



RESEARCH REPORT

Education and Training in Poland

**TEVAL2 Project Meeting
Lublin, February 2008**

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1. Educational system in Poland

The Polish school education system (education of all levels below the level of higher education) is based on the following legislation (parliamentary acts):

- The Education System Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments);
- The Act of 8 January 1999 on the Implementation of the Education System Reform (with further amendments);
- The Act of 26 January 1982 – Teachers’ Charter (with further amendments).

The higher education system in Poland is based on the following legislation (parliamentary acts):

- The Act of 12 September 1990 on Schools of Higher Education (with further amendments);
- The Act of 14 March 2003 on Academic Degrees and Title and on Degrees and Title in the Area of Art;
- The Act of 26 June 1997 on Higher Vocational Schools (with further amendments);
- The Act of 17 July 1998 on Loans and Credits for Students (with further amendments).

The new Act on Higher Education was adopted on the 27 July 2005 replacing the Act on Schools of Higher Education and the Act on Higher Vocational Schools. The new Act is operational starting the academic year 2005/06.

The basic principles of the Polish education system are included in the Education System Act of 7 September 1991, with further amendments.

Education is defined as part of “the common welfare of the whole of society”. It should be guided by the principles contained in the Constitution and by instructions contained in universal, international legislation and conventions.

In particular, this system should provide, among other things, a fulfilment of the right of each citizen in the Republic of Poland to learn and the right of children and young people to be educated and cared for; support provided by schools to back up the educational role of the family; the possibility for various entities to establish and run



schools and institutions; the adjustment of the contents, methods and organisation of education to pupils' psycho-physical abilities, and the possibility to avail oneself of psychological assistance and of special forms of didactic work; the possibility for disabled and maladjusted children and young people to learn at all types of schools and general access to secondary schools.

1.1. Pre-school education

A child aged 3 to 5 may receive pre-primary education, which is not compulsory, but all the six year-old children attend either kindergartens (*przedszkola*) or pre-primary classes attached to primary schools (*oddziały przedszkolne*), as the Ministry of National Education and Sport has introduced an obligatory 0 grade starting the school year 2004/2005 and therefore the age of beginning of the compulsory schooling has been lowered from 7 to 6.

Pre-school education in Poland underwent certain changes caused by a decrease in the number of pre-school children and by the partial introduction of fees into this type of educational institution. In 1995 the attendance rate was calculated as 46.2% of children aged 3 to 6 and in 1998 - 49%. In the school year 2003/2004 52.3% of 3 to 6 year olds attended pre-school institutions. In 2004/05 the attendance rate for children aged 3 to 5 (0 grade has become obligatory for 6-year olds) amounted to 38.2%.

Public kindergartens are administered and financed by local governments – communes. Parents' payments cover children's meals, extra lessons, and a so-called extra fee if a child attends the kindergarten for more than 5 hours a day. The fee is set by the commune. According to the Education Act of 1991, pre-school education is treated as the first level of the education system in Poland. Starting the school year 2004/05 children aged 6 are obliged to complete the "zero year" either in a kindergarten or in a pre-primary class attached to a primary school.

The main goal of pre-primary education is to support and stimulate the child's development, in the process of which the needs and possibilities of each child ought to be taken into account. Education of a 6-year old includes stimulating his/her general development and teaching primary reading skills and basic mathematics.



1.2. Compulsory education

Full-time compulsory education in Poland lasts 10 years and covers education in the “0 grade”, in the 6-year primary schools (*szkoły podstawowe*) and in the 3-year lower secondary schools (*gimnazja*). The “0 grade” is a year of preparation for primary education, obligatory for all six-year-old children from the 2004/05 school year. The “0” classes are attached either to kindergartens or to primary schools. At the level of primary school, full-time compulsory education starts during the calendar year in which the child reaches 7 years of age. Full-time compulsory education normally continues until the pupil is 16 years of age (i.e. the age of the completion of the gymnasium), but in no case beyond the age of 18 years. Part-time compulsory education, however, in the school or out-of-school forms, lasts until 18 years of age (based on the Constitution of the Republic of Poland adopted in 1997). Compulsory education is free of charge for all pupils.

