

## **Initial Teacher Education in Lithuania: Policies, Tendencies and Challenges**

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Initial teacher education in Lithuania follows two models: the *consecutive* model, when professional training, i.e. studies in educational subjects, methods of teaching and pedagogical practice in school, enabling students to qualify as teachers follow academic studies, and the *concurrent* model, when all components of the initial teacher training curriculum are combined from the outset.

The basic components of the teacher's competence in Lithuania are general cultural competence, competence in the subject/subjects in which teachers are trained and professional competence. Teacher training is oriented to the development of competence that the teacher will need in his/her practical work. Requirements for teachers' competence are set out in the regulations on teacher training and those on discrete areas of studies and also in the Specifications of Teachers' Professional Competence.

Pedagogues to teach various subjects (also special and social teachers) are trained in accordance with university study programmes alongside both concurrent and consecutive models of teacher training. At the moment Vilnius University has been running the only one programme for subject initial teacher training by using concurrent model: it is established at the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics (FMI). Upon completion of studies, persons obtain a Bachelor's degree in mathematics comprising the basis of the core subject and also a certificate attesting to the completion of pedagogical studies.

The scope of the studies are 160 Lithuanian credits (240 ECTS), the 40 Lithuanian credits (60 ECTS) should be devoted to pedagogical studies. Upon completion of the programme in a certain study field at university basic studies, persons may work as subject specialists in general education and special schools or as lecturers in colleges and higher educational institutions as well as continue studies for Master's degree by following didactic or educational programmes.

Recently a new initial teacher training model has been developed. The Regulations of Initial Teacher Training were approved. The aims of this document were to initiate changes in the whole teacher training system in order to meet the needs of Lithuania's educational system and the society. The Description of the Professional Competences of Teachers has been developing in order to establish unified criteria for teacher education and the in-service training of teachers'.

The main idea of the new model is to improve quality of studies and to attract student to be interested in teacher career. The Department of Didactics of Mathematics and Informatics within the FMI has reformed the teacher training programme.

The main difference is the proportion between theory and practice in study programmes. The school practice should comprise at least 20 Lithuanian credits and begin from the first year of studies. The purpose of school practice is to assist future teachers in acquiring experience, competences and skills necessary for practical pedagogical work to do the teacher's work at a base school for a definite period of time or perform various functions of the teacher's professional activities.

Upon completion of our programme students obtain a Bachelor's degree in pedagogy as well as in mathematics and informatics comprising the basis of the both core subjects.