

THE REALIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL MODELS IN LITHUANIA, MEETING STUDENTS' SPECIAL NEEDS

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This research sought the opinions and experiences, of pedagogues and specialists (N = 1518), who provide pedagogical and special pedagogical support to children who have special needs, and was carried out with the intention to reveal educational models appropriate to students with special educational needs in Lithuania.

The article presents the results of a survey of the practice of such pedagogues', and reveals the social and educational characteristics of different educational models, implemented through different forms of education (total integration/inclusion, partial integration, education at special school and home education).

Keywords: *educational models, forms of education of students with special educational needs; social, educational characteristics.*

Introduction

The strategic focus of education in Lithuania (2003–2013) highlights the supportive role of education to the Lithuanian state and society to seek for strategic goals, one of which is – to reduce social exclusion i. e. to develop societal cohesion. The aim is to ensure access to education, continuity for ongoing education and social justice. This should provide equal opportunities for studies, setting up a system of family pedagogical awareness and consultancy, providing purposeful pedagogical and cultural support to all families considered to be at social risk. This should ensure the raising of children in conditions that ensure socially fair learning and studying conditions, when all the special needs children and young people have the right to study at all types of schools in favourable education environments in both formal and informal education up to 2012. After the restoration of the independence of Lithuania, a new system of education was devised in which the best opportunities for an efficient education system was sought. This system was to involve a multi-track educational system for children of different abilities and needs. This system offers a variety of different forms of education and alternative institutions for the education of special needs learners (Aidukien, Labinien, 2003). The Republic of Lithuania regulates the structure of mainstream education and special needs education, through the law and organises special needs provision from early childhood to adulthood. The Education Amendment Act of

(2011) and other legal acts, specify the activity of different level institutions in meeting the special educational needs of the learners¹. These documents highlight such educational principles as *equal opportunities* (the individuals with special educational needs are provided with exactly the same conditions as the rest of society) This means *education availability* (conditions are provided for full or partial integration or at a special school. The school environment is adapted, providing psychological, special pedagogical and special support, by providing compensatory technology and special educational learning materials), and through *integration* (self-education of special needs individuals and education together with other members of the local community and equal participation in life) etc. Integration is understood in two ways within the system of education of Lithuania – as a principle of special education, regulated by law, and as one of the main forms of educational organisation. The Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania refers to three forms of education – total integration, partial integration and education at a special school. Home education is intended only in exceptional cases where there are health or socialization disorders, that would prevent the student from studying at a school. The

¹ Law on special education of the Republic of Lithuania 1998; law on education of the Republic of Lithuania 2007; Order of estimate of individual's special educational needs, 2000; The order of determination of disorder and its degree of special need individuals and their inclusion into SEN group, 2002; The description of order and criteria in determining the level of disability, 2005.

request for education at home is submitted by the health care institution to which the student is enrolled. Under the Order of Home Teaching (2000), home education is organised by the school at which the student is enrolled. The student, who is assigned teaching at home, formally belongs to the school and s/he may attend some lessons at school, and participate in after school activities, class and school festivals. However it has to be stated that teaching at home has some striking features of segregation. The type of education selected depends on the learner's special educational needs (SEN) – slight, moderate, severe and very significant. Following the law these are estimated by the school special education boards (SEB) or by specialists of the pedagogical psychological service (PPS). The categorisation focuses not only on development disorders, but also on the special educational needs determined by them. The form of education must be relevant and effective in meeting the educational needs of the child.

Over several decades special education paradigms and legal attitudes towards education have changed in the EU and other countries. These changes have also taken place in Lithuania. On the 17th of March 2011 the Seimas of the Lithuanian Republic confirmed a new law on education, including the design of new strategies, which is going to be confirmed in 2012. The UNESCO recommendations are taken into account when planning the priority aspects of educational development and strategic goals. They encourage education policy designers from different countries, to specify inclusive education as the priority goal of education (UNESCO, 2009a). Inclusive education aims to ensure the availability of appropriate education to every child, young person and adult and encourages equal opportunities. *Inclusive education is a non-stop process, the main goal of which is to ensure qualitative education for all the members of society, by accepting and respecting variety, taking into account every individual's abilities and needs, avoiding any discrimination* (UNESCO, 2009b).

The attitude of inclusive education dominates in all European countries (Avramidis, Bayliss, Burden, 2000. Meijer, 2003. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009; Thomas, Vaughan, 2010); where the process of inclusive education has been developed. Ainscow, Booth, Dyson (2006) claim that inclusion is related to the reduction of students' exclusion by applying the content of education more efficiently, changing the school

culture and ensuring more active participation in the life of the school community. It is emphasized, that inclusion is a non-stop process of change and improvement in schools, always striving for a level of perfection.

