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Development of Lifelong Learning Perspectives for Students with Special Educational Needs in Special Schools in Lithuania

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Abstract

The article briefly surveys the system of special pedagogical support in Lithuania, the types of educational institutions of a specific purpose and their place in the context of comprehensive education. The research on the quality of education and educational support provided in special schools and special education centres is introduced. The research aim is to investigate creation of the perspectives of lifelong learning for students with special educational needs. The research employs a combined research methodology: empirical methods of quantitative and qualitative research are combined. The quantitative research involved 317 pedagogues and specialists of educational assistance working in special schools and special education centres. The qualitative research involved 4 selected educational institutions devoted to students with special educational needs. Participants of the qualitative research: heads of educational institutions (N=12); pedagogues and providers of educational support (N=37); school students (N=32); students' parents (N=45). The pedagogues suppose they help school students and parents decide concerning future perspectives, support students' motivation for learning, develop the competences required for lifelong learning; they even state that they design individual curricula for the pupils (even though this is not the established common practice in Lithuanian schools). In general, parents are not aware

of what perspectives are available for their children after graduation from the institution of special purpose education, the limited opportunities to gain the skills required for a specific occupation, especially without travelling long distances from home. Students are thinking of their life perspectives after graduation from school, discuss them with family members; however, they lack support of pedagogues in order to adequately assess their abilities, possibilities to choose a profession.

Keywords: lifelong learning perspectives, special educational needs, special schools, special education centres, special educational support, educational system

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