1.2.1. Primary education

From 1999/2000 children between the ages of 7 and 13 attend new primary schools (*szkoła podstawowa*) for a period of 6 years. Admission is based on age. General objectives of the primary school are formulated as follows: to develop in children the ability of self-expression, reading and writing, the ability to solve arithmetic problems, the ability to use simple tools, to develop habits of social life, to develop cognitive abilities enabling mature understanding of the world, to develop conscious motivation to prepare for undertaking tasks requiring systematic intellectual and physical effort, to develop aesthetic and moral sensitivity of children and their creative abilities, etc.

Education in the 6-year primary school is divided into 2 stages:

Stage I – grades 1 to 3, called integrated teaching;

Stage II – grades 4 to 6.

The teaching at Stage I is meant to provide a smooth transition from pre-primary to school education. Educational activities are conducted according to a flexible timetable prepared by the teacher, in which the duration of lessons and breaks is influenced by the pupils’ activity.



Stage II of the 6-year primary school covers grades 4, 5 and 6. Teaching at this stage is arranged by subjects listed in the outline timetable (Polish language, History and civics, Modern foreign language, Mathematics, Natural science, Music, Art, Technology, Computer science, Physical education, Religion/Ethics). In addition to subjects, the following cross-curricular themes have been introduced at this stage:

- 1) health education;
- 2) ecological education;
- 3) reading and media education;
- 4) education for society;
 - a) education for family life;
 - b) cultural heritage of the region;
 - c) patriotic and civic education.

1.2.2. Compulsory secondary education

Before 1999 there was no distinction in the Polish education system between lower and upper secondary schools. The lower secondary level was included in the 8-year single structure school.

In the school year 1999/2000 a new type of school, grammar school (*gimnazjum*) was established. This school constitutes lower secondary level.

The only admission requirement is successful completion of the 6-year primary school and the attainment of the primary school leaving certificate.

The main objectives are formulated as follows:

- to introduce the pupil in the world of science by means of teaching the language, concepts, theories and methodologies characteristic of a given discipline at the level enabling further education;
- to arouse and develop individual interests;
- to introduce the pupil to the world of culture and arts;
- to develop in pupils social skills and abilities through creating possibilities of experience in co-operation in peer groups.

The teaching at this stage is arranged in subjects, taught by specialist teachers. Beside separate subjects, the following cross-curricular themes have been introduced at this stage:



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1. philosophical education;
 2. reading and media education;
 3. health education;
 4. ecological education;
 5. regional education – cultural heritage of the region;
 6. civil defence;
 7. European education;
 8. Polish culture in the context of Mediterranean civilisation.

1.3. Post-compulsory education

The upper secondary education covers the age group 16 to 18 or 19/20.

In the reformed post-grammar school education the following schools are operational starting the school year 2002/03:

- a) 3-year **general secondary school** (*liceum ogólnokształcące*) offering 3 years of full-time general upper secondary education for students aged 16 to 19. It offers the *Matura* examination necessary for admission to higher education.
- b) 3-year **specialised secondary school** (*liceum profilowane*) - new institution established in 2002/03 offering 3 years of full-time general and specialised upper secondary education for students aged 16 to 19. It offers the *Matura* examination necessary for admission to higher education.
- c) 4-year **technical secondary school** (*technikum*) - institution offering 4 years of full-time technical and vocational upper secondary education for students aged 16 to 20. It offers the *Matura* examination necessary for admission to higher education.
- d) 2 to 3-year **basic vocational school** (*zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*) – institution offering 2 to 3 years of full-time upper secondary vocational education for students aged 16 to 18. The leavers have access to the trade or occupation or to the supplementary general secondary school (*liceum uzupełniające*) or supplementary secondary technical school (*technikum uzupełniające*).



