

IMPROVING THE COMPETENCES OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS BY IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR EDUCATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the experiences of the leaders of educational institutions in the possibilities for improving the competences of preschool teachers by implementing the universal design for education strategy. The qualitative research found that the following areas of competence are important for preschool teachers when implementing the universal design for education strategy: continuous professional development, planning and implementation of inclusive education, knowledge of students, media and digital literacy, leadership, etc. Based on the insights of the leaders, teachers must constantly improve their professional competences that are closely related to the quality of children's education. The findings of the research revealed the informants' opinions on the most effective ways of improving the competences of preschool teachers, such as: collegial learning, participation in long-term competence development programmes, supervision, projects, idea fairs, self-education, etc. The research participants highlighted the possibilities for improving teachers' competences by implementing the strategy of universal design for education, including: searching for new educational methods and testing them in practical activities; developing cooperation with parents, guardians and caregivers of students; the opportunity to develop competences in an (in)formal, self-educational way; empowering creativity; participating in various project activities on a national and international scale, etc. The implementation of these possibilities depends on the motivation of teachers and their desire to constantly update and improve their professional competences.

KEY WORDS: *teacher competences, universal design for education, preschool age.*

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Introduction

Recent strategic documents (Lithuanian Law on the Amendment of the Law on Education, 2011; Good School Concept, 2015; Preschool Education General Programme, 2022; State Progress Strategy 'Lithuania 2050', 2024; Millennium Schools' Programme, 2024) and the works of scholars (Slee, 2018; Burgstahler, 2020; Taylor, Neild, Fitzpatrick, 2023; Gaučaitė, Kazlauskienė, Vilutienė, 2023) associate quality education with inclusive education. One of the strategies for implementing inclusive education, based on ideas of social constructivism, is universal design for education. The goal of this strategy is to create a holistic educational environment, in which every child can feel like an equal member of the community, play, choose alternative ways of exploring and participating in the educational process, and experience educational success.

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Principles of universal design for education	I. The diversity of ways children engage in education	the educator offers various educational methods: games, creative, experiential activities, etc taking into account the individual needs of his/her students
	II. Diversity in the presentation of educational content	the educator presents information in multisensory ways
	III. Variety of ways to demonstrate educational achievements	the educator assesses the individual growth of each child; offers alternatives for demonstrating their knowledge and abilities

Figure 1. Basic principles of universal design for education

Source: The authors, 2025, based on K. Taylor et al. (2023), I. Kaffemanienė et al. (2023).

K. Taylor et al. (2023) and I. Kaffemanienė, L. Giedraitienė, M. Jurevičienė et al. (2023) outline the main principles of universal design for education (Fig. 1), indicating what educational strategies educators should apply in order to enable children to become active participants in the educational process.

Understanding and acknowledging neurodiversity, anticipating educational barriers (obstacles, difficulties) and ‘building’ scaffolding (help methods) are priorities for the universal design for education. Scaffolding is ‘built’ when needed, and gradually ‘torn down’ (when the child can complete tasks independently). In this way, the child is empowered to engage in the self-education process, take responsibility and become a learning ‘expert’. It should be noted that sometimes the educator ‘builds’ scaffolding for the entire group, and sometimes for a specific child (Burgstahler, 2020).

The strategy of universal design for education has been studied in detail in various aspects in the works of scientists. T. K. Moffat (2022) and K. Taylor et al. (2023) presented the principles of universal design for education and guidelines for their implementation. K. Davies and P. Henderson (2020) wrote about the application of the scaffolding method in educational practice. R. Culatta (2016) and A. Virtanen (2022) analysed the possibilities for applying the strategy of organising personalised education. C. R. Short (2022) revealed the taxonomy of levels of autonomy in personalised education. T. Majoko (2019) highlighted aspects of educational differentiation when implementing the strategy of universal design for education. J. Subačiūtė (2022) and W. H. Rapp (2022) revealed the experiences of educators in the specifics of applying the universal design education strategy in practice. The logic of the research of A. Galkienė (2021), I. Kaffemanienė et al. (2023) and J. Nisbet (2023) allows us to state that children whose educators apply the universal design education strategy participate actively in the educational process, are willing to reflect on their activities, and are more motivated.

