Editors Nikoleta Gutvajn Milja Vujačić

CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



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OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Editors Nikoleta Gutvajn Milja Vujačić

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FOREWORD

nsuring conditions for a quality education for all children is a key goal that is supposed to be achieved within the process of reforming the education system. Efforts to ensure both equality and quality in education have become fully made through the idea of inclusive education. The importance of this concept has also been confirmed by the fact that inclusive education in many countries represents a key indicator of the quality, efficiency and humanity of their education systems. Experiences so far in the application of inclusive education have been very valuable, because they point out some important elements of this process and provide guidelines regarding the manner in which those necessary changes should take place. It is important to highlight that it is impossible to develop one unique inclusive model that could be applied in various countries with the same level of success, but that adequate solutions can be only achieved by analyzing specific contextual conditions, taking into consideration the specificities of each social and cultural environment and the existing conditions of education systems and schools. In order for this idea to be actually implemented, it is important that decisions regarding public policies be based on insights obtained through careful research of various problems in the field of inclusive education. Those insights can be very significant both for decision-makers and practitioners in considering the process and results of the implementation of inclusive education as well as in getting ideas for further development of inclusive practices in educational institutions. It is possible to single out two approaches to the research and perception of inclusive education based on the different interests of researchers. The first approach is about searching for practical solutions to certain problems of inclusive education (a partial reform of the education system and schools), while the other approach perceives inclusion as a cultural policy that requires complete reconstruction of society and a new way of thinking.

Research in this field shows that, in spite of great efforts and endeavours to improve this idea, the inclusive education implementation process in most countries develops slowly and with difficulties. There are still many unresolved issues and dilemmas related to this process: (a) In what way is inclusive education related to key challenges in education such as quality, failing classes, lack of resources, rigidity of school programmes? (b) Is inclusive education the right solution for all children with developmental disabilities? (c) Is there is a best solution for the successful application of an inclusive programme and is there a clear plan to be followed? (d) Is the introduction of inclusive education possible in all countries?

The results show that official education policies in this field haven been completely implemented in practice and that existing differences can be explained by the existence of numerous barriers and challenges relating to the practical application of planned changes. Overcoming existing problems has not yet been fully solved, even in countries that have a long tradition of inclusive education and good economic conditions for its implementation, and it is clear that challenges and problems which developing countries encounter, having less experience in this field and unfavourable economic conditions, are bigger and more complicated.

Education policies in the field of inclusive education can be successfully implemented in practice if the key actors in this process (principals, teachers, students, and parents), strongly support planned changes and express a positive attitude towards them. Research shows that the resistance and negative attitudes of teachers and other stakeholders towards the inclusion of children from marginalized groups in regular schools lead to numerous problems in the implementation of inclusive education. It is therefore highlighted that changing attitudes is one of the challenges and key conditions for the success of this process. Changing and overcoming negative attitudes towards inclusive education is progressing very slowly and with difficulty, and that is why many other planned activities in this field encounter difficulties in the process of realization.

The problems in the application of inclusive education to a great extent relate to teachers, as key actors in this process. Research shows that the successful development of inclusive practice is particularly obstructed by teachers' negative self-assessment of their professional competency for the realization of inclusive education, as well as a lack of adequate professional training and expert support in working with students who need additional support. These problems cause teachers who work in inclusive contexts to become overwhelmed and stressed, which additionally affects their work negatively. Modern educational approaches show the importance of the new role of teachers in establishing the required conditions for encouraging the individual development of children and recognizing their individual abilities, affinities, family and cultural heritage. Therefore, adequate professional training of teachers for working in inclusive education, the implementation of innovative approaches in work, and cooperation with parents has been highlighted as one of the most important goals in the process of adapting education to meet the abilities and needs of all children.

Research indicates that, apart from the conditions of education systems, the achievement of inclusive education is hindered by numerous barriers, including social and local community factors, as well as the those relating to children who need additional support and their families. Therefore in considering key challenges and perspectives of inclusive education, barriers and problems should not only be tackled within the education system, but also in connection with other segments of society, such as the family, local community, as well as healthcare and social security.

A collection of papers "Challenges and Perspectives of Inclusive Education" contains thirteen papers by authors who are, by their thematic orientation, focused on elaborating on numerous issues significant for inclusive education. This book aims to examine current problems in inclusive education from the standpoint of their significance for the improvement of public policies and the practice of inclusive education. No theoretical and stylistic harmonization was required from authors of the articles. They were expected to show the results of their own theoretical and empirical research, thus making them accessible to both an academic audience and the wider public, in the hope that the results of such scientific research will be implemented to a greater extent in educational practice.

This collection of papers addresses certain questions of inclusive education, but it does not give a comprehensive account of all aspects of inclusive education. We thought that it was important to publish and present in a single collection papers by authors who are dedicated to examining inclusive education from various perspectives. Papers contain relevant information about the current conditions of inclusive education in Serbia; dominant discourses of inclusive education within legal frameworks of preschool education in Serbia; the connection between teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and their implicit pedagogies; attitudes of school counsellors towards the education of students with special needs; preschool teachers' competences for working in inclusive education; preschool teachers' opinions about the benefits of professional development in improving competences in the field of inclusive education; possibilities for inclusion of socially marginalized individuals and groups in an institutional environment and the local community in the context of education for human rights; institutional foundations for the inclusion of Roma people in the education system in Serbia and Croatia; frequency of symptoms of emotional and behavioural problems of older primary school students, with an analysis of gender differences, in the presence of symptoms and students' perception and assessment of the influence of difficulties on their own functioning; inclusive support in preventing bullying in the Italian education system; higher education programmes for teacher training in Montenegro and problems inhibiting improvements in inclusive education in music schools, with suggested solutions for their solution; characteristics of career development for various types of teacher in regular and special education systems.

The paper authored by Tinde Kovač-Cerović, Dragica Pavlović-Babić, Tijana Jokić, Olja Jovanović and Vitomir Jovanović *First comprehensive monitoring of inclusive education in Serbia: selected findings*, presents selected findings of the first comprehensive evaluation of inclusive education in Serbia, five years after its systemic introduction. This evaluation is based on indicators defined by the Framework for monitoring inclusive education in Serbia. The research was conducted

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on a representative sample of 28 schools, and it encompassed 1537 students, 794 parents and 742 teachers. The structure of the framework, which implies predefined indicators and criteria, as well as the assessment of that same indicator by various informants, enabled the identification of the areas which are strong points in our education system, as well as areas that require immediate system development. The results of the monitoring constitute a reliable basis for improving the policy and practice of inclusive education in Serbia.