The main objective of general upper secondary education is to prepare youth for admission to higher education establishments of various types while of vocational upper secondary education is to prepare youth for the world of work.

At the levels of upper secondary/post-secondary education in Poland there are also the following types of institutions:

- e) 2-year **supplementary general secondary school** (*uzupełniająca liceum ogólnokształcące*) - new institution introduced in 2004/05 offering 2 years of full- or part-time general upper secondary education for students aged 18 to 20 in preparation for the *Matura* examination. This school is meant for the leavers of the 2/3-year vocational school.
- f) 3-year **supplementary secondary technical school** (*technikum uzupełniająca*) – new institution introduced in 2004/05 offering 3 years of full- or part-time vocational upper secondary education for students aged 18 to 21 in preparation for the *Matura* examination. This school is meant for the leavers of the 2/3-year vocational school.
- g) maximum 2.5-year **post-secondary school** (*szkoła policealna*) – this institution enables people with secondary education to obtain a vocational qualifications diploma upon passing of an exam.

Post-secondary schools prepare students for work in blue-collar and equivalent occupations or in occupations and specialities that require secondary vocational qualifications. The period of instruction varies depending on the occupation and is specified in the Classification of Occupations. For the majority of occupations it is two or two and a half years, for some only one year. Students in these schools are trained as nurses, accountants, administrative personnel for enterprises and hotels, computer specialists or librarians. Post-secondary schools, because of the type of qualifications they offer, are included as part of secondary education in the Polish classification.

Upper secondary schools are non-compulsory and mostly coeducational. There is also a small number of single-sex schools within vocational and professional education. Public (state) schools are free of charge.



The number of points indicated on the grammar school leaving certificate (based on results achieved in chosen areas of study and other achievements), including the points received during the grammar school examination, decides about the pupils' admission to an upper secondary school.

The detailed admission rules are defined by each upper secondary school which opens admissions to new pupils (starting 1 September 2002 these schools have become post-grammar schools).

The admission to the 2/3 year basic vocational school (*zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*) is based on successful completion of the 3-year grammar school, confirmed by the school leaving certificate.

The admission to supplementary general secondary school (*liceum uzupełniające*) and supplementary secondary technical school (*technikum uzupełniające*) is based on the successful completion of 2/3-year basic vocational school (*zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*).

1.4. Initial vocational education and training in alternance

There are two forms of vocational education and training in alternance:

A) The most popular form is based on an employment contract between an employer and a young worker. The employer is responsible for the organisation of training. The practical training is organised either at the employers' enterprise or, if the employers cannot assure suitable conditions for such training, at the Continuing Education Centre, Practical Training Centre, at a school farm, school workshop, school lab or at an individual farm. The training is implemented on the basis of a contract concluded between the employer and a particular training institution.

B) School based form of training which can be considered as training in alternance in the case when practical training takes place outside school, at the employer's place and is based on a contract between the employer and the school head. In this case the school is responsible for the organisation of training.

The young employee is paid for his/her work and has to comply with the Labour Chart regulations as well as with his/her individual employment contract.



In Poland the majority of young workers are employed in the private sector (e.g. artisans). The vocational training in crafts is supervised by the chamber of artisans and the relevant guild.

The contracts between the employer and the trainee can be concluded for indefinite or limited period of time (e.g. for the time required for training in a particular vocational area).

In 2002 a requirement of in-service training was imposed on all workers below the age of 18, which is due to the Polish Constitution regulation on compulsory part-time education for all citizens below the age of 18.

The following institutions organise education and training in alternance: vocational schools, out-of-school education institutions and employers. The out-of-school education institutions are: Continuing Education Centres, Practical Training Centres and Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP), which enable people with learning difficulties to obtain vocational qualifications. Continuing Education Centres and Practical Training Centres are public out-of-school educational institutions.

Training in alternance is considered to be at the same level as the basic vocational school.