When implementing the universal design for education strategy, the role of the educator himself changes. The educator becomes not only an ‘omnipotent’ transmitter of information and knowledge, but also a child’s consultant and companion, who coordinates, models, differentiates and personalises the education process, and (if necessary) provides emotional and subject support (‘builds’ scaffolding). The main concern of the educator is to create and maintain a humane education environment, in which the educator’s activity decreases, and the students’ activity increases. The change in the educator’s role involves looking at the education process differently, ‘releasing control’, and giving students more freedom to make the most of their opportunities (Guðjónsdóttir, Óskarsdóttir, 2016; Gaučaitė et al., 2023). Therefore, the practical application of the universal design for education strategy is unimaginable without motivated educators who are constantly improving their professional competences, and who learn together with their students.

The importance of improving the competences of educators is highlighted in scientific literature (Ostinelli, Crescentini, 2021; Balevičienė, Dubonikas, 2022; Kaffemanienė et al., 2023; Žilinskaitė, Lapėnienė, 2024, etc). However, the topic of possibilities for improving the competences of preschool teachers through the implementation of the universal design for education strategy has not been sufficiently researched. This implies a *problematic question*: what are the possibilities for improving the competences of preschool teachers by implementing the strategy of universal design for education?

The object of the research selected was the experience of leaders in the possibilities for improving the competences of preschool teachers by implementing the strategy of universal design for education.

The aim of the research is to reveal the experiences of leaders in the possibilities of improving the competences of preschool teachers by implementing the strategy of universal design for education.

The research *applied theoretical* (analysis of scientific literature and documents) *and empirical* (semi-structured interviews, qualitative content analysis) research methods.

1. The organisation of the research

To achieve the aim of the research, a qualitative study was chosen which helps to clarify the experiences of the research participants in the phenomenon under study (Žydzūnaitė, Sabaliauskas, 2017). The research followed a traditional structure: the research problem was identified, research questions were formulated, and data related to the research topic was collected and analysed.

Research participants. When conducting qualitative research, the sample of research participants (informants) depends on the purpose of the research (Bitinas, Rupšienė, Žydzūnaitė, 2008). Non-probability targeted sampling was chosen for this study. The demographic characteristics of the informants are presented in Table 1, where the data shows that the principals of five educational institutions providing preschool education participated in the research. Such a sample is sufficient, because when applying individual interviews, it is recommended to sample from five to 30 people (Rupšienė, 2007; Brinkman, 2018). All the research participants are women. P1 and P3 work in educational institutions in Palanga, P4 and P5 in Kretinga, and P2 in the Kretinga district. The management work experience of the research participants ranges from five to 19 years. The average management work experience is ten years. Of all the participants in the study, there were three principals, one deputy principal for education acting as a substitute for a principal, and one deputy principal for education.

The *research was conducted* in February 2025. The qualitative data collection method *chosen* for the research was a semi-structured interview conducted using a pre-defined questionnaire; however, the researcher can change the questions, point them in the necessary direction, and ask additional questions taking into account the progress of the interview (Žydzūnaitė, Sabaliauskas, 2017; Aleknavičienė et al., 2020). During the research, informants were asked seven to ten targeted and interrelated questions. The semi-structured interview ended with demographic questions in order to reveal the characteristics of the research participants. In order to obtain detailed insights from the leaders about the possibilities for improving the competences of preschool teachers by implementing the universal design for education strategy, the interview conditions were agreed upon with each leader in advance. The interviews took place in the leaders' workplaces, as this is their natural environment where they can feel free. The data obtained from the informants was recorded in writing.

In qualitative research, *the research instrument is the researcher himself*, who acts as a reflexive participant in the interaction (Bitinas, 2013). Although the aim for the research instrument is to remain neutral with respect to the research results, everything that is revealed in the research is a joint product of the interaction between the researcher and the research participant. Therefore, objectivity in educational research is partial (Denzin, Lincoln, 2018; Litvinaitė, 2024).

