical training, they either provide their own premises and facilities for the purposes of practical training in the company or they secure experts from practice to teach at schools. They might also be involved in

⁽¹⁸⁾ There were in total 13 centres established. The centres facilitated the exchange of information among schools and organised thematic workshops for co-ordinators and other pedagogical staff.

the process of study programmes completion (see Section 2.5) as well as in shaping school educational programmes. Instructors are exclusively employees of the company; the legislation does not recognise them as pedagogical workers. Therefore, they are not required to have pedagogical training despite the fact they interact with pupils.

Teachers need to acquire teacher's qualification at tertiary level of education. Some teachers complete the required qualification in pedagogy in the framework of further education. Teachers' obligation to participate in continuing education is stipulated in relevant legislation. Most continuing education implemented during the monitored period related to additional acquiring of pedagogical qualifications and development of teachers' skills in the area of curricular reform implementation – development of school educational programmes and preparation of uniform *Maturita* and final examination.

Continuing education of VET teachers does not form a system, its contents or time scope are not centrally prescribed; CPD is managed individually by every school – the headmaster of the school is responsible for continuing professional development of pedagogical staff.

A uniform standard of professional competences for teachers at all levels of education (from the pre-school education to the tertiary education – short cycle) of all types of schools and subjects is being prepared. The standard will be a part of long-awaited career scheme. Mentoring is not part of the support currently being provided to teachers within the school structure.

List of abbreviations

CPD	Continuing professional development [Další profesní rozvoj]
CVET	Continuing vocational education and training [Další odborné vzdělávání a příprava]
ČR	Česká republika [Czech Republic – CR]
EQF	European Qualifications Framework [Evropský rámec kvalifikací]
ESF	European Social Fund [Evropský sociální fond]
FTE	Full-time equivalent [Plný úvazek]
HE	Higher education [Vysokoškolské vzdělávání]
ICT	Information and Communication Technology [Informační a komunikační technologie]
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education [Mezinárodní norma pro klasifikaci vzdělávání]
IVET	Initial vocational education and training [Počáteční odborné vzdělávání a příprava]
MŠMT	Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy [Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports]
NIDV	Národní institut pro další vzdělávání [National Institute for Further Education]
NSK	Národní soustava kvalifikací [National Register of Vocational Qualifications]
NÚOV	Národní ústav odborného vzdělávání [National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education]
NÚV	Národní ústav pro vzdělávání, školské poradenské zařízení a zařízení pro další vzdělávání pedagogických pracovníků [National Institute for Education, Education Counselling Centre and Centre for Continuing Education of Teachers]
RVP	Rámcové vzdělávací programy [national curricula, framework educational programmes]
SOŠ	Střední odborné školy [secondary technical schools]
SOU	Střední odborná učiliště [secondary vocational schools]
SPV	Středisko praktického vyučování [centre of practical training]
ŠVP	Školní vzdělávací programy [school-based curricula, school educational programmes]
VET	Vocational education and training [Odborné vzdělávání a příprava]
VOŠ	Vyšší odborné školy [tertiary professional schools]
VŠ	Vysoké školy [higher education institutions]

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Web links

[accessed 18.03.2016]

TTnet Czech Republic: www.nuv.cz/ttnet

TTnet CR is an informal partnership network of organisations providing training of teachers teaching vocational subjects, practice and training, in-house company instructors, and trainers of further vocational/occupational training. TTnet's mission is to support (the development of) proficiency of those training organisations which train teachers of vocational subjects, practice and training, instructors, and trainers for pedagogical/andragogic jobs. The network is financed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

National Institute of Education of the Czech Republic: www.nuv.cz

The National Institute of Education is the authority responsible for the development of national curricula. NÚV was in charge of implementation of the national projects described in the article (see section 5.2.).

National Institute for Further Education of the Czech Republic: www.nidv.cz

The National Institute for Further Education arranges and offer courses, seminars, meetings, lectures and other activities connected to continuous education of pedagogical staff.

Methodological portal: www.rvp.cz

This web platform provides methodical-didactic support for teachers and enables them to share their experience, inspiration and knowledge. In 2015, there were around 500 new articles, 30 online workshops and 700 educational materials published online.