

EDUCATION GUIDELINES

Strategic Provisions for Lithuanian Education Development

Years 2003 – 2012

Summary of the Draft

“We learn for as long as we live.”

Lithuanian proverb`

This document is an attempt to provide a practical vision of the Lithuanian education. It is an attempt to project and propose how Lithuania should develop its education system over the next decade so that it is effective and accessible to everyone, so that it guarantees quality education and lifelong learning to the people of the country.

I. EDUCATION CHANGE – THE NECESSITY OF A PRESENT DAY

Changes that happened over the last decade have essentially altered the national education: the content of education has been renewed, new study opportunities have become available. However, education was still unable to respond sufficiently effectively to the needs of creating a civil society, adapt more flexibly to the market economy, to take into account needs of the knowledge society, knowledge-based economics and lifelong learning.

New challenges and new opportunities opening up to the society demand new changes in education today. Education must change so as to assist the people of Lithuania in using opportunities made available by their freedoms, globalisation, information explosion and rapid change and avoiding their negative consequences. Education plays an important role in the development of open civil society, strengthening its cultural and economic powers, decreasing the social gap and poverty of the people, restoring social justice and solidarity. In order for education to perform its role successfully, its further restructuring has to be coordinated with other national structural reforms and overall aims of the European Union educational policy.

National education should consistently be based on the **principles** defined in “The Concept of Lithuanian Education” of 1992: humanism, democracy, nationality and renewal and the underlying values of Western culture: unconditional worth of the individual, love of the fellow man, innate equality of the people, freedom of conscience and assertion of tolerance.

In response to today’s challenges, the Lithuanian education **aims to develop**:

- a self-dependent and responsible individual capable of lifelong ability improvement;
- civil society, self-governed and united, knowledge-based and able to preserve and create its identity and capable of improving its state and cooperating and competing in the global world;
- mature, creative and open-to-dialogue national culture.

Concrete **education development aims** that must be implemented over the next decade are inseparable from these general educational goals. Renewal of the national education system requires to achieve over 2003-12 that:

- all children of Lithuania have equal opportunities to prepare for school;
- all children of Lithuania have just social conditions to learn;
- 99 percent of the children of Lithuania acquire quality basic education and are able of choosing further study direction (a particularly ambitious aim);
- 95 percent the children of Lithuania, after graduation from the basic school, pursue further studies and acquire quality secondary education and (or) vocational qualification in demand in the labour market;
- all special-needs children have an opportunity to study in the environment most favourable to them in general education, vocational and higher education schools or, in exceptional cases, special schools;
- 70 percent of the youth of Lithuania acquire quality higher education, by graduating from the first level of higher education at universities and colleges and acquiring there qualification competitive in the labour market;
- all residents of Lithuania, having not acquired the required education and qualification, first– all youth, are invited to study and to acquire education and qualification;
- a large majority of residents of Lithuania have real opportunities to lifelong study and regularly renew and develop their abilities;
- a large majority of residents of Lithuania are capable of self-sufficiently using opportunities offered by the knowledge society.

II. EFFECTIVE AND HARMONIOUS SYSTEM

In order to implement the set aims of education development, the Lithuanian education system must operate effectively under conditions of open society and market economy. Therefore, achieving its inner harmony requires:

- to implement responsible management serving long-term educational goals;
- to ensure public participation in taking education- related decisions;
- to restructure financing of education so that it corresponds fiscal reality and ensures implementation of long-term educational goals, stable education development, accessibility and quality;
- to ensure effective use of all education resources;
- to develop open education structure and modern education network creating close vertical and horizontal links between various education levels and institutions and increasing mobility of pupils and students;
- to reinforce self-sufficiency of schools – studying communities – and their openness to life experience.

The responsible management system, based on monitoring, strategic planning, clearly defined responsibility, public information and participation is implemented through:

A. Reallocation and clear definition of powers, obligations, responsibility and accountability of the state, municipalities and schools, provisions for their cooperation. Expansion of self-sufficiency of schools – studying communities, ensuring transparency of their operation. Linking responsibility of institutions directly to the power to dispose of financial and other resources. Restructuring of the education supervision system. Partial replacement of the current education inspection by organising the system of external audit of schools and certain education links, analysis of education information and consulting and support to schools, the principal goal of which is to encourage education development and quality improvement. Handing over a large part of responsibility to municipalities and counties, not just for general education, but also for vocational training, special education and further adult study. Upgrading management of colleges and universities, ensuring effective interaction between these schools and the society.