Qualitative content analysis was used to process the data. The main goal of qualitative content analysis is to reveal the essential aspects of the phenomenon under research (Žydzūnaitė, 2011). Content

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the informants

Code	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Gender	woman	woman	woman	woman	woman
City	Palanga	Kretinga distr.	Palanga	Kretinga	Kretinga
Position	Principal	Deputy principal for education	Deputy principal for education acting as a substitute for a principal	Principal	Principal
Management work experience (in years)	10	5	19	7	7

Source: The authors, 2025.

analysis allows for an objective and systematic analysis of text features, leading to qualitative and well-founded conclusions (Kardelis, 2017). This research used a three-stage data analysis sequence:

1. Reading transcriptions, marking notes.
2. Initial data coding, which involves generating categories without limiting their number.
3. The categories identified in Stage II are combined, paying attention to recurring ideas and themes that emerged in different groups (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick et al., 2018).

Validity and reliability of the research. In order to ensure the validity of the research, an environment based on trust was created between the researcher and the research participants. The research participants were informed that the information they provided was confidential (informants were coded by assigning each one a letter and a number code: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5). The formulation of clear and understandable questions during the interview was also ensured. The generalisation of the results of this research was limited by the relatively small number of informants.

Research ethics is related to the moral principles that researchers must follow when preparing for research, and until the results of the research are published. According to scientists (Žydzīūnaitė, Sabaliauskas, 2017), the ethical behaviour of a researcher makes the results of the research more qualitative. This research was based on the principles of respect for personal privacy, confidentiality, anonymity and justice.

2. The research findings

The Lithuanian Law on the Amendment of the Law on Education (2011) states that competence is a person's ability to perform a certain activity, based on the totality of acquired knowledge, skills and value attitudes. The concept of competence is treated differently in the works of foreign and Lithuanian scientists. S. Carretero, R. Vuorikari, Y. Punie (2017), F. Caena, C. Redecker (2019) and E. Balzarienė (2021) describe competence as a person's personal qualities, knowledge, abilities, skills and value attitudes that are important for a person both in his personal life and in his professional activities. According to S. Sidiqova (2020), competence is a person's accumulated knowledge and acquired abilities that help him achieve excellent results in his professional activities. A. Ragauskaitė (2021) treats educators' competences as the knowledge, abilities and skills necessary for an educator in his pedagogical activities.

The analysis of scientific literature and documents revealed that the concept of *competence* is interpreted differently. Therefore, during the research, it was relevant to find out how the participants in the study understand the concept of *improving the competences of preschool teachers by implementing the strategy of universal design for education (UDE)*. The research data is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The concept of improving preschool teachers' competences by implementing the UDE system

Category	Excerpts from interview texts
The concept of <i>improving preschool teachers' competences by implementing the UDE system</i>	This is [...] strengthening the abilities of teachers, in order to adapt [...] the educational environment and process for all children, according to the individual needs of each child [...] Teachers must [...] organise education in such a way that each child feels accepted, motivated, and can [...] make progress (P1)
	This is [...] teacher development, learning flexibility, respect for another, sometimes different [...] person. Learning to adapt the educational environment so that children do not feel excluded (P2)
	It is the ability of teachers [...] to adapt educational environments taking into account the individuality of each child. Also, appropriate methods of conveying information, giving children equal educational opportunities to achieve success (P3)
	Developing teachers' competences based on the universal design for education strategy is essential for achieving high-quality and inclusive preschool education. This ensures that every child has the opportunity to learn according to their needs and abilities, and that the educational environment is adapted to everyone, regardless of their individual characteristics (P4)
	It is [...] the development of teachers' skills in order to adapt the educational environment and methods [...] to all children, regardless of their abilities, needs or challenges (P5)

Source: The authors, 2025.