1.5. Tertiary education

Graduates from upper secondary schools in Poland, those possessing the *Matura* certificate, have a wide variety of educational possibilities at the level of tertiary education:

- **Schools of higher vocational education** (*wyższa szkoła zawodowa*) or first cycle of university-type courses, of 3 to 4 years' duration and 3-year teacher training colleges (*kolegium nauczycielskie*)
- **Schools of higher education** (university-type, uniform Master-Degree studies) of 4.5 to 6 years' duration.



The latter are as follows: universities (*uniwersytet*), technical universities (*politechnika*), agricultural schools (*akademia rolnicza*), schools of economics (*akademia ekonomiczna*), pedagogical academies (*akademia pedagogiczna*), medical academies (*akademia medyczna*), academies of physical education (*akademia wychowania fizycznego*), schools of arts (*uczelnia artystyczna*), schools of theology (*akademia teologiczna*) and other.

Graduates from higher vocational schools or from the first cycle of university-type studies, if they wish to obtain a Master's degree or its equivalent, can undertake **supplementary Master-degree studies** of 2-2.5 years' duration.

In the Polish system of higher education, for these Master's degree holders who wish to obtain a Ph.D., there is a possibility to pursue doctoral studies of 3 to 4 years' duration.

A degree system based on **three main cycles** has existed in Poland since 1990 when it became possible for university-type higher education institutions to offer three or four-year higher vocational studies leading to a **Bachelor's degree (*licencjat, inżynier*)**, which could be followed by a **Master's degree (*magister and its equivalents*)**. The title of Bachelor was introduced by legislation in 1992. As institutions are autonomous, these courses have been introduced gradually over the last 10 years, but their development has been further encouraged by the Bologna process. At present they are already quite popular. **Doctoral studies**, provided by all types of higher education institutions as well as units of the Polish Academy of Sciences and research-and-development establishments, constitute the third cycle in this degree system.

The freedom regarding study plans and curricula, granted to higher education institutions by the legislation, is also linked to the diversification of teaching methods. It is often the case that traditional forms of instruction are abandoned, a development which is however not infrequently imposed by the considerable (multiple in some branches) increase in the number of students. The modular study system is now becoming increasingly common.

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), although not mandatory or underpinned by legislation, is gradually being introduced. Its implementation began under the TEMPUS PHARE programme and is continued under the Socrates programme (Erasmus). So far, 166 higher education institutions have introduced ECTS at some of their faculties (including the projects supported in the academic year 2004/05).



1.6. Continuing education and training for adults

„Adult education” and „continuing education” are often used interchangeably. The term „continuing education” is defined as „education in schools for adults as well as the development of general knowledge, vocational skills formation and ability development in out-of-school forms by persons who have graduated from compulsory education”.

Adult vocational training and adult general education can be provided both in the school and out-of-school forms. Adult education in school forms is provided in primary schools, gymnasias, basic vocational schools, upper secondary and post-secondary schools, and in higher education establishments. Vocational training and general education for adults in out-of-school forms can be organised by public or non-public education institutions. Continuing and practical education centres are the most common public continuing education institutions. Non-public education institutions can be organised by: social organisations and associations, religious organisations, and individuals.

Everybody who is over 18 years of age can attend schools for adults. An 18-year old person can also enter for an extramural exam in all subjects included in curricula of all types of schools for adults. In out-of-school forms the admission requirements are defined by the education providers. They usually depend on the aims of training.

The unemployed and those being threatened with unemployment are sent by labour offices for a course. If a course is provided on employer’s direct order, the admission criteria are commonly agreed by both the training institution and the employer. Qualifications required by the employer should be taken into consideration while preparing the training programme. The level of education completed, psychological and physical dispositions, work experience and some additional skills are, among others, taken into account as main admission requirements.

While directing staff to training the rule of equal opportunity should be respected – this applies to the employee’s gender, age, disability, political views and religion. Training can also take place on the unemployed person’s request.

