

# Curriculum Change Assumptions in Primary Education: Focusing On Lowering the Compulsory Education Starting Age (Lithuanian Case)

Ilona Tandzegolskiene<sup>1</sup>, Nijole Ciuciulkiene<sup>2</sup>, Jurate Garbaraviciene<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

## Abstract

**Problem of the research.** Recently a lot of attention has been paid to the lowering of starting age for compulsory education in Lithuania. What age should a child start compulsory education? This question raises debates in the context of both scientific and public interest. This topic is of big importance around the world. Unfortunately, there is still a lack of research, no clear evidence of the impact of early education. There is also a lack of research on curriculum change in the context of this reform. Another question “What kind of the curriculum should be applied for the lowered education starting age” is also very relevant. Thus, here emerges the research problem: the disclosure of assumptions for the curriculum changes in the early stage of primary education. **Main questions of the research:** what are the reasons for lowering the age of children in formal education and how does this relate to the primary curriculum transformation? How much should the primary school curriculum be changed if the education starting age is lowered?

**Objective of the research:** assumptions for the curriculum change.

**Aim of the research:** to evaluate the assumptions for the curriculum change of primary education focusing on lowering the compulsory education starting age.

**Participants of the research:** First stage – 12 educational experts, second stage – 6 preschool and primary education teachers. Participants were selected using targeted criteria selection method.

**Research strategy:** Qualitative research methodology was chosen for this research, based on the theory of humanism and social constructionism.

**Methods of data collection:** semi-structured experts’ interview and (focus) group discussion methods. **Methods of data analysis:** qualitative inductive thematic analysis.

**Results of the study.** Four main topics were distinguished during the study: the relevance of pupils' age; curriculum change when lowering primary school starting age; the peculiarities of age change; the processes of change taking place in the education system.

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**Conclusions:** Important arguments were presented to conclude that there is no unanimity, advocating for and against the lowering of the compulsory starting age in education. In order to lower the compulsory school starting age, it is necessary to review and change the curriculum, select and adjust educational methods, and tools, create new educational environments, adjust the assessment system, and train teachers accordingly, to work with pupil of younger age.

**Keywords:** primary education, lowering the compulsory education starting age, curriculum change.