B. Laying information foundations for the education quality management system, starting to base political decisions on reliable and thorough information and analysis. Implementation of the new self-evaluation and evaluation culture in all education links. Creating education information, monitoring, internal and external school audit systems and developing program accreditation system.

C. Implementation of strategic planning on all education levels, setting clear mechanisms for strategic decision-making and implementation. Starting orientation of education management of all links towards a concrete and defined result rather than process and means. Regular appraisal of progress made in achieving educational goals.

D. Making the education system influenced by and accountable to the society. Creating a system of public information about education. Implementation of mechanisms for active public participation in education-related decision-making.

The reform of education financing and resource use, helping the adjustment of the education system to the free market and ensuring better education accessibility and quality, is implemented through:

A. Reinforcement of real financial self-sufficiency of schools and transparent financial accountability, provision of schools with a possibility for more flexible use of financial and other resources.

B. Transition to program-based education financing, accounting and allocating education funds according to the approved priorities and uniform methodology on local, regional and national levels. Development and implementation of long-term national program for investment into education, including education upgrading, renewal of school and dormitory buildings, computerisation of schools and technological supply. The program shall be based on financing from both the state and municipalities and future structural funds of the European Union. Investment into education shall no longer be haphazard, but rather regular, long-term and planned.

C. Implementation of the principle “money follows the pupil” in all education links.

D. Implementation of practice of financing schools from a number of sources.

E. Improvement of the procedure of personal income and legal entities' profit taxes so as to have the said taxes encourage investment of citizens and companies into education and provide financial opportunities for lifelong study.

F. Ensuring effective use of utility services and teaching aids.

G. Ensuring effective use of labour resources. Introduction of mixed – full time and hourly – pay system for teachers. Increasing efficiency of education, training and studies, raising salaries of professors and teachers.

Creating a flexible and open education structure, linking general education, vocational training and studies, formal, non-formal and informal study forms into a uniform comprehensive education space. The new education structure is created through:

A. Completion of shaping the flexible general education structure, bringing closer general education, vocational training and study systems, increasing mobility of pupils and students. Transition to the program- based structure: implementation of various general education and vocational training programs and their modules in schools. Joining in the structure of the Lithuanian higher education into the overall system of European higher education.

B. Creating a structure of “open” general education, vocational schools and schools of higher education offering services of further study to the youth and adults; joining in the existing structure of “labour exchange training” into the structure, common for all open education; in addition to ongoing education system open to adults, developing a formal and non-formal education structure intended for further study of adults only. Opening up schools of higher education to a greater extent to the needs of adults. Restructuring and expanding existing “correspondence” and “evening” studies: making them into “open studies” of various forms. Development of distance studies: making them available to all residents of Lithuania from all locations of the country that seek them.

C. Bridging formal, non-formal and informal education; introduction of module-based teaching in certain education links, developing the procedure for accreditation of modules of both formal and non-formal education, the system for formal recognition of competences acquired in a non-formal and informal way.

Development of the modern education network:

A. Development of detailed restructuring plans for municipal, county and state education networks.

B. Through restructuring of municipal, county and state education networks, creating a modern national education network, meeting the needs of modern society and national financial resources. The completed development of the modern national education network shall achieve that:

- each ward has at least one modern operational open school (at least a library – a distance learning centre) – as a point of culture of the local community;
- each ward has accessible distance learning services;
- each municipality has at least one operational gymnasium and at least one vocational school, open even to the needs of adults;

- each county has at least one operational school of higher education;
- a school providing preschool, preschool preparatory and elementary education is located next to a child's home;
- a pupil's trip to the basic school takes under half an hour;
- a pupil's trip to the gymnasium and vocational school takes under an hour;
- all residents of municipalities are able to locally acquire general secondary education and competitive vocational qualification, individual program modules of higher education and engage in ongoing study;
- all residents of a county are able to locally acquire higher education and study modules and programs of all Lithuanian and some European universities and engage in ongoing study.

C. Development of the pupil transportation system.

D. Taking care of new working places for teachers and opportunities to acquire new qualifications.

Development of the link between education and life experience:

A. Expansion of educational, cultural and information functions of schools. Schools starting to provide more non-formal and informal education services to their pupils and local communities. Upgrading of school libraries. Making schools information, culture and education centres for local communities.

B. Development of social functions of schools. Schools starting to offer social and pedagogical programs for risk children employing social pedagogues.

C. Opening schools to the labour world. Implementation of vocational information and counselling system in general education schools. Making practical work activity part of general education. Creating a system for regular coordination of qualifications provided by Lithuanian schools and their demand in the labour market. Implementing the practice of qualification examinations behind the school doors.

