# Is Personalized Learning Based Education of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder Possible in Lithuanian Inclusive Primary School Setting?

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# AIM AND METHOD

The authors of this paper **aim** to reveal what approach dominates in inclusive primary school setting while educating pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

The explanatory research is based on qualitative research methodology: *semi-structured interview, content analysis, and scientific literature analysis.*

Participants: Lithuanian primary school teachers who are teaching in inclusive classroom and have pupil(s) with ASD in their classroom (N=8).

Number of pupils in classroom varies from 10 to 26, including one of them who has ASD and at least few more students who have other unspecified or non-identified special educational needs.

The questionnaire is based on *modified Personalization vs Differentiation vs Individualization Report (PDI) v3. Chart* (Brey, McClaskey, 2013).

The questionnaire includes the following topic areas:

1) General questions

2) Selection of educational content and method;

3) Cognition and education of pupils with ASD;

4) Promoting student participation in the educational process;

5) Determining the learning goals of a pupil with ASD;

6) Used resources in lessons

7) Assessment of progress.

# INTRODUCTION

Personalized learning (PL) gain more attention from researchers and practiners.

Qualitativetive researches reveal that practically PL paradigm requires collaboration between school communities and the policy of the government in order to achieve success in inclusive settings (Shemshack, Spector, 2020).

The results of the Lithuanian external risk assessment of mainstream education schools show that the needs of different students are taken into account when planning lessons in 29.7 % schools; the educational process is planned to be organized equally for the whole class in 70.3 % schools; signs of PL have been observed in 9.4 % individual schools (Šarskuvienė, 2019).

According to recommendations to pupils with ASD provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (2020 09 14 įsak. Nr. V-1367), the education for these pupils is focused on individualization.

| | Individualization | Differentiation | Personalization |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teaching | **Teacher** provides instructions to the individual learner | **Teacher** adjusts learning needs for groups of learners. | Knowledge of the learner's situation, needs and interests. Shared responsibilities of the **teacher and the student** in learning and setting the goals. |
| Learning | Individualized Education Plan | **Teacher** is responsible for a variety of instruction for different groups of learners. | |
| Goals | **Teacher** identifies the same objectives for all learners with specific objectives for individuals who receive one-on-one support. | **Teacher** identifies the same objectives for different groups of learners as they do for the whole class. | |

(Bray, McClaskey, 2013)

# RESULTS

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|---|---|
| Selection of educational content and method | Teaching process is organized by the class teachers, who foresee teaching goals, methods of education and assessment, and seeks for ways of motivating children. They try to take children's needs, hobbies and interests into account, and assess their individual progress. None of pedagoges singled out that they used additional methods for educating children with ASD. |
| Cognition and education of pupils with ASD | *Teacher obtains thorough knowledge of the child not only by constantly observing his reactions and behavior, but also by cooperating and sharing information with parents, other teachers, specialists, and other participants of education. Much attention is paid to the individualized teaching of the child with ASD and to the child's acquisition of the skills necessary for learning.* |
| Promoting student participation in the educational process | *Applied motivation measures, such as permission to choose the activity, task and the nature and time of its performance, other external motivation measures and gradual involvement of the autistic child in group activities ensure the child's participation in the learning process.* |
| Determining the learning goals of a pupil with ASD | *the child's individual needs, general curricula are taken into account, consultations with other educational support specialists take place.* |
| Used resources in lessons | *teachers use a wide range of visual, technical, and other educational tools that are sufficient at school. Education support specialists come to the aid of teachers, but there is a lack of pupil assistants. Assistance of classmates to each other and cooperation with parents are appreciated by teachers most.* |
| Assessment of progress | *Pupil assessment is based on standardized methods, but the child's individual strengths and abilities, needs, efforts and personal characteristics are taken into account.* |

# CONCLUSION

- Differentiated and individualized teaching predominates in inclusive classroom.
- Teachers emphasize that they seek to involve all students, including those with ASD in common activities and to ensure that a child feels well in a classroom.
- The elements of the PL also showed up as the principles of Universal Design for Learning were applied by the teachers.
- Individual progress of the child is taking into consideration.
- Teachers classify children according to their academic abilities when organizing a lesson.
- Teachers provide educational content and materials based on general education programs; apply active teaching methods, present teaching materials according to child interests, adapts tasks to address the needs of a child.
- Teachers emphasize that inclusion is only possible when a sufficient resources including educational support is available in a school.

# REFERENCES

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