In the paper *Inclusiveness of preschool education within education policies documents of the Republic of Serbia*, Lidija Miškeljin deals with an analysis of relevant legislative documents with the aim of showing that theoretical starting points interwoven with public policies discourse perceive a child differently, as well as inclusion itself thus bearing different implications for the practice of preschool education. A key question from which the author starts her analysis of the legislative framework is: What are the dominant discourses in legislative solutions for preschool education in Serbia and what kind of construction of inclusion do they offer? This paper uses one method of theoretical analysis implementing the technique of content analysis through the following dimensions: accessibility, employees, monitoring and evaluation, and management and financing. Based on the given criteria and categories we can observe that: children's rights remain at the level of political proclamation because they are not operationalized through the participation of children in education guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child; that reducing inclusion to a separate single consideration (such as the scope of children) becomes its own goal and displays particularity in understanding and recognition of inclusion; and that the concept of inclusion itself in documents of public policy is not based on a clear ideology because of existing terminological inconsistencies.

The results of the research aimed at examining teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education were presented and analyzed by Milja Vujačić, Rajka Djević and Nikoleta Gutvajn in their paper *An examination of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.* What distinguishes this research from similar studies in Serbia is its examination of the relationship between teachers' attitudes and their implicit pedagogies. The authors offer an account of key results of related research published both in our country and worldwide and recommend how to create further research on teachers' attitudes, which would lead to a more comprehensive and detailed consideration of this important variable, on which the quality of application of inclusive education depends to a great extent. A basic conclusion of this research is that teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education are moderately positive. The research has shown that there is a connection between teachers' implicit pedagogies and their attitudes towards inclusion, that is, the closer teachers' implicit pedagogies are to the contemporary education paradigm the more positive their attitudes towards inclusion are.

In the paper *How students with special needs should be educated*, Janez Drobnič shows that special schools can be seen as an opportunity to ensure the right to education for students with special needs, while on the other hand, they imply inequality in education because of students' exclusion from conventional learning environments provided to other students. Considering the fact that school counsellors' task is to help the integration of students with special needs, the

author conducted research on school counsellors' attitudes towards the education of students with special needs, in particular as to where such education should take place. One hundred and one school counsellors from primary, secondary, and special schools in Slovenia were included in the quantitative study. The prevailing opinion of counsellors in schools shows that they prefer the partial model of inclusive education, as they support all students – including those with special needs – being offered education in ordinary schools and classrooms, with the exception of students with learning difficulties. This suggests that we should seek new solutions for modern schools, in particular the education of all teachers for inclusive teaching in a classroom where all students are allowed to be different and individual, rather than being dealt with in two categories: students with special needs and others. This also means that we should revise education curricula and training for all teachers.

In the paper Attitude towards inclusion: an important factor in implementing inclusive education, Vanja Riccarda Kiswarday and Tina Štemberger focused on preschool teachers' inclusive competences. The research, in which 124 preschool teachers were included, aims to establish how they value and assess their competences for inclusion, whereby competences are understood on three levels: attitude, knowledge, and skills. The authors also checked whether preschool teachers with longer work experience and those who had attended in-service training for inclusive settings assessed their inclusive competences higher than others with less experience did. The survey results indicate that preschool teachers see themselves quite competent for work in inclusive settings – they rated themselves high in all three dimensions of inclusive competences. It turned out that there are differences in the assessment of skills and knowledge: teachers with 10 - 20 years of service rated these dimensions higher, but no difference could be noticed between teachers in relation to inservice training for inclusive settings.

In the paper *Preschool teachers' perception of professional training contribution to the development of competences in the field of inclusive education*, Isidora Korać presented a segment of research whose goal was to examine teachers' opinions about the contribution of professional development in developing competencies in the field of inclusive education. The research was based on a questionnaire answered by a sample of 150 preschool teachers employed at preschool institutions in several towns in Serbia. The findings of the research show that the current concept of professional development accentuates the adoption of *ready-made decontextualized* knowledge, development of preschool teachers' competencies as individuals, without connecting individual and organizational changes that inclusion initiates. The author concludes that if we want for the system of professional development to contribute to obtaining preschool teachers' professional competencies for application of the current model of inclusive education, it is necessary to enable their greater participation and reflective practice via programmes for professional development. Inclusion is a change and a challenge for organizations in which various protagonists participate, who are supposed to interconnect from their various positions, roles and responsibilities, aiming for horizontal learning and organized action. Future programmes for professional development

in the field of inclusive education should be directed at the following areas: (a) working with gifted children (b) adapting work organization in preschool institutions in order to meet the needs of children who need additional support, (c) assessment and revision of individual education plans and (d) teamwork and cooperation in preschool institutions.

In the work *Inclusion of socially marginalized individuals in the light of human rights education*, Olivera Gajić, Milica Andevski, Spomenka Budić and Biljana Lungulov consider possibilities for inclusion of socially marginalized individuals and groups in an institutional framework and a local community in the context of human rights education. The authors consider the context of social inclusion and human rights education in order to collect qualitative indicators concerning the existing knowledge, interest, and recognition of social inclusion and human rights with the purpose of shedding light on this problem by protagonists of the education process, as well as the wider community, which forms the basis of strategic decisions and guidelines of education in a democratic society. Finally, the authors conclude that a well organized support network for workers in this area, who are required to ensure conditions for the fulfilment of human rights on the principles of accessibility, participation and equality.

Studying the Roma minority, which is one of the most economically and socially deprived minorities in Serbia and Croatia, is the focus of the paper *Inclusion of the Roma in Croatia and Serbia: the institutional framework and its implementation*, whose authors are Nikola Baketa and Dragana Gundogan. The goal of this paper is to show the institutional foundations for including the Roma people in the education system, as well as the way in which institutional foundations changed in the process of approximation to the European Union. On the basis of these insights it can be established that, despite the legal framework, there is a high level of exclusion in the education system so that this approach leads to the more difficult advancement of the Roma people within it dropping out, or deciding not to continue education, which in turn perpetuates the problem of education and the social position of the Roma people. The methodological approach of the authors included analysis of legislative documents and reports, as well as that of available statistical data about the education of the Roma minority.