Every year the number of students with SEN has been decreasing in special education institutions in Lithuania as larger numbers of these students are integrated into mainstream schools: A total number of 440378 students attended schools in Lithuania in 2009–2010. 50737 (11.6 %) of which were school aged children with SEN². The tendency to educate SEN students in mainstream schools with other peers is related to integration, inclusive education. The conception of inclusive education is not used in legal documents, but it is easy to identify the priority direction as inclusive education, which is implemented following the principles of equal opportunities, equal rights, education availability, justice and the quality and efficiency of education.

Pedagogues' preparation for inclusive education is the vital factor in ensuring the quality and efficiency of education at schools with an increasing variety of different students. The success of inclusive education is largely related to the accessibility of the resources and the educator's ability to differentiate and distribute these resources to the students in the mainstream school class. The teacher's preparation (knowledge, perception, abilities, approach) is none the less important in trying to create favourable relationship within the students. Positive attitudes of the teacher are as important as understanding how to create and encourage students' relations and interactions (Meijer, 2003). The fact that human factors such as the teacher's attitudes and evaluation of barriers, appear to be one of the most important for the development of inclusion, are shown by research from different countries (Ainscow, Sebba, 1996; Engelbrecht, 2006; Savolainen, 2009; Artiles and Dyson, 2005). A consideration of the process of inclusion and integration in the research of specialist attitudes in different countries (Moberg & Savolainen, 2003; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; and other) show that the assessments of teachers and other specialists towards the students with SEN vary from negative to very positive. This is determined not only by the type of the students' disability but the education difficulties this presents and the teacher's preparation to meet the learners' SEN in the form of their qualifications, competence and other factors.

² With reference to the information provided by the Ministry of Education and Science database SVIS.

In trying to implement the attitudes of inclusive education some research has been carried out in Lithuania and other countries (Ališauskien , Miltenien , 2003; Miltenien , 2004; O'Callaghan, 2000; UNESCO, 2009a; and other)^{3,4} in order to analyse the structure of collaboration, opportunities and other positive and negative factors of education.

Problem questions: What practices and models of education when meeting students' SEN, are applied in Lithuania? What are the socio-educational characteristics of these educational models? How do teachers and other specialists providing special pedagogical support, assess different educational strategies and their relevance in order to meet the student's special educational need? What forms of education are the most relevant for the students with behavioural and/or emotional and autistic spectrum of disorders?

The aim of the research is to reveal the specifics of the implementation of educational models (practically implemented through separate forms of education) in order to meet special student needs; to identify the social and educational characteristics, taking into account the survey of Lithuanian teachers.

The object of the research is to ascertain the nature of educational model implementation in meeting students' special needs in Lithuania and the social and educational characteristics of these models.

The objectives of the research:

1. Reveal the practicalities of implementing existing educational models for special educational needs students in Lithuania, through applying a pedagogical written survey.
2. Reveal the social and educational characteristics of educational models, through a study of applying separate forms of education (teaching at home, at special school, special class of a mainstream school and completely integrated/inclusive class).
3. Identify priority educational models for students who have behavioural and/ or emotional and autistic spectrum of disorders.

³ Ališauskas, A., Ališauskien , S., Gerulaitis, D., Mielien , R., Miltenien ,L., (2010). *Research on the variety of the forms of education of special need individuals*. Research report. Šiauliai University, The centre of special pedagogy an psychology.

⁴ Ališauskien , S., Ališauskas, A., Mielien , R., Šapelyt , O., Miltenien , L., Gerulaitis, D. (2007). *The level of psychological, special pedagogical, and special support to the students of mainstream schools*. Research report. Šiauliai University. Ministry of Education and Science.

The research sample

A respondent survey has been carried out (not above 5 % error) where the sample represented 1518 pedagogues and specialists, working in the area of pedagogical and special pedagogical support provision. A random sample was selected with which to undertake a quantitative research methodology. Taking advantage of the Ministry of Education and Science ITC education management system (2008/2009 data presented) all gymnasiums in Lithuania, secondary, basic, youth and primary schools, vocational institutions were entered in the list. The survey population was also divided into sets (according to the type (primary, basic, secondary, etc.) and subdistricts). It was intended to ensure that the number of respondents was proportional to the size of the set and comprised all the subdistricts of the country, thus ensuring a representative sample. The sample was designed following the formula of sample volume determination (Kardelis, 2007).

2050 questionnaires were posted out and 1518 of them were returned (the return percentage was very high – 91.17 %). The high response level was determined by having a direct relationship with schools in order to establish an atmosphere of collaboration.