III. GUARANTEED ACCESSIBILITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CONTINUITY

Ensuring equal study start possibilities:

A. Creating family pedagogical information and counselling system. Starting providing focused pedagogical and cultural support to all social risk families raising children.

B. Expansion of preschool development services. Making preschool development of children from social risk families generally accessible.

C. Creating a general preschool development system, with it first opened to children from social risk families.

Creating socially just learning and study conditions:

A. Introduction of strict control of mandatory children's education and reinforcement of evaluation of personal parents' responsibility for mandatory children's education.

Creating a reliable accounting system of school-age children. Implementation of the national program for returning “street children” back to schools.

B. Creating conditions for educating all children with social and learning problems. Replacement of leaving pupils to repeat a year’s studies by additional pedagogical and social work with problem children.

C. Preparation of schools for educating children of diverse abilities and needs. Supplementing general education and vocational training by various special education forms. Creating a support system for exceptionally gifted children.

D. Improvement of conditions for learning and study for children of national minorities.

E. Creating a safe, healthy and cosy learning environment.

F. Creating favourable study conditions for all people of Lithuania seeking higher education. Implementation of the national student financing program. Creating flexible and effective student support system. Making open (distance, evening, correspondence) studies available to all people of Lithuania, wishing and able to study.

G. Creating social and financial possibilities for ongoing adult study. Preparation and implementation of national and regional further adult study (lifelong study) development programs.

H. Creating conditions for study in imprisonment institutions and the military.

Development of the diversity of education forms. Creating conditions for lifelong study:

A. Creating a uniform education space, based on open and interacting education forms. Development of interaction between formal, non-formal and informal education. Improvement of the system for appraisal and recognition of study results. Creating the procedure for recognition of competence acquired in a non-formal and informal way. Transition to credit-based, module-based, “accumulative” study.

B. Focused strengthening of people’s ability from young age to learn on an ongoing basis and self-sufficiently organise their study.

C. Essential expansion of possibilities for people’s lifelong study. Overcoming artificial obstacles to study: restrictions of study time and speed, study location, strict education requirements for the start of education or studies. Improvement of taxation and loan systems, creating financial possibilities for lifelong study. Making services of information and counselling on study opportunities and distance learning available to all those in need.

IV. ENSURED QUALITY

This is one of the main education development priorities. Today’s demand is to ensure the quality of national education that would meet the needs of the individual living in the open civil society and market economy. Naturally, the reality of open society and market economy is not and cannot be ideal. Quality education must help the individual not just to adapt to this reality, but also to give it a critical evaluation and improve it and, most importantly, not to lose one’s identity, self-sufficiency and seeking the meaning of life

in this reality. One of the essential quality dimensions is the ability of education to guarantee general cultural maturity of the individual.

Renewal and linking of the content of education with new competencies of the individual in seeking higher quality:

A. Transition to the policy of shaping new content, oriented not towards knowledge transfer, training of narrow vocational skills, but rather provision of training of general abilities, values and beliefs and provision of competences necessary for today's person, based not on knowledge reproduction (repeating), but their interpretation (analysis, critical evaluation, use in practice), closely relating content of education with life experience of diverse areas, real problems and search for solutions to them.

B. Revision and coordination of the content. Adjustment of general programs and standards of general education and programs of secondary school graduation examinations. Balancing of pupils' study loads and their coordination with health requirements. Discarding of particularly minor and specialised courses as part of the study content improvement. Making courses of humanitarian and social studies integral part of study programs. Narrowing the scope of lectures and seminars: allocation of more time for individual, project and research work of the student. Harmonisation of study programs with international standards. Creating a wide supply of formal and non-formal adult education modules.

C. Direct linking of the content with provision of values and beliefs, general abilities and competences necessary for the life of the individual and society. Essential strengthening of focus on the development of information culture on the general education, vocational training and study levels. Implementation of practical computer literacy programs on all education levels, introduction of computer literacy examinations meeting international standards. Strengthening of foreign language study. Strengthening of focus on the development of entrepreneurship, financial wisdom and economic literacy on all levels. Achieving that the basics of economic literacy are acquired by all pupils of the basic school, that the basics of the said literacy and entrepreneurship are provided to all requesting students of gymnasias, colleges and universities and all pupils of vocational schools. Improvement of general cultural literacy of pupils and students. Special focus on the development of creativity and civil culture.

D. Increasing content diversity, expansion of their choice possibilities. Provision of pupils with possibilities to choose from various learning strategies and alternative content options.