Continuing education aims at the acquisition and extension of general knowledge, upgrading of vocational skills and qualifications needed for a given occupation, job or post. Vocational training aims at the adjustment of the knowledge and skills to developing technologies and work organisation, as well as to job changes. The main objective of the



training of the unemployed is to react quickly to current local market needs and to help the unemployed to adjust their qualifications to these needs.

2. Requirements for entering in profession

2.1. Teachers

The **pre-primary school teachers** have the same rights, duties and salaries as teachers in primary education (years 1 to 3). The differences concern the teaching load which is 18 hours per week for primary school teachers, 25 hours for pre-school teachers of the younger age groups, and 22 hours for pre-school teachers of six year-olds. The system of pre-primary teacher training is constantly changing. At present, the forms of training offered are: three-year teacher training colleges, teacher higher education schools (pedagogical academies), and teacher education faculties at universities.

In the grades 1-3 in primary schools, one teacher teaches all subjects (so called integrated teaching), while in the grades 4-6 each subject is taught by a different teacher and pupils change classroom for each subject. Teachers used to be trained to teach one subject. Teacher training standards introduced in 2004 (Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 7 September 2004 on teacher training standards) envisage training of teachers as specialists in 2 subjects. Acquisition of computing skills and a good command of one foreign language also become obligatory.

Teacher training consists of training in subject matter (biology, mathematics, etc.) and pedagogical training (teaching methods, psychology, pedagogy). Teachers may receive their initial training in three-year teacher training colleges awarding the title of Bachelor (*licencjat*) or a diploma. Graduates with Bachelor may complement their education with two-year university study courses and obtain a Master's degree (*magister*). Many primary school teachers who have completed higher education are graduates of universities or teacher higher education schools (pedagogical academies).

The legal act defining the professional status and conditions of service of teachers employed in the school education sector is the Act of the 26th of January 1982 – The



Teachers' Charter (with further amendments including the most important ones of 18th of February 2000 and 24th of August 2001).

According to the Teachers' Charter, the post of teacher may be taken by a person who has completed either a higher education course with appropriate pedagogical preparation or a course of study in a teacher training establishment (college). Any person graduating from a higher education institution with pedagogical preparation or a teacher training college is as such recognised as a qualified teacher within the specialisation he/she has completed.

A teacher starting his/her first ever job undertakes a year-long internship (*staż*) in order to obtain a promotion degree of a contract teacher, and then embarks on another internship of 2 years and 9 months leading to a promotion degree of appointed teacher. The appointment does not lose its validity if a break in service has not lasted longer than 5 years.

Teachers working in 6-year primary schools ought to have one of the following qualifications:

- university education or equivalent completed (Master's degree),
- 3-year teacher training college completed (Bachelor's degree),
- 3-year teacher training college completed (ended with the diploma, without the title of Bachelor),
- a diploma of the formerly existing 2-year teacher training colleges (phased-out at the beginning of the 1990s).

According to the Teachers' Charter, a teacher can obtain the following professional promotion grades:

- trainee teacher,
- contract teacher,
- appointed teacher,
- chartered teacher.

A possibility of granting an honorary title of education professor is also envisaged for chartered teachers with outstanding professional achievements.

While implementing the curriculum, the teacher is free to apply the methods chosen from those recognised in the contemporary pedagogy which he/she considers to be most appropriate and the textbooks and other teaching aids chosen from those approved for use



in school. However, he/she is required to improve his/her knowledge, using his/her priority right to participate in all forms of in-service training.

Teachers employed in the 3-year grammar school (gimnazjum) ought to have – at the minimum – the qualifications confirmed with the Bachelor degree. 3-year grammar school teachers are employed according to the same rules as apply to 6-year primary school teachers.

Upper secondary school teachers ought to have completed a university education (Master's degree) or equivalent. Upper secondary school teachers are employed according to the same rules which apply to primary and lower secondary school teachers.

The **teachers at post-secondary schools** come from the labour market as well as from secondary and higher education.