Pedagogues, specialists providing special pedagogical support, members of the administration and SEB authorities representing all types of education institutions (schools-kindergartens, primary, basic, secondary, sanatorium schools, youth, special schools, children socialization centres and gymnasiums) took part in the survey. Respondent distribution was according to the school type: secondary (41.3 %), primary (5.6 %), basic (28.4 %), gymnasium (9.8 %), special (7.8 %), school-kindergarten (2.6 %), youth (1 %), adult secondary (0.1 %) and sanatorium (3.4 %). The respondent distribution according to the place of residence was: Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaip da, Šiauliai, Panev žys (31.8 %), other subdistrict centre (4.8 %), district centre (18.6 %), town (31.3 %) and county (13.4 %). The average pedagogical work experience of the teachers and specialists practitioners was 20.5 years. The respondent distribution according to the gender was: 1249 females (95.7 %), 56 males (4 %).

Methodology and the research instrument

The research instrument consisted of a quantitative questionnaire (written and returned response) with a theoretical analysis. The questionnaire aimed to find out how pedagogues

and specialists providing special pedagogical support, evaluate separate forms of education: home education, special school, mainstream school, special class and integrated/inclusive education. Which forms of education they deem are the most appropriate for the students who have behavioural and / or emotional and autistic spectrum disorders. The questionnaire reflected not only the content of a variety of forms of education, but the purposefulness of the support provided its special features and methods.

Following the operationalisation of the research object a structured survey was designed, the content of which reflected specialists' (special pedagogue and speech therapist), teachers' activity components, regulated by laws, and methodological attitudes of empowerment theory. The survey comprised 13 diagnostic blocks and 213 features.

Statistic data analysis was employed in the research and the methods applied in order to analyse the data were: descriptive statistics and factor analysis, (the relevance of all 4 factors of KMO scale to factor analysis is from 0.651 to 0.895. This shows that the data is relevant to perform a factor analysis).

The results of the research

Taking into account that there are a large number and variety of children with special educational needs in Lithuania, the pedagogues' attitude on relevance towards each of the four forms was revealed, according to the amount of the students' special educational needs (relevance to educate the children with slight, moderate,

severe and very significant special educational needs), separating the educational requirements of children suffering from autistic spectrum and behavioural and/or emotional disorders. The results enabled the identification of variety of existing educational models and their social and educational characteristics.

Educational requirements of total integration

According to the survey respondent opinions the form of total integration is the most appropriate for children with slight special educational needs (this opinion was supported by 81.6 % respondents). Approximately half of all the respondents thought that children who have moderate special educational needs can learn successfully through integration too. The respondents considered this form as inappropriate for children who have severe and very significant special educational needs.

The respondents were questioned according to a scale containing 21 variables referring to student's education at mainstream school in a regular class (i.e. the form of total integration). Having performed a factor analysis of the scale, categories describing and generalizing education in the form of total integration were revealed (the scale of opinion expression is from 1 to 4): *mainstream school preparation to satisfy children's special educational needs* ($M = 2.50$); *social integration and inclusion* ($M = 2.88$) and teachers – the main figures who satisfy special needs ($M = 2.97$) (see table 1).

Table 1

Education requirements of total integration: the results of factor analysis

Initial statements	M	SD	L	r/iitt	Cronbach	%
Mainstream school preparation to satisfy children's special educational needs						
Mainstream schools have favourable conditions for the students' vocational training	2.26	0.65	0.690	0.572	0.772	
Mainstream schools have favourable conditions for the students' vocational skills	2.29	0.68	0.563	0.517		
Despite different problems, the results of education at mainstream school is excellent – SEN children achieve a lot, parents and teachers are satisfied	2.38	0.66	0.485	0.483		
Teachers receive methodology, consultancy assistance, which enables them to satisfy students' special needs successfully	2.66	0.70	0.477	0.507		
School authorities look for resources and strive for better quality of SEN satisfaction	2.77	0.62	0.419	0.480		
Teachers are able to satisfy students' SEN	2.74	0.56	0.405	0.483		
Teachers have sufficient special pedagogy and psychological knowledge about SEN student learning and behaviour requirements	2.40	0.66	0.398	0.414		
Factor average assessment :	2.50					