Summarising the data presented in Table 2, it can be stated that in the opinion of the leaders, the improvement of the competences of preschool teachers while implementing the UDE strategy, *is the improvement of the knowledge, abilities, and skills of preschool teachers, in order to create an accessible, attractive educational environment for all children, to select and apply educational methods that enable all learners to experience educational success regardless of their individual educational needs, abilities and challenges.*

The research found that, in the opinion of the research participants, preschool teachers implementing the UDE strategy need all the competences specified in the 'Description of Competences for Teachers and Student Support Specialists' (2023), which are: *professional behaviour, cognitive, teamwork, emotional-motivational*. These are emotional intelligence, leadership, cultural identity, citizenship and intercultural competences. In the opinion of the informants, the following areas of competence are important for preschool teachers implementing the UDE strategy (Table 3): *professional development* (P1, P2, P4, P5); *planning and implementation of inclusive education* (P1, P3, P4, P5); *knowledge of students* (P1, P4, P5); *media and digital literacy* (P1, P3, P5); *creativity* (P2, P4, P5); *emotional intelligence* (P1, P2, P4); *constructive communication and cooperation with parents, guardians, caretakers, other educators, student support specialists* (P5, P4); *leadership* (P3), etc.

The results of this research coincide with the results of scientific research. I. Kaffemanienė et al. (2023) emphasise that when applying the UDE strategy, educators need: a deep understanding of inclusive education; the ability to recognise the individual needs of learners, socio-cultural diversity; to adequately choose educational methods, techniques and tools, and to be able to personalise, differentiate education, and 'build' scaffolding. The 'Order on the Approval of Priority Areas for Qualification Improvement of Pedagogical Employees (excluding higher education employees) for 2023–2025' (2022) highlights the following priority areas for improving the competence of educators:

Improving educational practice and didactics competences. Improving these competences includes strengthening the application of active educational methods, developing research-based educational practices, strengthening children's (self-)assessment and progress analysis, etc.

Strengthening digital competences. Developing this competence includes the ability to critically select digital tools and apply them in practice, etc.

Table 3. Areas of competence required for preschool education teachers implementing the UDE strategy

Category	Sub-category	Excerpts from interview texts
Areas of competence required for preschool education teachers implementing the UDE strategy	Planning and implementation of inclusive education	To create [...] an inclusive and accessible learning environment for all children (P1, P3, P4, P5)
	Professional development	Professional growth (P2, P1, P4, P5)
	Media and digital literacy	Apply innovative methods (P1, P3, P5)
	Emotional intelligence	Psychological and emotional competence (P1, P2, P4)
	Students' knowledge	To be able to recognise [...] children's needs (P1, P4, P5)
	Creativity	Creativity (P2, P4, P5)
	Leadership	Leadership development and education (P3)
	Constructive communication, co-operation and teamwork	Collaboration skills, working with parents, specialists and other educators to achieve the best results (P5, P4)

Source: The authors, 2025.

Development of competences necessary for implementing the principle of inclusion. Development of these competences includes changing attitudes, the ability to respond to different educational needs of children in order to achieve the child's well-being and individual growth, etc.

Developing competences for leadership development and learning. Developing these competences includes creating a culture of dialogue, the quality of educational activities, peer feedback, personal progress, etc.

Strengthening civic education competences. Improving these competences includes the opportunity to integrate the basics of citizenship, national security, media literacy, the development of critical thinking in the life of the school community, etc.

The research findings highlighted the leaders' experiences of *barriers encountered in the process of improving the competences of preschool education teachers* (the results of the research are presented in Fig. 2), which are:

Lack of finances (P1, P2, P3, P5). P2 shared his experience: 'There is a lack of educational resources and financial opportunities for more expensive training.'

Ineffective and inadequate in-service training events (P1, P2, P3). During the interview, P3 noted that: 'Teachers [...] notice that the training does not meet their practical needs. There is a lack of specific examples of how to ensure that all children can participate in the educational process in a quality manner and that their individual needs are met.'

Teachers' lack of motivation (P1, P4, P5); unwillingness to change (P1, P4, P5). During the research, P4 said: 'Teachers are sceptical about new educational methods and do not want to change their work habits.' P5 emphasised that teachers usually apply classic educational methods, which do not always provide opportunities to ensure the high-quality implementation of UDE strategies.

Lack of cooperation (P5). During the interview, P5 shared the opinion that educators do not cooperate sufficiently with other educators, do not communicate their competence development needs to administrative staff, etc.