In the paper *The symptoms of emotional and behavioral problems in older primary school students*, Branislava Popović-Ćitić and Lidija Bukvić have shown the results of the research on the frequency of emotional and behavioural symptoms in primary school students, with analysis of gender differences in the presence of symptoms and assessment of students' perception about the influence of difficulties on their own functioning. The data was obtained by means of a Strengths and difficulties questionnaire, a version for self-assessment of adolescents aged 11 to 16 with an addition about the influence of symptoms, on a sample of 630 students from 5 secondary schools in Belgrade. The obtained results were discussed in the context of considering the need for additional support, which, within an inclusive education system, would be provided for students with difficulties in their emotional and social development.

In the paper Bullying and strategies for confronting the phenomenon in Italian schools, Ignazia Bartholini starts with a review of literature about bullying, published since the 1970s to date. On the bases of the outcomes of some studies previously conducted, she aims to explain how the phenomenon of bullying has accompanied the raising of the period of mandatory school. Through the research of eminent scholars, she argues that the crisis of values and the loss of perspective for the future of teenagers increase the possibility of violent relationships among peers in school, where they spend much of their time. An interpretative model on bullying is therefore highlighted, using the "dramaturgic metaphor" of Goffman and focusing the role of viewer/witness (often the same classmates) in breaking the violent triangle where the perpetrator and victim are similarly victims of the same cruel play. Finally she describes the strategies devised by the Ministry of Education which are currently applied in schools in the Italian peninsula from the perspective of preventive and rehabilitative education, on potential protagonists - victim and bully - on spectators viewers - on all those adolescents who just look at the "violent drama" for fun or for weakness, without interrupting it and preventing a recurrence. In the light of empirical evidences, it is suggested that such programs accompanied by informal practices should be encouraged. The author suggests that after Italy another of the European nations that has invested very much in terms of support for inclusion and prevention for confronting the problem of bullying at school can be considered.

On the basis of recent structural and functional changes in the Montenegrin education system, with a special focus on the concept of inclusion, in her paper *The concept of inclusive education in the master's degree curriculum in Montenegro*, Tatjana Novović analyzes high school programmes for teacher training in Montenegro. Almost twenty years since the inclusive concept was implemented in the Montenegrin education system, with substantial changes in teaching practice and education legislation, the problem of vertical discontinuity in the system is still significant, i.e. there is a lack of coherence and compatibility between primary, secondary and tertiary education. The lack of a continual exchange of practical experiences and obtained knowledge about the benefits and marked challenges among all systemic institutional participants, creating a fluid field of inclusive context in Montenegro, induces discontinuity and actualises "old" questions about the purpose and functionality of previous courses of development of this concept in all education segments.

In her paper *Inclusive education of visually impaired students in music schools in Montenegro*, Vedrana Marković presents problems that complicate the improvement of inclusive education at music schools and offers some solutions. Musically talented children with visual impairment should be identified in time and have their music potential developed, i.e. they should be educated in music schools. It is often the case that blind and partially sighted children with musical talent acquire their musical education outside institutions, by private means, whereby they only dedicate themselves to learning how to play a selected instrument, but not to other courses which are envisaged in the elementary music school (solfeggio, music theory, choral singing, orchestra). This way of learning makes their music education incomplete. In addition to the primary goal – achieving a complete music education - there are numerous positive influences that happen through education in a music school.

The text written by Milica Marušić *The career cycle of teachers according to their motives of professional choice: a comparison of general and special schools*, is focused on the consideration of three groups of teachers, based on the dominant motives of their professional choice: realists, idealists and opportunists, with the aim of comparing characteristics of career development of those groups of teachers in regular and special education system. Results obtained by the use of a questionnaire (N=209) show that teacher *idealists* displayed the lowest level of career frustration, out of a total sample. It was concluded that the career development of *idealists*, *opportunists* and *realists* differ depending on the context in which they work: as regular school teachers, *opportunists* are more prone to withdrawal, while at special schools there is a stronger career frustration.

At the end of this foreword we would like to stress that our task was facilitated to a great extent by the readiness of all the authors to fulfill the requirements of the editor both in terms of the scope and structure of the papers. We hope that our gratitude will be a sufficient reward for the efforts they invested. We would like to thank the consulting editors, our distinguished colleagues Professor Nikolay M. Borytko, Professor Susana Padeliadu and Professor Marija Kavkler, whose suggestions significantly influenced the improved quality of the book. We owe a debt of gratitude to Milan Stančić, PhD, who patiently and dedicatedly helped us during all stages of preparation of this collection of papers. We are equally grateful to Rajka Djević, PhD, for her help and constructive suggestions, which significantly contributed to the quality of this collection of papers. We are also grateful to Mladen Radulović, MA, Branko Cvetić and Vlada Polić for their patience, professionalism and friendly understanding during the preparation of this manuscript.

Nikoleta Gutvajn and Milja Vujačić

INCLUSIVENESS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION WITHIN THE DOCUMENTS OF EDUCATION POLICIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA¹

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The importance of early childhood education and care for all children, including those with special educational needs, was endorsed in the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Specifically, the Convention on the Rights of the Child proclaims that "Children have the right to life and the best possible chance to develop fully" (article 6), and "Disabled children must be helped to be as independent as possible and be able to take full and active part in everyday life" (article 23). In accordance with the Convention, we must fulfill basic needs of children, as well as give them the opportunity to meet their full potential. The Convention, more specifically articles 28 and 29, guarantees minimal basic education for all children. The education is free, mandatory, adjusted to the characteristics of each child, relevant, and participative. The European Commission has also recognized early childhood education and care as one of the key strategies for diminishing the risk of leaving school prematurely. Furthermore, the World Conference on Special Needs Education (Salamanca, Spain, 1994) highlights early education as a priority area.

In 2009 the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) released a joint position statement on early childhood inclusion. This position statement defined early childhood inclusion, and provided the defining features of high quality early childhood inclusion: access, participation, and supports: "Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential" (NAEYC/DEC, 2009). Inclusive education as an educational concept,

The article was written within the UNICEF project "Kindergartens without borders 2 – quality inclusive preschool education in Serbia" achieved in partnership with the Ministry of education, science and technological development, the Center for interactive pedagogy, and the Institute for pedagogy and andragogy of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade.