Continuation of the table 1

Social integration and inclusion						
Education at mainstream school determines successful SEN children's social integration	2.70	0.62	0.618	0.527	0.763	11.53
Parents of their classmates are happy that their children study together with the SEN children	2.36	0.65	0.517	0.457		
Students learn in various, different tolerating environment	3.17	0.51	0.490	0.461		
Children with SEN have an opportunity to belong to the community of different people and acquire overall experience	2.90	0.61	0.478	0.481		
Students acquire social skills learning in an everyday natural environment	3.09	0.52	0.408	0.439		
Parents are satisfied with the education of their SEN children at mainstream school	2.88	0.49	0.402	0.483		
School community is empathic, willingly help each other	2.87	0.59	0.381	0.459		
Parents wish their SEN children to be educated at mainstream school	3.14	0.53	0.377	0.398		
Factor average assessment :	2.88					
Teachers are the main figures who satisfy special needs						
Teachers individualise education, taking into account each student's needs	3.08	0.57	0.643	0.501		
Teachers feel responsibility for each student, regardless of their differences and individual needs	3.17	0.56	0.543	0.481		
School authorities are interested in the problems of SEN students and their teachers	2.94	0.60	0.480	0.455		
Teachers learn team work	2.90	0.60	0.428	0.537		
Teachers working with SEN children meet challenges, acquire invaluable experience, develop their competencies	2.86	0.69	0.409	0.509		
SEN students get relevant support which satisfies their needs	2.86	0.60	0.398	0.465		
Factor average assessment:	2.97					

The highest evaluation is recorded under the overall category **teachers are the main figures who satisfy special needs** (factor average assessment 2.97). The respondents mainly approved of the statement, that the teachers working at mainstream schools *feel responsibility for each student, regardless of their differences and individual needs* ($M = 3.17$). It is probable, that because of this they *individualise education, regarding every student's needs* ($M = 3.08$). The statement which says that *school authorities are interested in the problems of SEN students and their teachers* ($M = 2.94$), was also accepted favourably, and this testifies to school authorities' interest to provide relevant support. The majority of the pedagogues think that teachers who work with SEN children *learn to work in a team* ($M = 2.90$), and *SEN students get relevant support which satisfies their needs* ($M = 2.86$). The greatest variety of opinions was noticed regarding the statement *teachers working with SEN children meet challenges, acquire invaluable experience, develop their competencies* ($SD = 0.69$), regardless of the different attitudes, the bigger part of the respondents approve of this statement ($M = 2.86$).

Social integration and inclusion is an acknowledged advantage of total integration ($M = 2.88$). The pedagogues who participated in the survey approve of the approach, that the learners studying through total integration *learn in various, different and tolerating environments*

($M = 3.17$), *students acquire social skills learning in the everyday natural environment* ($M = 3.09$), *children with SEN have an opportunity to belong to the community of different people and acquire overall experience* ($M = 2.90$); *the school community is empathic, willingly help each other* ($M = 2.87$); Relatively there was the least difference evaluating the statement *parents are satisfied with the education of their SEN children at mainstream school* ($M = 2.88$; $SD = 0.49$). The factor of parents' appreciation of their child's education and the factor of their self-determination is recognized: *parents are satisfied with the education of their SEN children at mainstream school* ($M = 3.14$). The biggest impediment, identified by the respondents was parents dissatisfaction with the process of integration in mainstream school as more than a half of the respondents did not appreciate the statement, that *parents of their classmates are happy that their children study together with the SEN children* ($M = 2.36$).

Preparation in mainstream schools to meet students' special educational needs ($M = 2.5$) was looked at ambiguously and here the biggest differences of opinion were recorded. The statements comprising this factor were more often disapproved. The vast majority of the respondents had a negative approach towards the preparation of mainstream schools in the provision of quality and relevant pre-vocational and vocational

education. In the majority of cases responses to statements; *mainstream schools have favourable conditions for the students' vocational training* ($M = 2.26$), *mainstream schools have favourable conditions for the students' vocational skills* ($M = 2.29$) were in the negative. More than half of the respondents thought that *teachers received methodological training, and consultancy assistance, which enables them to satisfy students' special needs successfully* ($M = 2.66$), and that the *school authorities looked for resources and strive for better quality of SEN satisfaction* ($M = 2.77$). Yet regardless of this the majority of all the respondents did not approve of the statement, that *teachers have sufficient special pedagogy and psychology knowledge in SEN student learning and behavioural needs* ($M = 2.40$). This highlights the lack of preparation of pedagogical staff. Less than a half of the respondents have the opinion that *despite different problems, the results of education at mainstream school is excellent – SEN children achieve a lot and parents and teachers are satisfied* ($M = 2.38$).