Strategic documents (Description of Qualification Requirements for Heads of State and Municipal Educational Institutions [Except higher education institutions], 2011), Guidelines for Strengthening Leadership and Management in Educational Institutions, 2020), and scientific works (Braslauskienė, Norvilienė, 2021; Litvinaitė, 2024) note that the head of an educational institution should be able to motivate educators to

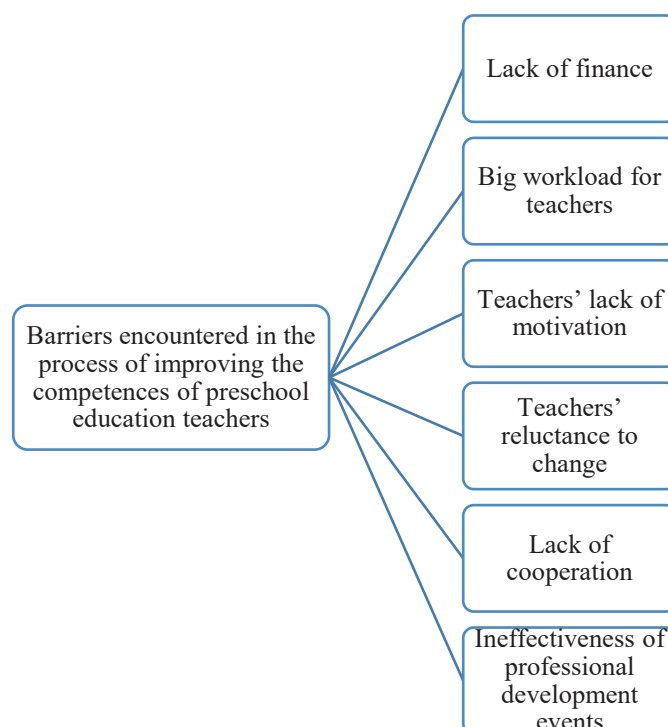


Figure 2. Barriers encountered in the process of improving the competences of preschool education teachers

Source: The authors, 2025.

become reflective practitioners who take responsibility for improving their professional activities, create favourable conditions for the development of educators' professional competences, involve the community of the educational institution and social partners in the process of improving educators' qualifications, etc.

In the *Dictionary of Psychology* (1993), employee motivation is defined as a process of promoting activity and behaviour, which is caused by various motives or a set of motives. Motives are stimuli for activity relating to the satisfaction of an individual's needs. They can be factors that stimulate activity, and which determine the direction of activity and individual, material goals that an individual pursues. In addition, motives include the reasons for the individual's choice of actions and deeds, which he perceives and considers to be important.

R. Braslauskienė and A. Norvilienė (2021) highlight material (monetary, non-monetary) and psychological motivational measures. Material motivational measures are financial incentives, by increasing wages, awarding bonuses, allowances and gifts, granting additional vacations, etc. Psychological motivational measures are trust and attention to the employee, creating opportunities to improve professional competences, creating a favourable micro and macro environment, etc. R. Braslauskienė and A. Norvilienė (2021) emphasise that the motivational system in each organisation must be structured in such a way that each employee feels a part of the entire set of motives.

During the research, all leaders emphasised that they help preschool teachers overcome barriers encountered in the process of improving their competences while implementing the UDE system: they encourage teachers to share good practices with colleagues in the educational institution and beyond (P2, P3, P4, P5); they support teachers: they create opportunities to choose professional development events and educational tools (P1, P5, P3, P4); they encourage teachers to focus on long-term professional development programmes (P1, P3); they enable them to participate in seminars where teachers acquire not only theoretical knowledge