In case of **initial vocational education and training in alternance**, practical classes carried out at the employer's premises are taught either by teachers or practical vocational training instructors. In both cases pedagogical qualifications as well as specialist knowledge in the given area are required.

For employment as an instructor the following qualifications are required:

- minimum a title of Master in the given vocational area and pedagogical qualifications (either teaching qualifications or a completed pedagogical course organised according to the standards defined by the department of education);
- in the case when the instructor has pedagogical qualifications and no title of Master - the completion of vocational secondary school, as well as a professional title or a title of a skilled worker in the relevant area, together with a suitable professional experience;
- the instructor can also hold the professional titles at the higher education level and present a suitable professional experience.

Different requirements apply to **academic teachers** since higher education in Poland is not considered to be a part of educational system. The faculties are entitled to decide on appointments and competitions for research-and-teaching posts. The types of teaching activities included in the teaching workload, as well as the volume of the teaching workload are determined by the Senate of a higher education institution.



As far as **teachers working in schools for adults and in continuing education** are concerned, it is The National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (KOWEziU) that is in charge of the preparation and co-ordination of activities in the area of training and in-service training of such teachers. The Centre organises meetings and seminars with a view to disseminating most recent developments in the area of vocational and continuing education, as well as research results, publications and pedagogical innovations. It also co-operates with social partners with respect to the quality assurance in the area of vocational and continuing education. Some universities provide training for future specialists in the area of continuing and adult education at the teacher training faculties. Continuing Education Centres are in charge of advice provision to teachers and lecturers employed in adult education. The centres can also employ professional advisers specialised in adult education. Practical Training Centres are also involved in in-service training programmes for youth and adult school teachers.

2.2. Trainers

No official requirements for entering in profession of a trainer have been developed in Poland so far. It is the market that determines the standards. Top training companies set their own standards in terms of employing trainers; higher education (of any subject) and experience in certain field indicate a professional trainer.

Polish Chamber of Training Companies is currently working on developing a set of unified standards for the profession of a trainer but no outcomes have been introduced so far.

3. Compulsory assessment

3.1. Teachers

Compulsory teacher assessment in Poland is being carried out by the headmaster no more than once a year either on the request of:

- the teacher himself;



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- the supervising pedagogical organ;
 - organ running the school;
 - school council;
 - or parents' council.

The evaluation of teacher's work can be done any time during the school year, however, no sooner than one year after last evaluation or assessment of teacher's professional achievement took place.

The evaluation has a form of a visitation of the headmaster and is based on the observation and documentation analysis. The feedback is of a descriptive type. The teacher receives either distinctive, good or a negative mark.

Teacher's assessment is also linked to the promotion in the teaching career. As said above, a teacher can obtain the following professional promotion grades:

- trainee teacher,
- contract teacher,
- appointed teacher,
- chartered teacher.

A teacher starting his/her first ever job undertakes a year-long internship (*staż*) in order to obtain a promotion degree of a contract teacher, and then embarks on another internship of 2 years and 9 months leading to a promotion degree of appointed teacher. At the beginning of each internship the teacher is obliged to prepare a plan of professional development which is verified later on. Examination commission which grants professional promotion grades performs an analysis of the documentation prepared by the teacher.

Documentation includes:

- application for promotion;
- documents confirming professional qualifications;
- plan of professional development with a report regarding its execution;
- assessment of professional achievement for the period of internship;
- other documents confirming professional achievements.

The commission conducts an exam or an interview based on the documentation provided and grants the teacher with professional promotion grade or rejects the application.



Teachers are also obliged to keep record of their students' progress. Methods used by the teacher are being evaluated at this point. Every activity taken up needs to be evaluated. Corrective actions are implemented afterwards where necessary.