Education factors in partial integration

The majority of the pedagogues who participated in the survey held the opinion that partial integration is the best where there are moderate (46 %) and severe (36 %) special educational needs. Eight percent of all respondents indicated that the children, who have statements of very significant special educational needs could be educated in such a way too. The other 15 % of the respondents were also likely to apply this form of education to the children with slight special educational needs. Taking into account the fact that the process of education of children with slight SEN is only being slightly changed and there is not much need for support, such a position can be interpreted as the aspiration to form classes based on the principle of homogeneity, by eliminating any differences and not tolerating them.

Having performed a factor analysis of the scale, related with student's education in a mainstream school special class (i. e. in the form of partial integration) such categories were revealed: partial integration – *an efficient form of education* ($M = 2.93$); *prevocational and vocational training* ($M = 2.53$) and appropriate management / support coordination ($M = 2.81$) (see table 2).

Table 2

Education peculiarities of partial integration: the results of factor analysis

Initial statements	M	SD	L	r/itt	Cronbach	%
Partial integration – efficient form of education						
Education at a mainstream school special class determines the successful social integration of SEN children	2.75	0.60	0.673	0.614	0.850	23.94
Education of SEN students corresponds to their potential abilities	2.89	0.54	0.656	0.665		
SEN students feel equal members of the school community, take part in common events, make friends with children of different abilities	2.82	0.64	0.601	0.594		
SEN students receive intensive special pedagogical support satisfying their needs	2.90	0.61	0.588	0.596		
Regardless of different problems, the result of education in the form of partial integration is excellent – students having SEN achieve a lot, parents and pedagogues are satisfied	2.64	0.61	0.569	0.581		
Children with SEN develop their social skills in a different environment	2.82	0.53	0.565	0.573		
Parents are satisfied with the education of SEN children in a special class in the mainstream school	2.88	0.53	0.555	0.562		
School community is empathic, willingly help each other	2.80	0.55	0.512	0.531		
Factor average assessment:	2.81					
Prevocational and vocational education						
Favourable conditions are created for the students to acquire working skills in mainstream schools with special classes	2.53	0.63	0.852	0.703	0.763	14.66
Favourable conditions are created for the students to prepare for vocational education in mainstream schools with special classes	2.52	0.64	0.793	0.691		
SEN children take an active part in after school activity (clubs, school events)	2.53	0.63	0.386	0.414		
Factor average assessment:	2.53					
Appropriate management/support coordination						
School authorities are interested in the problems of SEN students and their teachers	2.96	0.53	0.862	0.693	0.818	12.22
School authorities look for the necessary resources and strive for better quality of SEN satisfaction	2.89	0.57	0.718	0.693		
Factor average assessment:	2.93					

The highest assessment was recorded in the generalizing category **appropriate management / support coordination** ($M = 2.93$). The majority of the pedagogues' approval of the following statements *school authorities are interested in the problems of SEN students and their teachers* ($M = 2.96$), *school authorities look for necessary resources and strive for better quality of SEN satisfaction* ($M = 2.89$) in a sense expressed the respondents' favourable attitudes towards the authorities, who found special classes in mainstream schools and looked for the necessary resources.

Partial integration as an efficient form of education ($M = 2.81$) was approved by the majority of the survey respondents. More than a half of those questioned thought that being educated through partial integration *SEN students receive intensive special pedagogical support satisfying their needs* ($M = 2.90$) and *the education of SEN students corresponds to their potential abilities* ($M = 2.89$). Pedagogues believed, that *parents are satisfied with the education of SEN children in special classes of the mainstream school* ($M = 2.88$), and *SEN students feel they are equal members of the school community, take part in common events, make friends with children of different abilities* ($M = 2.82$), that *the school community is empathic, willingly help each other* ($M = 2.80$), and that *children with SEN develop their social skills in different environments* ($M = 2.82$). The biggest difference in pedagogues' opinions appeared regarding the statements *education in mainstream school special classes determines the successful social integration of SEN children* ($M = 2.75$); *regardless of different*

problems, the result of education in the form of partial integration is excellent – students suffering from SEN achieve a lot, parents and pedagogues are satisfied ($M = 2.64$). This reflects an ambiguous opinion regarding partial integration – though this is thought to be extremely appropriate and efficient for the education of children with SEN, the respondents are unsure about the final results of education.

An ambivalent position has been stated when evaluating **prevocational and vocational education** ($M = 2.53$) of a child in partial integration. Around a half of the pedagogues approve and the same number of them disapprove of the opinion that *favourable conditions are created for the students to acquire working skills in mainstream schools with special classes* ($M = 2.53$); *favourable conditions are created for the students to prepare for vocational education in mainstream schools with special classes* ($M = 2.52$).

Education factors at special schools.

Education at special schools was indicated as the most appropriate form of education where there are very significant (70 %) or severe (58 %) special educational needs. In rare cases segregated education was also indicated for those with moderate special educational needs and in very rare cases for those with slight educational needs.