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according to the UNESCO definition, represents every child's right to be included into the educational system, i.e. regular schools and grades, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or any other state (UNESCO, 1994: vii, par.2).

The term inclusion often refers to involvement of children with disabilities and developmental difficulties, but in a broader sense, inclusive education is used in literature to describe the educational system that is open to all children, especially those, more or less, excluded because of their marginalized social status. Recent research about ECE providers in New Zealand has characterized successful services as ones where staff "were not simply tolerating or accommodating [children with special needs and their whānau³] but communicating an ethos of equality, fairness and providing a service underpinned by the principles of inclusion and provision of a quality education for all." (Gordon-Burns, et al. 2010)

The complexity of inclusion is seen in the way it is conceptualized, which is the result of different theoretical, as well as ideological standpoints in understanding children and childhood, learning and development, the roles of adults and public policies. The article presents an analysis of the strategic and normative framework of the Republic of Serbia, with the goal of showing how theoretical standpoints woven into public policies discourse see the child and the inclusion itself differently, and therefore bring different implications for the practice of preschool education. The key question forming the basis of this legal framework analysis is: What are the dominant discourses in the legal solutions of the Republic of Serbia applying to preschool education, and which construction of inclusion do they offer?

METHODOLOGY

The subject of analysis is the measures of education policy makers of the R. of Serbia, which we use to define conceptual and normative frameworks, organization and function of the preschool education system, and the establishment and development of inclusion within that system. The analysis uses the method of theoretical analysis by applying the technique of content analysis based on the analysis matrix as the instrument of research. The analysis matrix is based on the key principles of quality given in the Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care of the European Commission (European Commission, 2014), and has the following dimensions: accessibility, which covers the access to the preschool education (the understanding of childhood and functions of preschool education expressed through legislature), the participation of families and local communities (participation is encouraged, social inclusion

Whānau is a Māori-language word for extended family, now increasingly entering New Zealand English, particularly in official publications.

is strengthened and differences promoted); *employees*, which includes regulation (of the group sizes, of the adult-child relations), cadre (professional qualifications and level of education), professional development and networking; *monitoring and evaluation* which covers systematical following and evaluation, as well as feedback on local, regional and national levels, and *management and finance*, which involves the systemic establishment of inclusive preschool education through management, finance, and the network of preschool institutions.

The categories of analysis refer to the key points of inclusion of education, such as the understanding of preschool education, of children and childhood and of inclusion. The criteria are: (dis)continuity; the (non)existence of a clear ideology in the basice conception of inclusion, development of a systemic approach, or the particularity in the building of a context for inclusion in preschool education.

INCLUSION IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN SERBIA

A child in Serbia and his/her position within society, according to the *Initial report*, as well as Second and Third periodical report about application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Government of RS, 2007, 2015), is defined according to the age limit and legal restrictions, and is not based on the rights the child has as a participant in society and the conditions used to fulfill those rights. This determination of the child is noticeably different from the image of the child within the Convention. This shows that, in Serbia, children's rights are understood primarily as a normatively-political question, and not as a priority question of all circles of life of the community, and especially, of education. By listing an exclusively normative basis (the Constitution and laws) as the standpoint and as basic principles in fulfillment of children's rights, the image is given of a child as a "user of protective measures" (Woodhead, 2006). Children's rights in education are given as "the right to a quality education, versatile personality development, protection against discrimination and violence, the right of association..." (The Government of the RS, 2007, 2015) and come down to the right to an education, but not to participation of the child within the education as well. The freedom of expression of the child is linked with constitutional rights (article 91, 93), Charter on Human and Minority Rights (article 92), and Family law (article 94) (The Government of the RS, 2007, 2015). The non-recognition of participation rights is contrary to the recommendations on the application of the Convention given in the General commentary no. 7 (UN Committee, 2005) in which three principles for policies and practice of fulfillment of participation rights of children are given: (a) the right to be consulted; (b) the right to express one's own perspective; (c) the responsibility towards children in "listening" to their opinions and respecting their dignity (UN Committee, 2005).

The basic mission of *The strategy of development of education in Serbia by the year 2020* (SDE), in the part related to the social care and preschool education, is the creation of conditions "for the welfare of children from their birth till they start school" (MoESTD⁴, 2012:38). The accent is put on the diversification of programs and services of preschool education, which is in accordance with modern orientations and a very important action for the development of inclusion. The strategic action used to increase fairness of preschool education is seen as "a larger scope of children from marginalized and socially sensitive groups and groups from underdeveloped areas" (MoESTD, 2012:48), and comes from a particular interpretation of fairness towards certain groups of children, instead of it being seen as the basic human right to an education that every child has. In *The action plan for implementation of the strategy of development of education in Serbia by year 2020* (The Government of the RS, 2015), the development of inclusive education is in the category of subsystems in education, while all planned activities are described in normative categories. The orientation of establishing inclusion "from above" is given as a category established by measures and monitored formally.

THE DIMENSIONS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION INCLUSION

Dimension Accessibility: Access to preschool education

All the leading documents, from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the General commentary no. 7 of the Convention, to the European Declaration on the Rights of the Child, recommendations of the EU Commission on investing in children, The proposal of key principles for the "The framework for quality preschool education" (EC, 2014) and the EU Strategy 2020, directly or indirectly set a request for all countries to ensure accessible and quality early childhood education. All national strategic documents, from the Poverty reduction strategy (SSS, 2003), Strategies for improving the position of Roma people in Serbia (2010) and National plan of action for children (NPA, 2004), to the Strategy for the development of education in Serbia until 2020 (SDE, 2012), set among the main goals the increase the coverage of children within preschool education.

With the Law on the foundation of the education system (LFES, 2009) the bases of inclusive education are set, such as: the prohibition of discrimination, segregation and all forms of separation which are not in the child's interest; new inscription policy; the possibility of education through the individualization of work methods or individual

⁴ Ministry of education, science and technological development.

education plans and others (Kovač Cerović et al., 2014). However, the Law maintains the confusion of a conceptualized approach contained in the simultaneous regulation of inclusive education and reference to the right to education, versus the standardization of results and achievements of children in education. The confusion and discontinuity is brought about by the unclear purpose of achievement standards, whether they adjust to individual characteristics and their functions as prescribed measures, or whether they adapt to each individual child (LFES, 2013, article 5). The provision of inclusion is based on administrative measures and norms (e.g. "instead of testing before starting school, examination of those who are enrolled and identification of children who need special/additional support", "forming teams of experts for inclusive education", "local interest commissions") whilst already the small number of support types available is insufficiently clearly regulated compared to the rights and obligations of all participants in education.

