

Professional Development in Multicultural Education: Supporting Teachers in Diverse Classrooms

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Abstract

In recent years, Lithuania has experienced a significant increase in the number of refugee and migrant families, leading to rapidly diversifying early childhood education (ECE) environments. This demographic shift has placed unprecedented demands on teachers, who are often unprepared to address the complex cultural, linguistic, and emotional needs of children from refugee backgrounds. Despite these challenges, there remains a notable lack of structured professional development, intercultural training, and institutional guidance for educators working in multicultural classrooms. This presentation examines the growing need to support Lithuanian ECE teachers through comprehensive professional development programs and clear policy frameworks. Drawing on recent national and international research, as well as testimonies from educators in Lithuanian kindergartens, the study highlights systemic gaps that hinder inclusive practice—such as insufficient multilingual resources, lack of psychosocial support, and minimal collaboration between schools and external support services. The findings emphasize the urgent need for leadership in early childhood institutions to prioritize intercultural competence, teacher wellbeing, and curriculum adaptation to meet the evolving needs of a multicultural society. Without these reforms, both teachers and refugee children risk being left unsupported in a rapidly changing educational landscape.

Keywords: multicultural education, intercultural competence, professional development, educational leadership, educational diversity.