Having performed a factor analysis of the scale, related with student's education at special school, these generalising categories have been revealed: *efficient management and support to prepare for a profession* ($M = 2.99$); *education is satisfying the child's needs* ($M = 3.32$), *satisfaction with education* ($M = 3.19$) (see table 3).

Table 3

Peculiarities of education in special school: the results of factor analysis

Initial statements	M	SD	L	r/itt	Cronbach	%
Efficient management and assistance to prepare for profession						
School authorities are interested in the problems of SEN students and their teachers	3.23	0.48	0.766	0.693	0.842	20.83
School authorities strive for better quality of SEN satisfaction	3.26	0.47	0.757	0.686		
Special educational institutions create favourable conditions for the students to acquire working skills	3.15	0.55	0.608	0.682		
Special educational institutions create favourable conditions for the students to prepare for vocational education	3.16	0.56	0.545	0.656		
Education of SEN students corresponds to their potential abilities	3.22	0.53	0.484	0.574		
SEN children take an active part in after school activity (clubs, school events)	3.13	0.58	0.430	0.465		
Factor average assessment:	3.19					

Education satisfying children's needs						
SEN students receive intensive specialist support satisfying their needs	3.40	0.53	0.786	0.808	0.880	19.09
Such children receive better and more comprehensive support in special schools	3.30	0.60	0.758	0.772		
Special schools provide quality, education corresponding SEN children needs	3.39	0.53	0.728	0.754		
Children feel safe, nobody turns away from them, or bullies, abuses them.	3.21	0.62	0.592	0.650		
Factor average assessment	3.32					
Satisfaction with education						
Education at special school determines the successful social integration of SEN children	2.75	0.69	0.773	0.673	0.791	18.22
SEN children develop their social skills at special school too, because trips to the natural environment are being arranged	3.10	0.52	0.615	0.687		
Parents are satisfied with the education of their SEN children	3.06	0.52	0.607	0.662		
Regardless of different impediments the result of education at special school is excellent – SEN children achieve a lot, parents and teachers are satisfied	3.03	0.57	0.594	0.651		
Factor average assessment:	2.99					

The highest assessment has been recorded in the category **education is satisfying the children's needs** ($M = 3.32$). The majority of the respondents think that at special school *SEN students receive intensive specialist support satisfying their needs* ($M = 3.40$), as *special schools provide quality, education is provided corresponding to SEN children's needs* ($M = 3.39$). A common teachers' position is that *such children receive better and more comprehensive support in special schools* ($M = 3.30$), and *children feel safe, nobody turns away from them, bullies or abuses them* ($M = 3.21$).

Efficient management and assistance to prepare for profession ($M = 3.19$) is another pointed advantage of a special school. Those questioned accentuated the authorities' interest in the problems of SEN students and their teachers ($M = 3.23$) and the aspiration for a quality education for SEN children ($M = 3.26$). Pedagogues believed that *efficient management and aspiration to make the education of SEN students corresponding to their potential abilities* ($M = 3.22$) *allow to create favourable conditions for the students to acquire working skills* ($M = 3.15$) and *prepare for vocational education* ($M = 3.16$).

For the majority of the respondents a child's (self)education at a special school is associated with good education results and related

to **satisfaction with education** ($M = 2.99$). The majority believed that *learning at special school determines successful social integration of SEN children* ($M = 2.75$). A large number of those questioned approved of the statement that *SEN children develop their social skills at special school too, because trips to the natural environment are being arranged* ($M = 3.10$), highlighting the parents' *satisfaction with the education of their SEN children in special school* ($M = 3.06$). Most teachers think that *regardless of different impediments the result of education at special school is excellent – SEN children achieve a lot, parents and teachers are satisfied* ($M = 3.03$).

Factors of home education. 27.1 % of the respondents indicated home education as the best form of education for the children with very significant special educational needs. Only a small percentage (1.3 %) of those questioned approved of applying this form of education for moderate special educational needs.

Having performed a factor analysis of the scale, related with student's education at home, such generalising categories have been revealed: *suitability for the children, who have behavioural and emotional and autistic spectrum disorders* ($M = 2.2$); *flexibility and temporality* ($M = 3.13$) and for *application in exceptional cases* ($M = 3.29$) (see table 4).