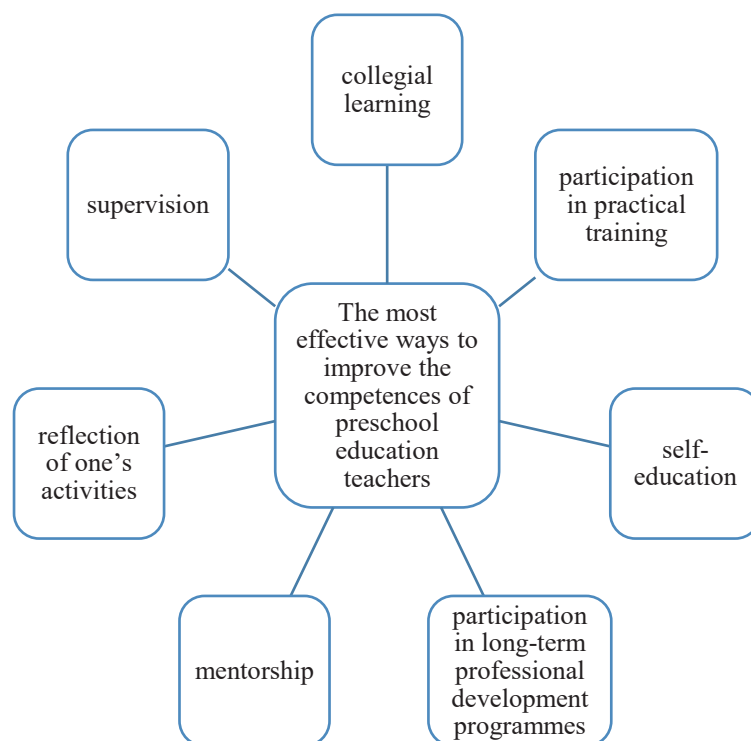


Figure 3. The most effective ways to improve the competences of preschool education teachers

Source: The authors, 2025.

but also practical skills about the UDE strategy (P2, P5); they strengthen teachers' motivation (P4, P5); and they create opportunities to realise their creative ideas (P4).

During the interview, the leaders identified the most effective ways to improve the competences of preschool teachers by implementing the UDE strategy in their opinion (see Fig. 3).

The data presented in Fig. 3 shows that, in the opinion of the research participants, the most effective ways of improving the competences of preschool teachers when implementing the UDE are: *collegial learning* (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5); *participation in training in which teachers acquire not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills* (P2, P4, P5); *self-education* (P4, P1); *participation in long-term competence development programmes* (P1); *mentorship* (P1); *reflection on one's own activities* (P1); *supervision* (P3); *participation in idea fairs and projects* (P3); *continuous training* (P5).

The findings of the research highlighted the experience of managers that *in the future, in order to improve the competence development system, preschool teachers need to:*

- strengthen collegial learning (P1, P2, P3, P5);
- pay more attention to training that improves the practical skills needed to implement the UDE strategy (P1, P2, P3, P4);
- choose long-term qualification development programmes (P1, P5);
- follow a consistent plan for improving competences (P1).

Leaders of educational institutions:

- promote mentorship by experienced educators (P2, P4);
- promote networking (P4, P5);
- to create systems for improving the qualifications of teachers at school (P1);

- motivate educators through various means (P1);
- focus more on case studies (P5).

Founders of educational institutions: increase funding (P2, P3).

The statements of the principals who participated in the research revealed *the possibilities for improving the competences of preschool education teachers through the implementation of the UDE strategy in their opinion*. The findings of the research are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Possibilities for improving the competences of preschool teachers through the implementation of the UDE strategy

Category	Sub-category	Excerpts from interview texts
Possibilities for improving the competences of preschool teachers through the implementation of the UDE strategy	Participation in long-term professional development programmes	Teachers have [...] opportunities to develop their competences [...] through [...] long-term professional development programmes (P1)
	(Non-)formal learning	Informally (P1, P4)
	Collegiate learning	Observing the activities of colleagues (P1, P3, P4, P5)
	Reflection on one's activity	Reflect on your own activities (P3)
	Search for scaffolding methods, application in practical activities	To provide scaffolding needed for a specific child in a specific situation (P3)
	Empowering creativity	The opportunity to look at the educational process creatively (P3)
	Testing new educational methods and approaches	Try new educational methods and techniques (P3, P4, P5)
	Remote learning	This is [...] remote learning (P5).
	Development of cooperation with parents, guardians and caregivers	The opportunity to collaborate more actively with the children's parents (P3, P5)
	Getting to know the students	The opportunity [...] to find out the needs of children (P3, P4)
	Participation in projects	Participation in projects (P5)

Source: The authors, 2025.