By looking at the articles of the *Law on preschool education* (LPE, 2010) it is noticeable that no solutions are offered for the insufficiencies shown in the status display on preschool education, related to the development of a network of preschool institutions and the increase of the scope of children. The scope of children from sensitive groups is solved by prescribing priorities during enrollment in preschool institutions, where we see that children from sensitive groups have priority, while the method and procedure of enrollment into preschool institutions is closely regulated by the statute (LPE, 2010, article 13), which cannot be considered a just solution within the context of equal rights of every child to an education. The goals and principles of the Law come from the conceptualization of education based on rights of the child, and are focused on involvement and connection with the family, local community and the wider social community as a common social responsibility. However, the principles of the Law are not substantiated in relation to: rights of the child in education; rights of the family to choose and actively participate in institutionalized education; and the achievement of continuity in education.

Despite the fact that the current legal framework gives priority to children from sensitive social groups, numbers paint a different picture. In 2014, according to preliminary data of the MICS research, the scope of children aged 36-59 months is about 50.2% for the general population of Serbia, whilst the scope of children from Roma settlements is 5.7%. The participation of children in preschool education from higher socio-economic groups is significantly larger than the participation of children from the poorest of families (82% versus 9%). The access to preschool education for children in rural areas is half the size of that in cities: 28.7% versus 56.6%. Children with disabilities are also insufficiently covered by this system, with only 1.2% being enrolled (MICS, 2014).

The participation of the family and the local community. The primary role of the family in the early education of children and the relationship or partnership between the family and the kindergarten are supported by the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

in which it is said that the family needs to be given protection and necessary help in order for it to take its responsibility within the community (UN Committee, 2005). In the OECD study Starting Strong, the importance of building partnerships with the parents, the development of support to parenthood and the strengthening of integration of the family within the community is shown, amongst other things (OECD, 2006).

The Law on the foundation of the education system regulates the position and the role of the parents in engaging with preschool institution by reducing them to: the right of parents to have their child enrolled in a preschool institution; "delegated decision making" through the Parents' council and obligations and responsibilities of parents during the enrollment process (LFES, 2013, article 89). In the Law on preschool education "the support to the educational function of the family" is seen as the second goal of preschool education (LPE, 2010). The principles of democracy and openness, most directly related to the participation of families and local communities through encouragement of participation, strengthening of social inclusion and promotion of diversity, are not further elaborated in the text of the Law. The parents' role is defined in relation to the execution of obligations towards the preschool institution: financial (article 14), child enrollment (article 24), and duties (article 25). The parents' role in these two Laws is reduced to the role of users of preschool education services, with "delegated decision making", which remains at the level of "abstract recognition of rights" (Woodhead, 2006, according to Krnjaja & Pavlović Breneselović, 2013).

The participation of the local community and its role is defined in the Law on preschool education through the unit of local self government and that with the use of terms: "keeps records and informs" (LPE, 2010, article 23) and "the right to initiate infringement proceedings against the parents or legal guardians whose child has not been registered on time, or does not attend preschool preparatory program" (LPE, 2010, article 24). The participation of the local community as the environment in which the interests and activities of groups and individuals overlap with the interests and activities of kindergartens and therefore create possibilities for establishing and developing partnerships is not recognized within the text of the law.

The Employees dimension

Profession. According to the Law on preschool education, teachers, experts and associates can work in preschool institutions. The position of teachers and experts is regulated by the traditional separation between practitioners and experts. The Law on the foundation of the education system makes us question their collaboration and the development of common goals, since the role of the teacher is "to insure respect of principles of education, accomplishment of the goals of education, and advancement of

educational work with their competences..." (LFES, article 118, LPE, article 38), and that of an expert is "to advance educational work and cooperation with parents, i.e. caregivers, and to keep track of the application of given standards of accomplishment with their competences, advice and other forms of work..." (LFES, article 119, LPE, article 41).

The Law on the basis of education of 2009 introduces the "pedagogical assistant" who helps children in accordance with their needs, and cooperates with parents, associations, and local communities. Simultaneously, the weakness of legal regulations is the lack of clarity as to their education and further specialization (LFES, article 119, LPE, article 41).

Regulations (group sizes, adult-child relations). The number of children in homogenous and heterogeneous age groups is given as a normative, and positive discrimination can be recognized in specially given articles which regulate the number of children in groups in hospitals, in development groups (LPE, article 30 paragraph 4) and bilingual groups (LPE, article 32). By individually separating children with disabilities ("children with disabilities exercise their right to preschool education in educational groups, in educational groups with additional support and an individual educational plan, and in development groups, based on the individual educational plan", article 34, LPE 2010), the Law remains on the level of "abstract recognition of rights" (Woodhead, 2006). In that way the confusion of the conceptualized approach given in the simultaneous regulation of educational inclusion and reference to the right to an education, versus determining the specific status of children is kept ("in one educational group there can be no more than two children with disabilities. The number of children in the educational group, in which there is one child with disabilities, is diminished by three children in relation to the number of children set by this law", article 34, LPE, 2010).

Professional development of practitioners. To work with and in society, teachers need to have an understanding of the value of respect for diversity and be able to work in close collaboration with colleagues, parents, and the wider community (European Commission, 2007:13-14; Council of the European Union, 2010c:4). The defining of professional development as "constant development of teachers' and experts' competences for the sake of more quality work and advancement of children's and students' development and of their success" (MoESTD, 2013, article 2) shows that key support⁵ for establishing and developing inclusion and preschool practice is not recognized. This may lead to the idea that competences are a quality of individuals, rather than of early-childhood settings in their systemic context, as is stated in CoRe Research Documents (CoRe,2011:15). The priority areas of professional development are defined generally in the Rulebook (individualized approach to working with children, pupils and students using different methods and forms

Professional development as part of the system of education which transforms continuously and as the development of partnerships and different roles within the preschool institution, seen as the community of learning in which professional development is realized, and which contributes at the same time to the development of preschool institutions as communities (Krnjaja & Pavlović Breneselović, 2013).

of work in the realization of the subject/ or educational field; monitoring and evaluation of educational achievements; the selection, preparation, adaptation and use of textbooks; other didactic-methodical materials and other sources of knowledge for a certain subject or educational field; the creation of a tolerant and non-discriminatory environment for learning and development of every individual; protection from violence, abuse, neglect and discrimination; identification of security risks and responding to them.;...article 6, Rulebook⁶, 2015), whereby there is no clear criteria of priority, nor its meaning within professional development. In the given priority areas, inclusion relates only to certain categories, and is therefore reduced to technical conceptualization and does not aspire towards collaborative building of values of preschool education as an inclusive practice.