E. Expanding content sources and renewal of ways of its transfer. In addition to traditional textbooks, introduction of effective use of databases accessible on the Internet, library stock, media, social, cultural and economic environment of the pupils. Implementation of active education, training and study methods encouraging self-sufficiency and cooperation and practice of self-sufficient activity on all education levels.

F. Creating a system of regular content renewal. Starting systematic evaluation, revision, selection of and adding to the content. Its regular coordination with goals and objectives set for education.

Renewal of teacher training and work:

A. Essential change in the very role of a teacher in creating the knowledge society: replacement of a teacher– the knowledge holder and transferor- by a teacher – the learning organiser, developer of learning possibilities, learning assistant, advisor, partner, mediator between the pupil and diverse modern knowledge sources. On the other hand, in the open modern world the teacher must also remain an educator, the witness of the life's truths, handing down the tradition (values comprising the foundations of the community life, its experience) and teaching its creative development.

B. Restructuring of the teachers' training system. Performance of evaluation of the effectiveness of teachers' training system and international expert examination of study programs. The Ministry of Education and Science becoming a real client for teachers' training. Provision of teachers' training standards and various strategies for their implementation. Introduction of teacher's qualification examinations behind the doors of schools of higher education.

C. Restructuring of the teachers' qualification upgrading system. Its gradual coordination with the teachers' training system: their interconnection by study modules and a uniform teachers' qualifications award and recognition system.

D. Orientation of teachers' training and qualification upgrading systems towards strengthening of today's teachers' necessary values and beliefs, general abilities and competences.

E. Strengthening of today's teacher's role, expansion of the range of their duties and possibilities.

Modernisation of education research:

A. Linking it to the needs of education change and education quality improvement. A particular focus on applied research. Consistent Lithuanian's involvement in international comparative education research.

B. Creating effective financing procedure for education research, ensuring of dissemination of research results and accountability of researchers to the public.

Renewal of schools and improvement of education supply:

A. Renovation and modernisation of schools. Continuing the on-going improvement of schools. Development and implementation of the national plan for school renewal. Over 80% of schools to be renewed over the decade.

B. Supply of schools with modern information technologies and sources. Implementation of the national program for introduction of information and communication technologies in schools. Completion of computerisation of public libraries and their adaptation for self-study. Creating the support and regular upgrading system of the basis of these technologies.

C. Ensuring of consistent development, publishing of and supply with education aids. Improvement of textbook development and procedure for their supply. A special focus on the development and adaptation of original computer training programs and development of audio and video aids.

D. Improvement of psychological, social, research, cultural and medical education supply. Expansion of schools' financial and administrative possibilities by making use of supplementary support required for the improvement of their activity. Creating a system of supplementary social, cultural, research and other support for schools.

Implementation of reliable quality evaluation and ensuring public accountability:

A. Creating a modern evaluation and self-evaluation system. Its direct linking to quality improvement. Prohibiting using external evaluation results for administering any penalties. Penalties may not be imposed due to poor quality, but only because of insufficient efforts to achieve quality. External evaluation starting to promote motivation to improve work rather than self-defence. Implementation of accountability practice of schools, management institutions and the entire education system. Public presentation and analysis of activity evaluations of education management institutions of all levels. Linking evaluation with the planning of further activity.

B. Essential renewal of the pupils' progress and achievement appraisal, improvement of evaluation culture. Continuation and implementation of the reform of pupils' progress and achievement appraisal. Transition to the pupils' appraisal encouraging creativity, self-sufficient critical thinking, strengthening motivation to learn of pupils rather than suppressing it. Focused development in schools of all levels of ability of pupils to self-evaluate their progress and achievement.

C. Creating a recognition system for learning results– competences, qualifications – corresponding to flexible, diverse and open study forms and providing conditions for lifelong study, which will legitimise recognition of earlier acquired experience, “cumulative diploma” and will enable emerging and expansion of module-based, credit-based, “cumulative” study.

V. PROVISIONS FOR STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

President of the Republic of Lithuania shall submit the draft Strategic Provisions for Education Development, discussed with the public and improved, for the approval of the Seimas.

After the approval of the Strategic Provisions by the Seimas, the Government, in consultations with the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania and municipal and county education divisions, shall develop and approve (or only develop, and the Seimas shall approve) a –ten-year action plan for the implementation of Strategic Provisions. This program shall be based on specific financial obligations of the state– the long-term plan for education financing and investment into education. Implementation of the Strategic Provisions and the action program shall make use of financing from the European Union structural funds.

Implementation of the action program, based on defined success criteria, shall be coordinated by the Government. The overall supervision of implementation of the Strategic Provisions and its action program shall be performed by the Seimas.