3.2. Trainers

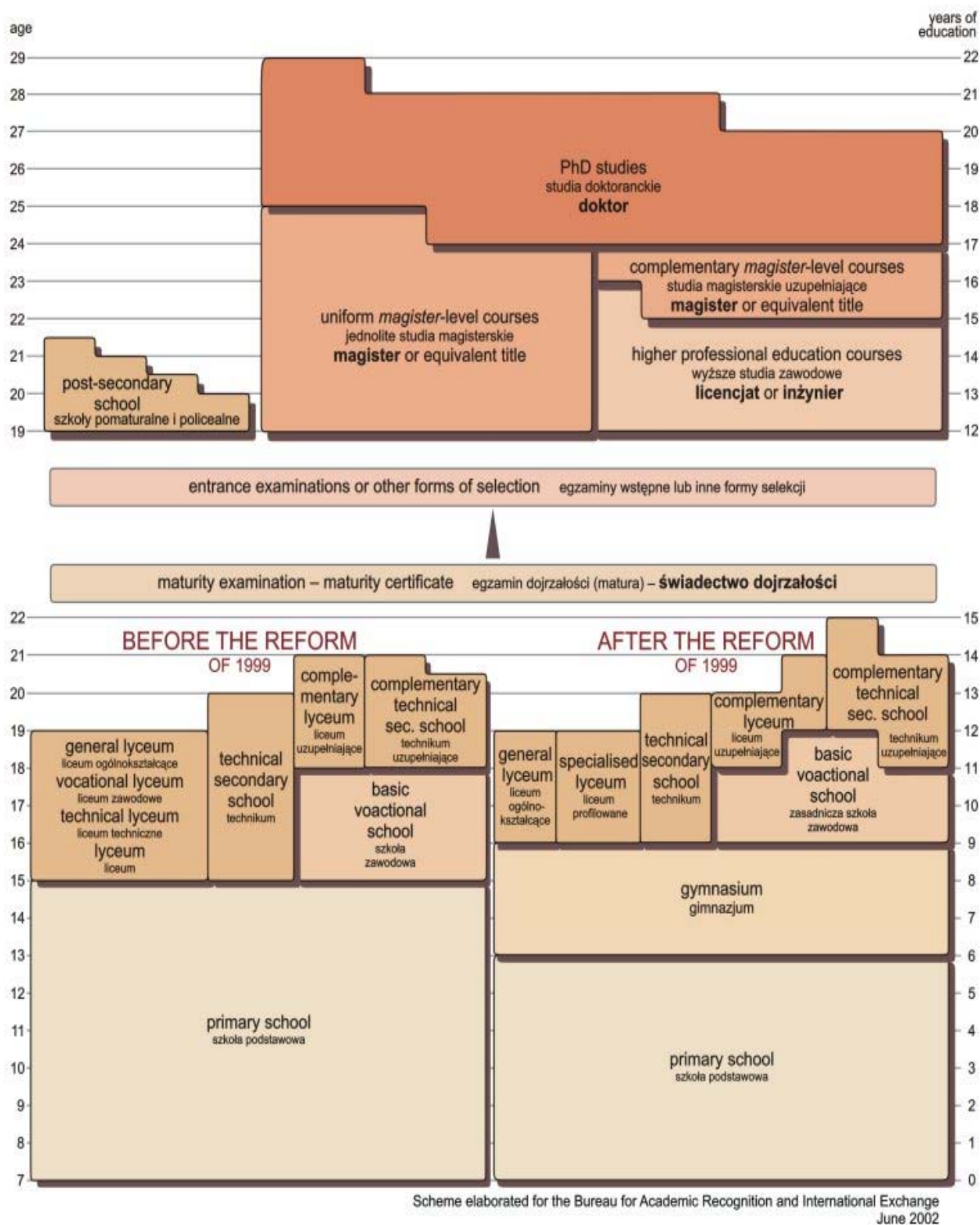
Since no requirements have been ever developed for entering in profession of a trainer, no general system for the assessment of trainers' competences functions in Poland. Only the content and the delivery of the training are being evaluated. Evaluation is then done on the basis of two methods: Kirkpatric's or ROI method.



Annex



THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN POLAND



Source: <http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl/educ/schemat.htm>



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