Professional networks. The rulebook on continuous professional development does not set up a network of different actors in professional development, except for the possibility for their mutual participation in creating training programs. Of all participants, a few stand out with their special activities: the Institute for education improvement and the Ministry of education, which shows a hierarchical structure and fragmentation, instead of a network of mutual relations of different participants, groups, organizations and institutions on different levels (team, institutional, interinstitutional), which is equally important in shaping professional development.

Examples of lateral program and project connections of institution on a local, national, regional and international levels do exist, and we shall name some: within the project Kindergartens without borders 2 (MoESTD, UNICEF, CIP – Centre for Interactive Pedagogy and IPA – Institute of Pedagogy and Andragogy), a PAN professional network has been set which "has a goal to gather all professionals and paraprofessionals in order for them to jointly represent the importance of early childhood development and provision of adequate social support, to jointly promote the quality of inclusive practices in preschool education" (http://www.predskolci.rs). At the initiative of the Foundation for an open society, a web page about inclusion has been created based on the need of all participants in the Network of inclusive education and local education teams, with the goal of promoting the importance of inclusive education, facilitate networking of participants, and inform users about the approach and actions in inclusive education in the world (http://www.inkluzija.org).

Monitoring and Evaluation Dimension

The inclusiveness of preschool education, and therefore quality, is seen in the provision of conditions in which children are respected as rightholders, their dignity, autonomy

The rulebook on continuous professional development and title acquisition of teachers, educators and professional associates.

and cultural differences are respected, their self-confidence, sociability and friendships are promoted, their family is supported, and durable surroundings for learning and development are built. Despite many reforms in different areas of education, the question of monitoring in Serbia has remained conceptualized, institutionalized and legally the least elaborate area. This non-elaboration has contributed to the multiplication of insufficiently coordinated activities in this field and to the fact that "even though every educational institution (and all its units) has a system of keeping track of its own activities, and sometimes results, there are no unified reports of the Ministry in charge of education about the state of education" (Kovač Cerović et al., 2014).

The National education council and the Council for vocational and adult education have been given authority to supervise, analyze, and give recommendations for diminishing dropout rates, as well as establishing proposals for the continuation of education for those who have left the system. The National education council drafted and adopted a document called Monitoring indicators in education in Serbia (NPS, 2011). According to the Quality framework for monitoring inclusive education, "the description of indicators [is] made in [such] a way that it covers disaggregated data important for supervision of inclusive education, by quintiles of socio-economic status and by vulnerable groups (Roma, refugees, displaced persons, children with special needs, orphans, and migrants)" (Kovač Cerović et al., 2014).

In Serbia, evaluation of the quality of preschool institutions' work is achieved according to the Rulebook on the evaluation of the quality of the institution's work (NPS, 2012). The function of the Standards of the quality of work of educational institutions in Serbia is to enable "uniform and objective assessments of the quality of work of preschool institutions and the contribution to a quality, consistent and effective implementation of legislation" (NPS, 2012). The standards are defined as "statements about the quality of practice or the terms of the realization of practice" and indicators such as "operationalized definitions by means of which the realization standards are measured" (http://www.zuov.gov.rs), whilst the values of inclusive preschool education (such as equality; diversity; security protection, welfare; the role of adults; conception of learning and teaching; play) can only be recognized in individual indicators.

In the past decade, there have only been two national evaluations of preschool education in Serbia. One was An Analysis of the introduction of the Preparatory preschool program (Ivić & Pešikan, 2009) developed within the "Strategy for reduction of poverty in Serbia", while the other was Where quality lives – a policy of building quality in preschool education of the Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade.

Management and Finance Dimension

Supervision. With the Law on the foundation of the education system of 2003, the jurisdiction over preschool education at the state level was unified under the Ministry of education and sports (LFES, 2003, article 1). Within this Ministry, the Sector for preschool education and the Group for preschool education related questions deal with preschool education. None of the given jurisdictions for both structural units relates directly to the questions of establishing and supporting inclusion of preschool education. The Rulebook about the regulations on internal organization and systematization of jobs in the Ministry of education, science and technological development, 2015 (www.mpn.gov.rs) formed a Group for social inclusion within the Sector for development and higher education. The same Rulebook forms the Group for minority education and human and minority rights in education. By looking at the jurisdictions of both these units (MoESTD, 2015, article 29, 31), one can see that none of the given jurisdictions relates directly to the question of establishment and support of inclusion of preschool education. There are no activities with which these two structural units would connect to the Sector for preschool education and the Group for preschool education related questions, except by looking at the principle sentences in the description of work of the Group for social inclusion: "providing technical support in the coordination of measures in this field at the level of the Ministry", and of the Group for minority education and human and minority rights: "cooperation with other public bodies, internal units of the ministry", which reflects the access to preschool education and inclusiveness of preschool education as a separated part without internal and external networking in the education system. The Ministry of education transfers some of its jurisdictions to the Provincial secretariat for education of AP Vojvodina, administration, and national communities (www.obrazovanje.vojvodina.gov. rs). The jurisdiction of the local self-government is largely related to the establishment of networks of preschool institutions and to the obligation of financing preschool education within the local community.

The Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Issues, Sector for family care and social protection, is responsible for the social protection of children, family-legal protection and financial support for families with children. The Ministry of health, through the Sector for public health and sanitary inspection, is responsible for health and sanitation supervision of preschool institutions, health insurance of children, food, water, and equipment safety in preschools. However, values, policies and regulatory frameworks and procedures that originate from the policies of these three ministries in relation to the function of preschool institutions and inclusion in preschool education, are not harmonized.

