

**RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND AGE CUT-OFF IN LIGHT OF THE
JURISPRUDENCE OF THE COURT OF JUSTICE OF MINAS GERAIS**

**DIREITO À EDUCAÇÃO E CORTE ETÁRIO À LUZ DO ENTENDIMENTO DO
TRIBUNAL DE JUSTIÇA DE MINAS GERAIS**

**DERECHO A LA EDUCACIÓN Y CORTE ETARIO A LA LUZ DEL
ENTENDIMIENTO DEL TRIBUNAL DE JUSTICIA DE MINAS GERAIS**

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2025.038-033>

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ABSTRACT

Considering the ongoing controversy surrounding the age cut-off for entry into basic education, this study aimed to analyze the understanding of the Court of Justice of Minas Gerais (TJMG) regarding the application of Resolution CNE/CEB No. 02/2018, which established March 31 as the deadline for enrollment in preschool and elementary school. To this end, a qualitative, bibliographic, and documentary research was conducted, covering decisions rendered between 2023 and 2025. The findings indicate that the TJMG has consistently upheld the national guidelines and the position consolidated by the Federal Supreme Court (ADC 17 and ADPF 292), while admitting only limited exceptions, such as the transition rule and the theory of accomplished fact. It is concluded that the Court has sought to balance the child's best interests with legal certainty, reaffirming the importance of the age cut-off as an instrument of standardization and stability in educational policies.

Keywords: Age Cut-off. Case Law. Early Childhood Education. Minas Gerais Court of Justice. Right to Education.

RESUMO

Considerando a persistente controvérsia em torno do corte etário para ingresso na educação básica, o presente estudo objetivou analisar o entendimento do Tribunal de Justiça de Minas Gerais (TJMG) sobre a aplicação da Resolução CNE/CEB nº 02/2018, que fixou a data de 31 de março como limite para matrícula na pré-escola e no ensino fundamental. Para tanto, realizou-se pesquisa qualitativa, de caráter bibliográfico e documental, abrangendo julgados proferidos entre 2023 e 2025. Observa-se que o TJMG tem mantido posicionamento predominantemente alinhado às diretrizes nacionais e ao entendimento consolidado pelo Supremo Tribunal Federal (ADC 17 e ADPF 292), admitindo apenas exceções restritas, como a regra de transição e a teoria do fato consumado. Conclui-se que a Corte mineira tem buscado equilibrar a proteção integral da criança e a segurança jurídica, reafirmando a importância do corte etário como instrumento de padronização e estabilidade das políticas educacionais.

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Palavras-chave: Corte Etário. Direito à Educação. Educação Infantil. Jurisprudência. Tribunal de Justiça de Minas Gerais.

RESUMEN

Considerando la persistente controversia en torno al corte etario para el ingreso a la educación básica, el presente estudio tuvo como finalidad analizar la comprensión del Tribunal de Justicia de Minas Gerais (TJMG) sobre la aplicación de la Resolución CNE/CEB nº 02/2018, que estableció el 31 de marzo como fecha límite para la matrícula en la educación preescolar y primaria. Para ello, se realizó una investigación cualitativa, de carácter bibliográfico y documental, que abarcó sentencias dictadas entre 2023 y 2025. Se observa que el TJMG mantiene una posición predominantemente alineada con las directrices nacionales y con el entendimiento consolidado por el Supremo Tribunal Federal (ADC 17 y ADPF 292), admitiendo únicamente excepciones limitadas, como la regla de transición y la teoría del hecho consumado. Se concluye que la Corte ha procurado equilibrar la protección integral del niño con la seguridad jurídica, reafirmando la importancia del corte etario como instrumento de estandarización y estabilidad de las políticas educativas.

Palabras clave: Corte Etario. Derecho a la Educación. Educación Infantil. Jurisprudencia. Tribunal de Justicia de Minas Gerais.

1 INTRODUCTION

The right to education occupies a prominent position in the Brazilian legal system, being enshrined by the Federal Constitution as one of the fundamental pillars for the full development of the person and the exercise of citizenship. The effectiveness of this right, however, depends on the observance of normative parameters that ensure the organization and quality of education, among which is the so-called age cut-off, a criterion that establishes the minimum age for entry into the mandatory stages of basic education.

