

Inclusive Education In Lithuania

Definition. In Lithuania Inclusive Education is defined as the process that ensures qualitative education for all children, where attention is focused on the expectations of every and their parents, also peculiarities of each child's needs, necessities in special help and special services and stopping drop-out from the system of education (Plan of actions of the development of inclusive education for the period of 2014–2016 year; approved by the Minister of Education and Science, 2014-09-05).

Policy. Inclusive Education in Lithuania is primarily based on international documents: UN convention of children rights (1989), Salamanka declaration and Recommendations for the improvement of special education (1994), for example. The main legal documents that regulate education for children with SEN in Lithuania are as follows:

The Law on the Social Integration of the Disabled(1996) - the disabled have the right to work, study and train, and regardless of the cause, character and degree of their disability they shall be entitled to the same rights as other residents of the Republic of Lithuania;

The Republic of Lithuania Law on Education (2011) - special needs education is provided by all compulsory and comprehensive education programmes. In order to meet the needs of a children, these programmes have to be changed, adapted or new special educational programmes created; an additional assistance has to be provided.

Implementation of the policy. Inclusive Education in Lithuania is understood primarily as an inclusion of children with non-standard mental and/or physical capabilities into mainstream school and classroom structures. Recently, the concept of “special needs” was broadened and has become an umbrella term for children facing learning difficulties by whatever reasons they are caused, including the consideration of a pupil's social or ethnic background.

An initial detection of a child's needs is made by his/her teacher. The teacher informs the parents about this and only after that can an initial assessment of the child's special educational needs be conducted by specialists. These specialists provide recommendations to the parents and the child's school about what kind of special assistance and education plan/programme has to be implemented, including what kind of special provisions are required in order to support the child's learning and teaching process.

Needs and Challenges. Due to homogeneity within the educational culture, it is characterized by a lack of intercultural orientation, by not taking into account social, ethnic and gender factors, and by personnel who are not fully skilled to work in sociocultural diverse groups. The educational policies fail to recognize the social inequality as a central issue based on cultural and economical differences within the educational system. Teacher Education has not consistently kept up with the policy of inclusiveness in Lithuania. Moreover, intercultural education has rarely been a subject in the teacher training curriculums.