Institutions and bodies with special jurisdictions in monitoring, development and advancement of the education system on the national level are the National education council for preschool, primary and secondary general and artistic education (NEC), Institute for improvement of education (IIE) and The Institute for education quality and evaluation (IEQE) (articles 14 and 17, LFES, 2009). The relationship between NEC, an organ that guides the development of preschool education and other institutions on state and local level is not clear. In the job description of the NEC, there are no activities related to the development of inclusion, nor is there any cooperation with scientific research, science and education, and professional institutions provided for within the analysis and oversight of the state of education.

Institutes are responsible for "developmental, advisory, research and professional activities in preschool education on the national level" (article 17. LFES, 2009). Within the description of the structure of the IIE, there is a Sector for specific questions of preschool, primary and high school education in which professional jobs are done that relate, among other things, to: "supervision and development of education of children with disabilities; inclusive education; supervision and development of education of children with special abilities; supervision and development of education of minorities" (http://www.zuov.gov. rs/sspposo). By looking at the activities, we can see that the question of inclusion is "a specific question" which is not integrated into other activities of the Institute, and appears separately from supervision and development of education of children with disabilities, children with special abilities and minorities, while the question of preschool education is reduced to the scope of children within separated categories.

Finance. The General Comment no. 7 accentuates the importance of the existence of "sufficient public investment in services, infrastructure and overall resources specifically allocated to early childhood [...]. In this connection, States parties are encouraged to develop strong and equitable partnerships between the Government, public services, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and families to finance comprehensive services in support of young children's rights." (UN Committee, 2005:10).

The law regulates the responsibilities and duties of separating means from the budget of local governments. We see that the Republic is bound to separate means for the exercise of the preparatory preschool program; the exercise of the preschool program for children with disabilities; and for hospitalized children (article 157, LFES, 2009/2013), while the local government is bound to finance preschool education with the participation of parents (article 159, LFES, 2009/2013). It is not possible to determine how much comes from the national, and how much from the local budget. It is especially hard to determine the funds separated for the support of the children's rights to an education from different social groups, because these funds are a part of the overall budget for education and social protection. The UNICEF study points out that in the period 2007–2009, funds

coming from local governments were equal to 142 million euros per year, which, with the participation of parents, represents the sum of 180 million, and suggests that it the division of spending of these funds should be further looked into (UNICEF, 2012).

The state has not taken on the obligation of increasing funds for preschool education based on strategic and conceptual plans about increasing the number of children, which reflects discontinuity between strategic plans and their normative regulation. For example, there is a priority for developing networks in underdeveloped and rural areas, but it is clear that without the support of the state, these areas have no capacity of developing networks. Even though in the Poverty reduction strategy, it states that we need to "elaborate the system of integral support for the development of early childhood" (The Government of the RS, 2002), the state has not promised any augmentations of the budget for preschool education.

The UNICEF study on investment in education states that the public spending for preschool education in Serbia is 0.43% GDP which is below the average of 0.5% GDP for the countries of OECD (UNICEF, 2012).

Network of preschool institutions. The construction of the network is seen as the lead strategic direction for development of preschool education⁷ and its development is especially connected to augmentation of the scope of children from vulnerable groups (NEC, 2011:61), where the participation of the private sector is seen as one possible solution.

Regulation on criteria for the adoption acts on networks of preschool institutions and acts on school networks adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia introduces new criteria for the foundation of a network of preschool institutions, based on the need to maintain the development of children and social inclusion. The overview of the 16 criteria given in the Regulation shows that only one is related to the development of inclusion of preschool education ("equal right and availability of education for all children, without discrimination and segregation, in the democratically established and socially responsible preschool institution in which the right of the child to an education is guaranteed"), while some criteria are insufficiently precise: e.g. "respect for environmental principles in carrying out activities".

Joint project of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia and the European Union IMPRES (Improvement of preschool education in Serbia) aimed at improving inclusive education practices in Serbia. The project effectively contributed to policy development in the pre-school education sector in Serbia by developingThe Toolkit for the optimization, planning and management of preschool services.

CONCLUSIONS

The systemic establishment of inclusive preschool education through clear expectations of the importance of collaboration by all parties in local communities and the promotion of the universal right to a quality inclusive PVO is not recognized in the analyzed documents of the education policy. Instead, inclusion is regarded as a product brought into practice, and not as a process initiated, supported and developed in practice through measures of support. The needs of children are much more represented than their rights. The very concept points out the specificities and differences of needs that sometimes cannot be fully seen and understood outside a certain context, which leads to relativisation. The child is seen as a person in the making, to whom rights are given. The concept of rights, unlike the concept of needs, is based on a different framework of values and ethics. It is seen through universality, indivisibility and codependence of all rights (UN Committee, 2005). The concept of rights sees the child as a complete being that is and has rights. Therefore, rights are not given, but taking responsibility to insure children can exercise their rights is implied (Woodhead, 2006).

The rights are not operationalized through the participation of children in education, guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but remain on the level of political proclamation, while the establishment of inclusion is based on administrative measures and norms. By determining the roles of participants in the process of education as "providers and beneficiaries of services" (the position and the role of children and parents is described by the term "beneficiary of services"), the collaboration of the family and the preschool institution is defined through one dimension without real participation and remains on the level of "abstract recognition of rights".

In the documents, a particularity within the building of the context for inclusion is present. The particular research of the inclusion indicators, reduced to the isolated observation of the individual dimension (e.g. the scope of children) that becomes its own goal, speaks of the nonexistence of joint action and horizontal and vertical coordination in defining measures and giving support, focused on the poorest and socially vulnerable groups, since it implies the same meaning at different levels of education and in different cultural contexts (Moss, 2009; Woodhead, 2006). Terminological inconsistencies and the nonexistence of a clear ideology in the basis of the conception of inclusion lead to discontinuity between the conception of education as a whole and the conception of preschool education. Inclusion is treated as a separate area that needs to be additionally regulated by legal acts, and not as a conception (which stems from the right of the child to an education and creation of conditions for their participation in education) and therefore as a component of the system. The particularity of understanding inclusive education represents an obstacle to the transformation of a uniform system of education into

inclusive practice, as well as the development of process characteristics of the system inclusiveness.