The data presented in Table 4 shows that the research participants identified the following opportunities for improving the competences of preschool teachers in implementing the UDE strategy: *collegial learning* (P1, P3, P4, P5); *searching for and testing new ways and methods of educating children, trying to meet different educational needs of children* (P3, P4, P5); *developing cooperation with parents, guardians and caregivers of students* (P3, P5); *learning through formal, informal, and self-education* (P1, P4); *participating in long-term, continuous professional development programmes* (P1); *reflecting on one's own activities* (P3); *searching for and applying new scaffolding methods in practical activities* (P3); *empowering creativity* (P3); *searching for and testing new ways of improving competences* (P5); *participating in project activities on a national and international scale* (P5), etc.

During the interview, the different opinions of the managers emerged. P2 noted that the possibilities for improving the competences of preschool teachers in implementing the UDE strategy are limited due to limited funding. Meanwhile, P1 expressed her opinion that the possibilities for improving the competences of preschool teachers in implementing the UDE strategy are currently unlimited, because the flow of

information is really large. Therefore, it is important for teachers to critically choose which professional competence development events to participate in and transfer learning experience and knowledge to their practical activities. The logic of scientific research (Kaffemanienė et al., 2023; Žilinskaitė, Lapėnienė, 2024) coincides with the findings of our research. The great competence of educators and continuous professional development help to ensure the right of every child to receive quality education and timely assistance. Therefore, educators must be open to continuous improvement, the development of their abilities, and a review of beliefs and attitudes.

Conclusions and discussion

The research conducted by Kaffemanienė et al. (2023) emphasises that when applying the UDE strategy, teachers need: a deep understanding of inclusive education; the ability to recognize the individual needs of learners and socio-cultural diversity; and to adequately choose educational methods, be able to personalise them, differentiate education, and 'build' scaffolding. The research by Žilinskaitė and Lapėnienė (2024) shows that the areas for improvement of teachers' competence are the following: educational practice and didactics; strengthening digital competences, competences necessary for implementing the principle of inclusion, leadership development and learning competences; and strengthening civic education competences. The authors' research revealed a similar opinion of the leaders as the result of Litvinaitė's (2024) research, which showed that the most effective ways to improve the competences of preschool teachers are: collegial learning, participation in long-term competency development programmes, supervision, projects, idea fairs, self-education, etc. Based on the insights of managers, teachers must constantly improve their professional competences, which are closely related to the quality of children's education.

The research findings highlighted the leaders' experiences of barriers encountered in the process of improving the competences of preschool teachers, including: lack of finance, inappropriateness and ineffectiveness of professional development events, lack of motivation of educators, and lack of cooperation.

During the research, the leaders revealed the possibilities for improving teachers' competences by implementing the strategy of universal design for education, including: searching for new educational methods and means and testing them in practical activities; developing cooperation with parents, guardians and caregivers of students; the possibility for developing competences in an (in)formal, self-educational way; enabling creativity; participating in various project activities on a national and international scale, etc. The implementation of these possibilities depends on the motivation of teachers and their desire to constantly update and improve their professional competences.

Research limitations and possibilities for research continuity. The limitations of qualitative research are related to the subjectivity that is inevitable in qualitative research. Although the requirements for this type of research were met when planning and conducting the research, the generalisation of research findings and the possibilities for their application are partly limited by the small number of research participants. It is precisely data from qualitative research that is unique and characteristic only of the individuals participating in the research. However, it is likely that the experiences revealed by these research participants allow us to state that this research is relevant and requires continuity, including research on the opinions of teachers, educational support specialists and parents, and paying greater attention to the process of improving the competences of teachers and other specialists in inclusive education.

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PRIEŠMOKYKLINIO UGDYMO MOKYTOJŲ KOMPETENCIJŲ TOBULINIMAS, ĮGYVENDINANT UNIVERSALIAUS DIZAINO UGDYMU(SI) STRATEGIJĄ: VADOVŲ PATIRTYS