Law No. 9,394/1996 (Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education) (LDB) established that early childhood education, in its pre-school phase, is mandatory from the age of four, and that elementary education must begin at the age of six. In order to standardize the application of this rule throughout the national territory, the National Council of Education (CNE) set March 31 as the deadline for calculating the minimum age required, through Resolution CNE/CEB No. 2/2018. Thus, only children who complete four or six years by that date can be enrolled, respectively, in preschool and in the first year of elementary school.

Before national standardization, the absence of a common framework for the age cut generated great legal uncertainty and inequalities between education systems. Each state and municipality established its own reference date, which caused disruptions in school transfers and even grade regressions, especially when families moved between networks that adopted different criteria. Such a scenario led to the recurrent judicialization of the matter, culminating in the decision of the Federal Supreme Court that recognized the constitutionality of the rule and conferred on the CNE the competence to define a single cut-off date at the national level.

Despite this, the controversy surrounding the application of the age cutoff still persists in state courts, especially in the Court of Justice of Minas Gerais (TJMG), which has been urged to decide on requests for enrollment of children outside the established standard.

In this context, this article aims to analyze the right to education from the perspective of the age cut, examining the understanding consolidated by the TJMG after the issuance of Resolution CNE/CEB No. 2/2018 and the decision of the Federal Supreme Court. It seeks to understand how the Minas Gerais Court has reconciled the full protection of the child, the pedagogical autonomy of the institutions and the necessary observance of the normative commands that govern basic education.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution of the Republic of 1988 established that education is a right of all and a duty of the State and the family, and must be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society (art. 205). Article 208, item I, ensures access to compulsory and free basic education from four to seventeen years of age, which covers both early childhood education and elementary education. In addition, article 227 imposes absolute priority on the full protection of children and adolescents, making education a central element of their protection (Brasil, 1988).

In this context, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law No. 9,394/1996) consolidated the normative structure of basic education and conferred on the Union the function of coordination and general standardization of educational policies (Brasil, 1996). Article 32 of the LDB, amended by Law No. 11,274/2006 (Brasil, 2006), determined that elementary education would last nine years, with compulsory enrollment from the age of six.

The definition of the age criterion and the respective cut-off date was regulated by the National Council of Education (CNE), which, in the exercise of its normative power (article 9, paragraph 1, of the LDB), issued Resolution CNE/CEB No. 1/2010 and, later, Resolution CNE/CEB No. 2/2018, setting the date of March 31 as the deadline for the child to complete four years (preschool) and six years (elementary school) (Brazil, 2010; 2018a). The Federal Supreme Court, in judging ADC No. 17 and ADPF No. 292 (Brasil, 2018b; 2018c), recognized the constitutionality of these rules, consolidating the uniformity of the age cutoff at the national level (Souza, 2018).

According to the Legal Bulletin of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Minas Gerais (Minas Gerais, 2024), the age cutoff is a standardization instrument that aims to ensure equal access and permanence in school, avoiding discrepancies between education systems. The document emphasizes that it is up to municipalities and states to observe the national parameter, under penalty of violating the normative competence of the Union and the principle of educational isonomy.

The discussion about the ideal age to enter elementary school goes beyond the legal level and enters the field of Historical-Cultural Psychology, especially from the contributions of Vygotsky, who conceives child development as a social and historical process, mediated by language and interaction with the environment (Silva, 2021). From this perspective, Patricia do Nascimento da Silva (2021) analyzes the age cut in the curricular policies of early

childhood education and observes that the establishment of a rigid age milestone may conflict with the assumptions of Historical-Cultural Psychology, according to which development and learning occur in areas of proximity and not in watertight stages.

Thus, educational legislation should consider that each age group has specific maturation characteristics, and the exclusive use of chronological age as a criterion for school admission is inappropriate (Silva, 2021). In this line, entry into the first year should occur when the child demonstrates sufficient socio-emotional and cognitive skills to face the demands of the new stage, reconciling respect for the natural development of childhood with the normative requirements of the educational system (Guglielmo; Stefanelli, 2022).

On the other hand, João Paulo Faustinoni e Silva (2015) defends the maintenance of the age cut as an instrument of protection for childhood, arguing that Early Childhood Education is an essential phase of human development, and should be valued as a space for integral education and not just as preparation for elementary school. Anticipating school entry, according to him, deprives the child of fully experiencing this stage and can cause emotional and pedagogical damage.

The expansion of lawsuits on the age cut reflects the phenomenon of judicialization of the right to education, in which the Judiciary is called upon to fill gaps or interpretative divergences between educational standards and the expectations of families.

