

Study 9/2023

Head Teachers' Salaries: Long Overlooked²

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Summary

- School leadership staff (head teachers and their deputies) are crucial to teaching quality. Pay for primary school leadership staff in the Czech Republic, however, is not closely monitored in the long term, despite the fact that pay influences the efficiency of managerial work and educational leadership and, moreover, affects potential candidates' motivation to apply for school leadership roles.
- For our analysis, we use employee level data from the [ISPV](#) database of salary statements for the years 2017–2021. The classification used in the ISPV database does not enable us to distinguish between different leadership roles – head teacher vs. deputy – so our analysis looks at sets of school leadership staff as a whole. We analyse their average total gross monthly salaries, the average value of bonuses, the variability in their pay range and the factors that influence the amount of their pay and its variability.
- Our data analysis reveals four key findings:
 - Pay for leadership staff at primary schools rose from 160% of the national average salary in 2017 to 200% of the average salary in 2021 (75,000 CZK). This rate of growth was similar to that of teachers' salaries, but substantially faster than growth in other public and private sector wages, including those for leadership roles in the healthcare sector and social services. It is important to note that schoolteachers' pay rose during this period from a relatively low starting level. It is also likely that school leaders' pay will not be maintained at its current level relative to the average salary.
 - There is far greater variability in pay for primary school leadership roles than there is in teachers' pay. This is due to the value of bonuses, which increased from 10% of the total salary in 2017 to 15% in 2021. Nevertheless, school leadership pay remains less variable than leadership pay in other branches.

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- Primary school leadership staff pay varies from region to region by as much as 10,000 CZK/month; it is highest in Prague (83,000 CZK) and lowest in the Zlín region and Vysočina (71,000–72,000 CZK). This variability is caused by differences in the structure of the school systems and by differences in school authorities' approaches. These mechanisms equalize pay and cost-of-living differences between regions.
- Pay differences between leadership staff at smaller and at larger primary schools are minor. Male leadership staff are paid approximately 3,000 CZK per month more than female leadership staff. This is due to male leadership staff being classified in wage band 13 more frequently than their female counterparts. We are unable to establish from the available data whether the observed differences in wage band classification reflect genuine differences in the work carried out by these leadership staff.
- Our findings lead to the following recommendations:
 - Pay for primary school leadership staff has increased substantially over the past few years, but it is unlikely that this trend will be maintained. If it is not, this will result in a new reduction in the motivation for high quality candidates to apply for leadership roles. Maintaining the competitiveness of leadership pay relative to similar positions outside education should thus be as high a priority as is maintaining the relative level of teachers' pay.
 - The above-tariff salary component, which is determined by the school authority for head teachers, has increased over time for primary leadership roles. It is therefore necessary to systematically educate and support school authorities to ensure that they are able to evaluate school teaching quality and to make use of bonuses? as a motivational tool to increase efficiency.
 - In the Czech Republic, there is no state-initiated financial or non-financial motivation for the best head teachers to apply for positions at schools with high proportions of disadvantaged pupils. Once bonuses are taken into account, relative regional differences and differences linked to school size are also insubstantial. It is therefore necessary to consider ways to provide financial and non-financial motivations to attract high quality head teachers to schools serving disadvantage pupils.
 - Numerous questions related to school leadership remain unanswered, limiting the effectivity of public policy targeting. For instance, we do not know what career paths lead to becoming a head teacher, what characteristics are associated with high quality school management at different types of schools (including those with large shares of disadvantaged pupils), or how leadership changes can affect teaching quality. Linking data and providing support for applied research could motivate new research using existing data. Strengthening the existing data, both by introducing a blanket survey (i.e., low-stakes tests) and by linking this data to data on school leadership staff, would make it possible for research to identify the value added by schools and the factors associated with effective school leadership.