Table 4

Peculiarities of home education: the results of factor analysis

Initial statements	M	SD	L	r/itt	Cronbach	%
Suitability for the children, who have behavioural and emotional and autistic spectrum of disorders						
Home education is especially suitable for the children who have behavioural and emotional disorders	2.90	0.75	0.800	0.604	0.704	21.81
Home education is especially suitable for the children who have autistic spectrum of disorders	2.95	0.75	0.719	0.538		
Home education is an excellent form of education for SEN children and should be applied more often, even in not very complex cases	2.30	0.77	0.549	0.429		
Factor average assessment:	2.72					
Flexibility and temporality						
Such education should be organised flexibly, combining it with education at school, only then you can expect fair results	3.18	0.50	0.645	0.392	0.561	12.34
Home education should be intended temporarily because children need the environment of their peers	3.08	0.56	0.595	0.392		
Factor average assessment:	3.13					
Application in exceptional cases						
Home education is intended for a student with very significant SEN who cannot learn at school due to his/her condition	3.43	0.60	0.530	0.269	0.414	9.97
This form can be applied only in very rare and exceptional cases, as home education isolates the SEN learner from school and "imprisons" him/her in a narrow family circle	3.15	0.76	0.491	0.269		
Factor average assessment:	3.29					

This form of education did not gain much acceptance and essentially is evaluated as the form to be applied only in **exceptional cases** ($M = 3.29$): when *a student has very significant SEN and cannot learn at school due to his/her condition* ($M = 3.43$) and only in *very rare and exceptional cases, as home education isolates the SEN learner from school and "imprisons" him/her in a narrow family circle* ($M = 3.15$). If this form is being applied, the pedagogues think, that **flexibility and temporality** ($M = 3.13$) is of importance: *such education should be organized flexibly, combining it with education at school, only then you can expect fair results* ($M = 3.18$); *home education should be intended temporarily because children need the environment of their peers* ($M = 3.08$). **Suitability for the children, who have behavioural and emotional and autistic spectrum disorders** ($M = 2.72$) distinguished as the category uniting the teachers' attitude. *Home education is especially suitable for the children who have autistic spectrum disorders* ($M = 2.95$) and *home education is especially suitable for the children who have behavioural and emotional disorders* ($M = 2.90$) were pointed out by more than a half of all the pedagogues as an especially appropriate form. However, despite this, A larger number of teachers did not approve of the statement *home education is an excellent form of education for SEN children and should be*

applied more often, even where the SEN is not very complex ($M = 2.30$).

Educational factors of children with autistic spectrum and behavioural and/ or emotional disorders

A separate part of the questionnaire was designed to evaluate the pedagogues' attitude towards the educational opportunities for children with behavioural and/ or emotional disorders,. It emerged that 77 % ($N = 1173$) of the respondents had an opportunity to educate students with behavioural and/or emotional disorders (the other 23 % of the respondents either did not answer or stated that they had not had students with such disorders). This data is contradictory, because regarding official statistics (ŠMM released database) the number of children at schools with behavioural and/or emotional disorders is very small – the number accounts for 1.6 % of all the children having SEN.

A majority of the survey participants thought, that a child with behavioural and/or emotional disorders ought to be educated in a separate or half- separate environment: 39.5 % indicated that the best institution of education for these children could be special schools, another 27.7 % think that the best way is home education, and 25.2 % indicated a special class of a mainstream school. Only 17 % of all the respondents identified total integration/inclusion

(the form of total integration) for children with behavioural and/or emotional disorders.

Those with experience of educating children with autistic spectrum disorders were 65 % (N = 987) of all the questioned pedagogues (other respondents either did not answer or stated having not had such experience – 19.7 % (N = 243)). Assessing the appropriateness of educational forms for that group of children the participants of the research considered it to be through a separate type of educational environment - education at special school (43 %) and home education (38 %). Only in rare cases would the pedagogues recommend education in a special class at a mainstream school (16.8 %), and in exceptional cases – integrated/inclusive (form of total integration) education (6.4 %).

Conclusions and discussion

Making references to the law on special education in the Republic of Lithuania and following the realistic education practice in the country, we can state that the students with special educational needs can be offered 4 modes of education: total integration, partial integration, education at a special educational institution and/or home education. The research revealed a variety of pedagogue's evaluations towards different educational models, within different forms of education. The education of students with more severe SEN are associated with special types of institutions. Children with behavioural and/or emotional disorders are seem to be better educated in segregated school environments. If education in special educational institutions is not possible, other segregated forms such as home education are sought. The majority of pedagogues consider home education to be one of the appropriate forms of education for children with behavioural and/or emotional and autistic spectrum disorders, thus isolating them from normal children's environments and restricting their interaction with peers.