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Santrauka

Pastaruoju metu strateginiuose dokumentuose (Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo įstatymo pakeitimo įstatymas, 2011; Geros mokyklos koncepcija, 2015; Priešmokyklinio ugdymo bendroji programa, 2022; Valstybės pažangos strategija „Lietuva 2050“, 2024; Tūkstantmečio mokyklų programa, 2024) bei mokslininkų (Slee, 2018; Burgstahler, 2020; Taylor, Neild, Fitzpatrick, 2023; Gaučaitė, Kazlauskienė, Vilutienė, 2023) darbuose kokybiškas švietimas siejamas su įtraukioju ugdymu. Viena iš įtraukiojo ugdymo įgyvendinimo strategijų, grįstų socialinio konstruktyvizmo idėjomis, yra universalus dizainas ugdymuisi. Šios strategijos tikslas – su-

kurti holistinio ugdymo(si) aplinką, kurioje kiekvienas vaikas galėtų jaustis lygiaverčiu bendruomenės nariu, žaisti, rinktis alternatyvius tyrinėjimo, dalyvavimo ugdymo(si) procese būdus ir patirti ugdymo(si) sėkmę.

K. Taylor ir kt. (2023), I. Kaffemanienė, L. Giedraitienė, M. Jurevičienė ir kt. (2023) pažymi pagrindinius universalaus dizaino ugdymo(si) principus, nurodančius, kokias ugdymo strategijas turėtų taikyti pedagogai, siekdami įgalinti vaikus tapti aktyviais ugdymo(si) proceso dalyviais.

Mokslinėje literatūroje (Ostinelli, Crescentini, 2021; Balevičienė, Dubonikas, 2022; Kaffemanienė ir kt., 2023; Žilinskaitė, Lapėnienė, 2024 ir kt.) aktualizuojama pedagogų kompetencijų tobulinimo svarba. Tačiau tema apie priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų kompetencijų tobulinimo galimybes, įgyvendinant universalaus dizaino ugdymui(si) strategiją, tyrinėta dar nepakankamai. Tai suponuoja probleminį klausimą, kokios yra priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų kompetencijų tobulinimo galimybės, įgyvendinant universalaus dizaino ugdymui(si) strategiją?

Tyrimo objektu pasirinktos vadovų priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų kompetencijų tobulinimo galimybių patirtys, įgyvendinant universalaus dizaino ugdymui(si) strategiją.

Tyrimo tikslas – atskleisti vadovų priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų kompetencijų tobulinimo galimybių patirtis, įgyvendinant universalaus dizaino ugdymui(si) strategiją.

Taikyti teoriniai (mokslinės literatūros ir dokumentų analizė) ir empiriniai (pusiau struktūruotas interviu, kokybinė turinio (content) analizė) tyrimo metodai.

Siekiant atskleisti vadovų priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų kompetencijų tobulinimo galimybių patirtis, įgyvendinant universalaus dizaino ugdymui(si) strategiją, pasirinktas kokybinis tyrimas, kurį atliekant rinkta, analizuota, sisteminta mokslinė literatūra ir dokumentuose pateikta informacija, atliktų mokslinių tyrimų duomenys bei rezultatai; pasirinkta tyrimo strategija, kurtas tyrimo dizainas; sudarytas tyrimo instrumentas; atliktas pusiau struktūruotas interviu; analizuoti, apibendrinti duomenys, išskirti tyrimo radiniai, parengta tyrimo ataskaita.

Tyrimo radiniai išryškino vadovų barjerų priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų kompetencijų tobulinimo procese patirtis, tai: finansų trūkumas, kvalifikacijos tobulinimo renginių netinkamumas, neveiksmingumas, pedagogų motyvacijos ir bendradarbiavimo stoka.

Vykdant tyrimą vadovai atskleidė mokytojų kompetencijų tobulinimo galimybes įgyvendinant universalaus dizaino ugdymui(si) strategiją, tai: naujų ugdymo būdų, metodų paieška, išbandymas praktinėje veikloje; bendradarbiavimo su ugdytinių tėvais, globėjais, rūpintojais plėtra; galimybė plėtoti kompetencijas (ne)formaliu, savišvietos būdu; kūrybiškumo įgalinimas; dalyvavimas įvairiose projektinėse veiklose nacionaliniu bei tarptautiniu mastu ir kt. Šių galimybių įgyvendinimas priklauso nuo mokytojų motyvacijos, noro nuolat atnaujinti, tobulinti savo profesines kompetencijas.

RAKTINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *mokytojų kompetencijos, universalus dizainas ugdymui(si); priešmokyklinis amžius.*

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