The weaknesses of the uniform system through the particular approach and partial comparison are only masked by disposable measures, but their uniform framework does not change. "The first time one of those measures, as support, fails, the system will once again show its weaknesses and unsustainability. That is the consequence of the attempt to implement, into a uniform, unchanged system, a series of specificities, such as for example the education of children from vulnerable groups, children with disabilities, gifted children, and children from different cultural communities, instead of working on its transformation into an inclusive system. The traditional system with its attempts to implement partial novelties and improvements, such as implementing new models into an old form, only further shows its weaknesses, making it 'calcified'" (Krnjaja & Pavlović Breneselović, 2013).

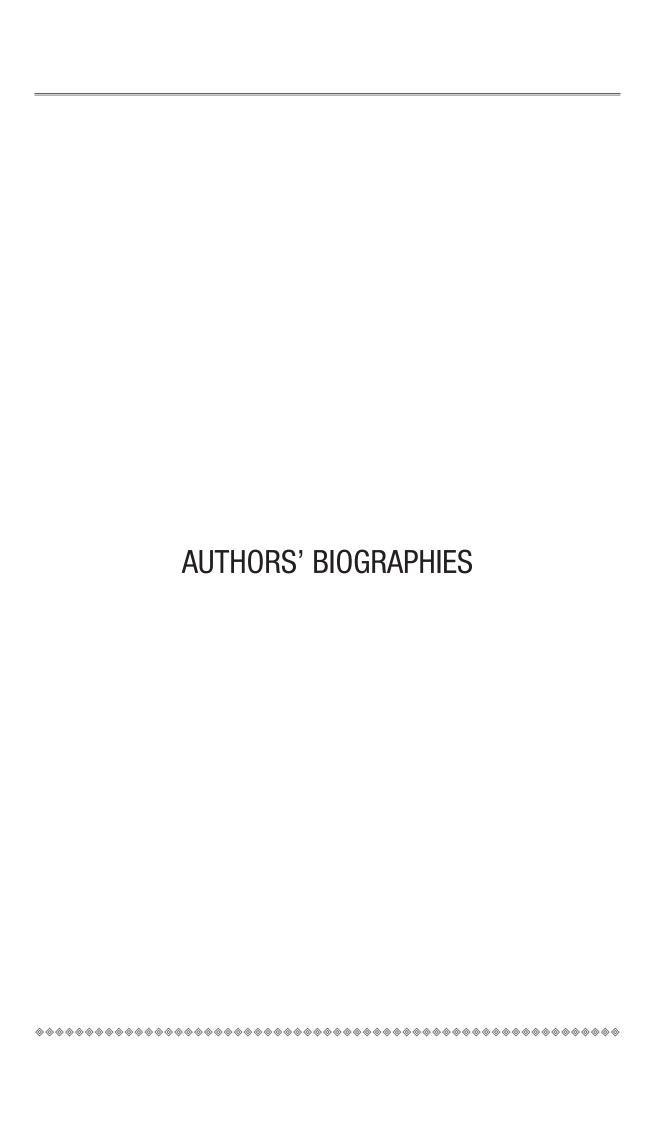
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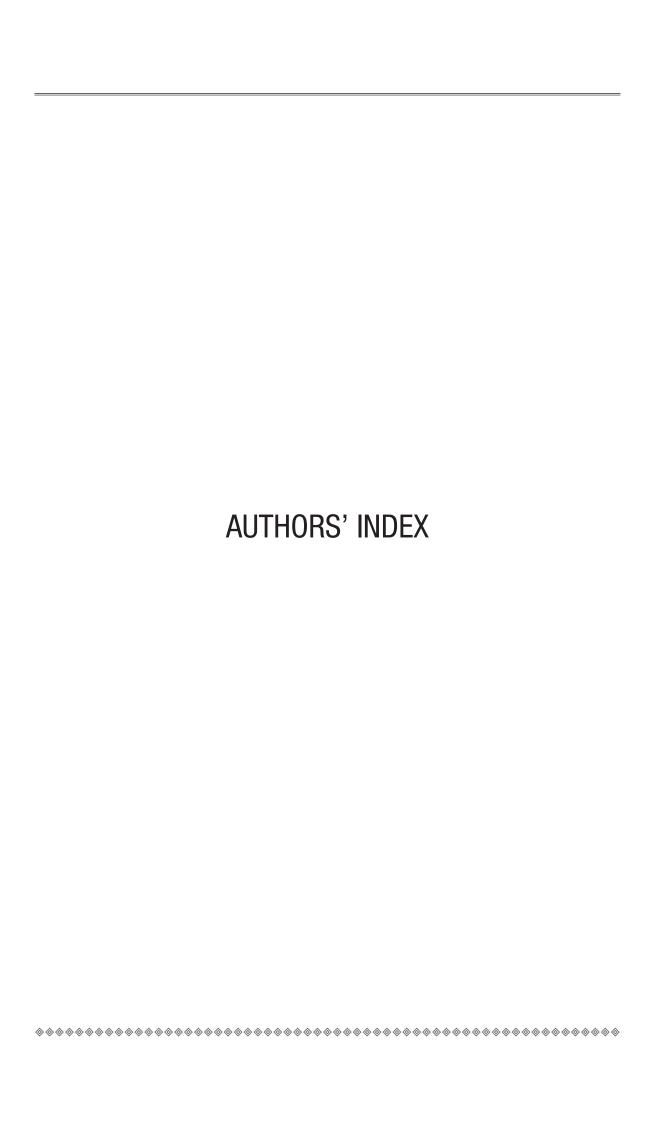
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Milja Vujačić

Nowadays inclusive education is seen as a priority field in development of the system of education for children with disabilities. The authors use relevant research materials and apply modern methodology. Each article shows long-term research interest of its author, reflecting their scientific interests and priorities. The edited book can be recommended not only to researches and educators, but also to students, undergraduates, graduate students, who only begin their path in science and in need of expanding research horizons.

Professor Nikolay M. Borytko (from review)

This book as a whole provides information on several countries in the wider Balkan area, for which there is limited relevant information available and communicates both commonalities and diversity. The mission of inclusive education is propelled throughout the entire book and many of the challenges discussed, are of interest of wider readership. It is certainly a useful book for anyone who is interested in inclusive education.

Professor Susana Padeliadu (from review)

The chapters follow the framework of the scientific papers with clear objectives, adequately described methodology of the studies, consist of clear descriptions of results with discussion and conclusions and also include information how results may affect the practice. Reader of the book will also find the review of relevant literature in the field of inclusive education.

Professor Marija Kavkler (from review)

