
History

Charles University, the oldest university in the Czech Republic and in the entire Central Europe, was founded by Charles IV in 1348. The famous Czech king and Holy Roman Emperor, a major European statesman of his time, aimed at making Prague the new centre of education and thereby increasing the cultural prestige of the Czech kingdom. The first lectures were held in Prague churches and monasteries. Since 1366, the University has had its own official seat, Karolinum. This historical building is one of Prague's most treasured medieval monuments, yet it continues to be used for its original purpose.

The Faculty of Education at Charles University was established in 1946 following a decree on teacher education by the President of Czechoslovakia issued on October 27, 1945 and a subsequent law in the following year relating to faculties of education throughout Czechoslovakia. The Faculty of Education at the Charles University was officially opened on November 15, 1946 in the Prague Rudolfinum (The House of Artists), and the festive launch was attended by the Czech president, Dr. Edvard Beneš.

However, the 1953 school reform succeeded in dismantling all Czech faculties of education. The newly established institution for training the teachers of general subjects was called The Pedagogical University – The Higher School of Pedagogy.

Yet another reform of the Czech educational system (carried out in 1959) gave birth to Pedagogical institutes in Prague and Brandýs nad Labem which were designed to train primary teachers, while future secondary school teachers were supposed to study their core subjects at various university faculties, as had been the case before 1946. The Czech faculties of education were not re-established until 1964. It is worth mentioning that secondary school teachers of art, music and physical education were initially trained at other respective Charles University faculties while also attending some pedagogical and psychological courses at the Faculty of Education.

The mid-1970s saw the unification and merging of the training networks of primary and secondary school teachers and the extension of the respective length of study up to 5 years. Those were rather unhappy times, as many departments were dismantled or appended to various other University faculties.

Although Czechoslovakia was later (1993) divided into two independent countries – the Czech Republic and Slovakia – the Czech and Slovak faculties of education maintain collaboration; deans of Czech and Slovak faculties of education meet regularly at conferences of the Association of Deans to negotiate actual problems and issues relating to teacher education. In 2016, the Czech and Slovak faculties of education together celebrated the 70 years since their formation.

Over the 70 years of the Faculty's existence, a number of noteworthy experts in various fields have taught in its ranks, such as Cyril Bouda, V. Hrabal, J. Charvát, Otakar Chlup, L. Kopeckij, J. Plavec, V. Tardy and F. Vodička, to mention just a few.

In the Czech Republic there are nine faculties of education (in Prague, in Liberec, in České Budějovice, in Plzeň, in Ústí nad Labem, in Brno, in Olomouc, in Ostrava, and in Hradec Králové). Together these faculties participate in resolving common, topical issues in education (digital literacy development, key literacies' development, pre-literacy in pre-school education etc.).