As analyzed by Meire Cristina de Souza (2018), the early entry of children into elementary school has become one of the main judicialized issues in the educational field. The author examined court decisions in several states (Rondônia, Alagoas, Mato Grosso do Sul, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul) and concluded that there is no subjective right to early enrollment. On the contrary, the decisions that remove the age cutoff violate the principle of full protection and the pedagogical autonomy of the institutions.

Also according to Souza (2018), the excessive judicialization of these issues compromises legal certainty and disregards the normative role of the National Education Council. From a different perspective, Costa and Araújo (2020) argue that the age cut, by restricting access to elementary education for children who demonstrate cognitive readiness before turning six, can hurt the principle of the best interest of the child. For these authors, the application of the rule should be flexible and allow for a case-by-case analysis based on psychopedagogical reports. Judicialization, in this case, would be a legitimate instrument for the realization of the fundamental right to education (Costa; Araújo, 2020).

However, even acknowledging the role of the Judiciary in the realization of rights,

Souza (2018) warns that the judicial function should not replace the technical-pedagogical space of public policies and that jurisdictional control should be limited to situations of manifest illegality, under penalty of disorganizing the national education system and weakening the normative authority of the CNE and the state education councils.

The principle of the integral development of the child, provided for in article 227 of the Constitution (Brasil, 1988) and in article 4 of the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) (Brasil, 1990), requires educational policies that respect the specificities of each age group. The undue anticipation of schooling can compromise socialization, autonomy and playful learning, pillars of early childhood education.

The tension between chronological age and psychological development reflects the challenge of harmonizing educational policies with developmental theories. Historical-Cultural Psychology proposes that learning precedes development, which means that teaching should anticipate the child's already formed capacities, but always respecting the limits of their zone of proximal development (Silva, 2021).

The age cut, when applied inflexibly, ignores individual differences and disregards the complexity of the educational process.

However, the suppression of this rule can generate imbalances between the stages of education and emotional overload for children, since childhood must be lived to the fullest, and not shortened by external pressures from parents or private institutions (Faustinoni; Silva, 2015).

Guglielmo and Stefanelli (2022) reinforce this point by highlighting that school readiness is not only cognitive, but also affective and social. The authors observe that children exposed early to the demands of formal education may present emotional difficulties and loss of the pleasurable bond with learning. Thus, permanence in early childhood education until the appropriate age is fundamental for the balanced development of higher psychological functions (Guglielmo; Stefanelli, 2022).

The theoretical framework outlined here demonstrates that the debate on the age cut is not limited to the setting of a date, but involves a broader reflection on the right to childhood, the role of the State and respect for the stages of human development. It is from this perspective that the performance of the courts, especially the TJMG, the object of analysis of this study, should be understood through interdisciplinary dialogue, which is capable of reconciling legal certainty with pedagogical sensitivity.

3 METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a qualitative approach, of bibliographic and documentary character, with the objective of understanding the current understanding of the Court of Justice of Minas Gerais (TJMG) on the age cutoff for entry into compulsory basic education. The qualitative method was chosen because it enables the interpretative analysis of the grounds used in judicial decisions, valuing the legal, pedagogical and principled aspects that guide the judgment of these cases.

The data collection was carried out on the TJMG website, using the expression "age cut" as a search criterion, covering the period from 2023 to 2025, in order to reflect the most recent position of the Court after the consolidation of the jurisprudence of the Federal Supreme Court on the subject.

Exclusively civil appeals were selected, as they are appeals that directly address the merits of the controversy, aiming to review lower court judgments. Other types of judgments, such as interlocutory appeals, motion for clarification, internal appeals and monocratic decisions, were excluded because they are ancillary or merely procedural in nature, without substantial analysis of the right to education or the constitutional principles involved. The identified judgments will be tabulated and examined individually, considering variables such as the date of the judgment, rapporteurship, type of appeal, legal grounds and result, allowing the identification of argumentative patterns, convergences and divergences in the TJMG's understanding of the application of the age cutoff.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

24 TJMG rulings were located that deal with the age cutoff for entry into compulsory basic education, all classified as civil appeals and judged in the period from January 2023 to October 2025. The sample reflects the consolidation of the Court's understanding after the national deadline of March 31 was set by the National Education Council (Resolution CNE/CEB No. 2/2018) and by the Federal Supreme Court (ADC 17 and ADPF 292). The cases analyzed are systematized in Chart 1, with an indication of the number, rapporteurship and date of judgment:

Table 1

TJMG Civil Appeals Judgment Data (Period: 2023-2025)

	TJMG Number	Date of Judgment	Rapporteur
1	1.0000.25.073819-2/003	09/10/2025	Des. Milk Square
2	1.0000.25.103815-4/001	04/09/2025	Des. Fábio Torres de Sousa
3	1.0000.24.441008-0/002	26/08/2025	Des. Renato Dresch
4	1.0000.25.008411-8/002	14/08/2025	Des. Jair Varão
5	1.0000.25.205999-3/001	14/08/2025	Des. Carlos Henrique Perpétuo Braga
6	1.0000.24.446661-1/002	12/08/2025	Des. Renato Dresch
7	1.0000.25.040736-8/001	15/07/2025	Des. Juliana Campos Horta
8	1.0000.25.052478-2/003	26/06/2025	Des. Marcus Vinícius M. Valle (JD Summoned)
9	1.0000.24.230285-9/002	12/06/2025	Des. Leopoldo Mameluque
10	1.0000.24.189007-8/002	03/06/2025	Des. Júlio Cezar Gutierrez
11	1.0000.25.003552-4/001	29/05/2025	Des. Marcus Vinícius M. Valle (JD Summoned)
12	1.0000.24.422808-6/001	08/05/2025	Des. Áurea Brasil
13	1.0000.25.009134-5/001	24/04/2025	Des. Marcus Vinícius M. Valle (JD Summoned)
14	1.0000.24.199979-6/002	14/02/2025	Des. Armando Freire
15	1.0000.23.286733-3/003	04/02/2025	Des. Renato Dresch
16	1.0000.24.397077-9/001	23/01/2025	Des. Pedro Bitencourt Marcondes
17	1.0000.24.153114-4/002	12/12/2024	Des. Luís Carlos Gambogi

18	1.0000.22.288964-4/002	26/11/2024	Des. Márcio Idalmo Santos Miranda
19	1.0000.23.061053-7/003	13/06/2024	Des. Milk Square
20	1.0000.23.272073-0/001	22/02/2024	Des. Jair Varão
21	1.0000.23.222810-6/001	23/01/2024	Des. Peixoto Henriques
22	1.0000.23.189436-1/001	27/11/2023	Des. Áurea Brasil
23	1.0000.23.170536-9/001	23/11/2023	Des. Wagner Wilson
24	1.0000.23.162679-7/001	24/10/2023	Des. Renan C. C. Machado (JD Summoned)

Source: The authors with data from TJMG (2025).

In a preliminary analysis, there is a significant growth in the number of judgments over the period, evidencing the increase in the judicialization of the subject. In 2023, three judgments were identified (October and November); in 2024, the number rose to eight decisions; and, in 2025, already in October, thirteen rulings are registered. This progression demonstrates that the debate on the age cut remains alive in the state instances, despite the consolidation of the understanding by the Federal Supreme Court, possibly due to local controversies and specific parental demands.

With regard to the rapporteurship, there is a predominance of judgments conducted by Judge Renato Dresch, responsible for three judgments. Then, Judge Marcus Vinícius Mendes do Valle, acting as a summoned judge, appears in equal prominence with three cases under his rapporteurship. Other magistrates with more than one decision on the subject were Leite Praça and Áurea Brasil, which indicates a certain dispersion of the matter between different civil chambers.

Although the survey was not restricted to a single fractional body, the decisions are mostly concentrated in Civil Chambers with competence in Public Law and Education, especially the 7th and 8th Civil Chambers, which traditionally judge claims involving the state and municipal Public Power. This institutional recurrence suggests that the controversy remains associated with lawsuits against public entities, usually municipalities responsible for enrollment and compliance with the rules of the National Council of Education.

In summary, the initial results indicate that the TJMG has been maintaining increasing attention on the issue of the age cutoff, with a tendency to consolidate the understanding aligned with federal guidelines, although the multiplicity of decisions and reports reveals the persistence of specific debates on the concrete application of the age rule and its exceptions.