The following social and educational characteristics of educational models were identified in the research:

- Pedagogues identify the mode of *total integration* as the most appropriate, for children with slight special educational needs, and a mode of partial integration, for children with moderate special educational needs. Although attitudes of inclusive education dominate the application of total integration for learners with special educational needs, they are often more a formality than a reality, as some

pedagogues have ideas where they transfer responsibility to society (i.e. "our society is not ready yet", "change society attitudes"). It was revealed that there is a tendency to realise the ideas of total integration and inclusive education, of fulfilling high aspirations and objectives that reflect the modern direction of education being divergent from mainstream school preparedness in order to satisfy special educational needs and ensure the educational quality received by all the learners.

The advantages of this model of education are related to the processes and development of social integration and inclusion in mainstream schools. The main resource of successful implementation of the model is teachers as the main satisfiers of special educational needs.

- Regarding the survey participants' attitudes, the most appropriate form for the children with moderate and severe special educational needs is the form of *partial integration*. This is explained by the fact that sufficient time is allocated for SEN children's individual assistance during the lesson in a special class of a mainstream school. Here students receive both intensive special support corresponding to their needs and opportunities to be an equal community member of a mainstream school.

According to the attitudes of the respondents, the most appropriate form of education for partial integration is to institute special classes in mainstream schools, when in the case of total integration a school cannot ensure that the child's needs will be met. Characteristics of such a model of education, in comparison with other models and forms of education, are related to better prevocational and vocational education and appropriate coordination of meeting SEN, pedagogical and special pedagogical support provision. However, educating children in a special class in a mainstream school, is not enough to achieve the objectives of social integration. Regardless of the advantages mentioned, some of the pedagogues have doubts about whether children receive a successful education using this method. The supporters of the concept of inclusive education see partial integration as segregating and contradict the idea of inclusive education.

- Where special schools are the most appropriate form of education, was found when severe or very significant special educational needs are diagnosed. The

advantages of special schools are that they can provide all-round assistance and education meeting the learner's needs (there is a methodological basis, experienced specialists and a safe environment) and focusing on vocational training and the development of social skills. There are advantages for teacher's who provide support in special school too: the individualisation of education, meeting of the child's needs, taking into account specialists' recommendations, contacts with parents and other specialists providing support, coordinating the objectives and the content of education.

Though education in special schools is acknowledged as an efficient form, there is a tendency to focus only on the advantages of education in a segregated environment. This means they do not visualise the limitations in an integrated world. This attitude by the majority of the pedagogues' testifies to a latent negative attitudes towards integrated education.

- The most controversial issue is the evaluation of *home education*. It is considered as some sense of isolation and exclusion, but on the other hand, it is acknowledged as necessary and timely in exceptional cases and to be applied especially flexibly, ensuring some integration possibilities for the student with peers at school. The research has revealed that home education is considered to be the most appropriate for children with severe and very significant SEN, and in other cases it should be applied only exceptionally. This is not to be considered good for less disabled children but the participants of the research did not consider it should be refused in every case. The majority of pedagogues consider home education as one of the appropriate forms of education of children with behavioural and/or emotional and autistic spectrum disorders, thus isolating them from the regular school environment and limiting their interaction with peers. The main advantage of home education is the possibility of individual support provision for the child.

In comparison with previous research of pedagogues' attitudes in Lithuania (Ambrukaitis, Ruškus, 2002; Miltenien, 2005, 2006; Ruškus, 2000; and other), a positive approach that evaluates the role of the pedagogue and the education of children having special educational needs in mainstream schools, has been noted. This research identifies that pedagogues in mainstream schools in Lithuania, especially primary classes, take more responsibility for the education of children with special needs and acknowledge the advantages of inclusive education. However, the focus on partial integration and education in special schools or at home (sometimes even in the cases of slight special educational needs or behavioural and/ or emotional disorders) that is justified on the grounds of the school's lack of preparedness to satisfy learners' special needs, testifies to the resistance to inclusive education in practice. Empirically identified features of educational models more characteristic favour integrated but not inclusive education. Pedagogues' aspirations to differentiate the availability of education following the extent of the special need i.e. according to how the learner him/herself is able to adapt to mainstream school (and the educational environment) testifies to poor systemic-institutional adaptations in the school. The acknowledgement of segregated models (special school, home education) as the most efficient in the present conditions show some negative attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education. It is obvious that occurrences of inclusive education, when at both individual and institutional levels seek to ensure a quality education for everyone, and show episodes of successful practical experiences at school. Considering the underlying intention to move from integration to inclusion it is insufficient merely to change the term or political attitudes. It is imperative to change the practice of education by identifying and disseminating good pedagogical experiences initiating inclusive classes, inclusive schools, and an inclusive society.

**References attached to the original paper
(pp. 115–116)**

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