The reading of the syllabuses reveals a hard core of compliance with Resolution CNE/CEB No. 02/2018 and with ADC 17/DF and ADPF 292/DF of the STF, with majority application of the objective criterion (March 31) and rejection, as a rule, of attempts at flexibility based only on psychopedagogical reports or on the "proximity" of the anniversary. A paradigmatic example of this line are judgments 1 (Leite Praça), 6 and 15 (Renato Dresch), 11 and 13 (Marcus Vinícius Mendes do Valle, JD Conv.), 14 (Armando Freire), 16 (Pedro Bitencourt Marcondes), 17 (Luís Carlos Gambogi), 19 (Leite Praça) and 21 (Peixoto Henriques), all reaffirming the constitutionality of the cut and denying enrollment when the age requirement is not met.

From the procedural point of view, two vectors appear recurrently: (i) the requirement, in a writ of mandamus, of a liquid and certain right proven by pre-constituted evidence (e.g., 11 and 13), which makes discussions that depend on evidentiary delay (psychopedagogical aptitude, pedagogical peculiarities, etc.) unfeasible; and (ii) the correction of the cooperating authority, whose incorrect indication leads to the extinction of the *writ* (3). Still in the procedural dimension, there is a record of a lateral discussion on free justice in favor of children, with an objective parameter and an un rebutted presumption (6), without interfering in educational merit.

With regard to the exceptions, the Court recognizes three clearly delimited hypotheses. The first stems from the transition rule provided for in article 5 of CNE/CEB Resolution No. 02/2018, in the sense that, if enrollment prior to the effectiveness of the rule is proven, progression to elementary school is ensured even without meeting the minimum age (2). The second corresponds to the application of the *fait accompli* theory, when enrollment was guaranteed by an injunction and the child successfully completed the stage (or year), the pedagogical and emotional situation is stabilized, which justifies its preservation (5, 10, 22 and 24).

The Court, however, rejects the automatic use of the *fait accompli* theory when it comes to precarious and recent measures, without sufficient time lapse or pedagogical consolidation, as established in case 23, except for an unsuccessful vote.

Finally, very exceptional flexibility is admitted when there is a very close proximity to the cut-off date, prior integration of the child into the class and robust demonstration of non-existence of prejudice, in light of the best interest of the child (7) and, occasionally, reasonableness (9).

Such situations, as mentioned, are a minority and depend on strong evidentiary weight in very specific circumstances; they are not to be confused with an isolated psychopedagogical opinion (8, 11, 13, 17).

In analytical summary, the case law of the TJMG (i) consolidates the binding validity of the age cut-off; (ii) restricts flexibilities to the transition rule and to situations consummated with an effective school career, or to very well demonstrated exceptionalities (proximity of a few days, integration of the student, pedagogical or psychological risk); (iii) it rejects theses based only on "aptitude" without normative support; and (iv) values legal certainty and pedagogical continuity, mitigating risks of school regression and network disorganization.

5 CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to analyze the treatment given by the TJMG to the controversy involving the age cutoff for entry into early childhood education and elementary school, based on judgments handed down between the years 2023 and 2025.

The research, of a qualitative and bibliographic nature, showed that the Court has consistently and mostly applied the deadline of March 31, set by Resolution CNE/CEB No. 02/2018, in line with the understanding consolidated by the Federal Supreme Court in actions for concentrated control of constitutionality (ADC 17 and ADPF 292). The results indicate that, although the TJMG recognizes the constitutionality and the organizing function of the age criterion, it admits specific exceptions.

Such exceptions are limited to the application of the transition rule provided for in article 5 of the aforementioned resolution, to the application of the *fait accompli* theory in consolidated situations under judicial protection and to very rare cases in which the proximity of the cut-off date and the best interest of the child justify flexibility. Such hypotheses, however, are residual and require robust demonstration of pedagogical or emotional damage, without which technical and normative rigor prevails. The analysis also demonstrates that the Court has sought to balance the full protection of the child with the need for administrative uniformity and legal certainty. By reaffirming the validity of the age cutoff, the TJMG contributes to the stability of educational policies, avoiding distortions in school enrollment

and ensuring coherence between the federal system and state jurisdictional practice. In this way, the study confirms the consolidation of a jurisprudence that is in harmony with the national education guidelines, but sensitive to exceptional situations in which the strict application of the norm may compromise the child's integral development.

Future studies can deepen the investigation from a comparative perspective, examining decisions of other state courts or the STJ to verify the degree of national uniformity of jurisprudence, as well as to evaluate the practical impacts of these decisions on the educational management of municipalities and on the formulation of public policies aimed at early childhood.

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