Editors Nikoleta Gutvajn Milja Vujačić

**CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES** 

# OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



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# CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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FACULTY OF TEACHER EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE • SERBIA

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# OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Editors Nikoleta Gutvajn Milja Vujačić

BELGRADE 2016.

# INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, SERBIA VOLGOGRAD STATE SOCIO-PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY, RUSSIA FACULTY OF TEACHER EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE, SERBIA

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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.

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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

# INCLUSION OF SOCIALLY MARGINALIZED INDIVIDUALS IN THE LIGHT OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

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The efforts and community initiatives undertaken to rehabilitate social problems in our country, unfortunately still have not lead to significant developments in the field that affects certain social groups, especially children and young people, who due to social exclusion and marginalization, lose the possibility to exercise the right to education as a prerequisite for exercising many other human rights. Although the framework of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and other strategies, define education as an important strategic system, it seems that education is still understood as a cost to the State, and not as an investment in long-term and sustainable development. We will deal with the education system as a lever for the development of the culture and practice of democracy and human rights in a society. The fact is that the education system transmits an entire system of knowledge, skills and values of the society. It is the means for the development of democracy and human rights in a society, but also acts as a mirror in which it is possible to see the results of the implementation of democracy and human rights in communities (Pešikan, 2003: 174).

Many authors use the terms deprivation and social exclusion as if their meaning is self-explanatory, often equalizing them with poverty (Šućur, 2001). As the term deprivation (lat. Privare) means any seizure, deprivation, and extortion (Klaić, 1990), we consider the terms material and wider non-privilege, social exclusion, and similar terms justified, and it is necessary to distinguish them. In this context, social inequality implies the existence of socially created inequalities concerning the existence of visible social groups that are ranked one above the other according to different factors such as prestige and wealth (Haralambos & Holborn, 2002: 25).

Social exclusion, as a new concept in social sciences, emphasizes the unfavorable attitude of an individual towards the social environment (Gajić, 2007). Social institutions

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should enable individuals and social groups at risk of social exclusion to have the possibility to get opportunities and resources which are necessary for full participation in economic, social, and cultural life, as well as to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. This ensures their greater participation in the decision-making process, which affects their lives and access to fundamental human rights.

Social inclusion is a broader term than poverty, because it is the process by which certain groups are placed on the margins of society, being hindered in full participation due to their poverty, lack of education, life skills, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job opportunities, earning money, education opportunities, as well as social networking and participation in activities within the local community. For individuals and groups the effects of poverty and social exclusion could range from physical, through economic, social, or psychological. In addition, the consequences differ depending on whether individuals and groups react to the problems of poverty and social exclusion actively or passively, in legal or illegal ways, etc. (Vuković et al., 2009).

Today, international associations and organizations (AIEJI, 2005) recognize that the primary task of pedagogy, especially social pedagogy, is the process of social integration whose aim is to support and help socially excluded people, vulnerable groups, and people with special educational needs, so that they can develop personal potentials in changing social conditions. In such a process, pedagogy is oriented to the use of different methods and approaches whose general base is education for fundamental human rights, even though it is not always explicated enough. We know that "equality is somehow linked to social justice, human (particularly children's) rights, and notions of equality or multiculturalism. However, it is one thing to say that these ideas are linked, but quite another to say how, precisely, they are linked (Ainscow et al., 2012: 2).

# SOCIAL INCLUSION AS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

Social integration/inclusion is a process of interconnection among individuals or social groups and their integration into a larger, relatively harmonious social unit. In practice, social inclusion is often equalized with the concept of social integration. Every socially responsible society strives to define measures to reduce the level of social exclusion and create the environment for inclusion of the socially excluded into the social life (Joint Report on Social Inclusion, 2003).

The approach selected by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to fight the phenomenon of social exclusion insists on human rights, ensuring equal access to all resources. Together with its governmental and non-governmental partners, SDC integrates human rights principles into the design, implementation, and monitoring

of developmental strategies, programs, and projects at both multilateral and bilateral level (66 SDC. *Towards a Life in Dignity: Realizing Rights for People*, 2005).

Today, inclusion is most frequently discussed in the context of the development of democracy in a society and in education. It is "a process which ensures that every individual, regardless of their experience and living conditions, can achieve their potential in life. Characteristics of an inclusive society are reduced inequality, a balance between the rights and obligations of individuals, and development of social cohesion" (Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion, 2002). In a broader context, inclusion involves a relationship between the individual and the society, and vice versa, which is why it is called social inclusion. In this sense, the phrase social inclusion gradually replaces terms such as equality and access, which have primarily described an earlier social and educational policy aimed at increasing the number of individuals from marginalized groups in the education system (Gidley et al. 2010). However, the question is whether the new term social inclusion is an actual change of policy, or just a new name for the old approach (Gidley et al. 2010)? Nevertheless, in recent years there has been a noticeable increase in the use of terms such as social integration, social inclusion and social participation, which some authors use as synonyms, while others make a significant difference among them (Bossaert et al. 2013). Regardless of the terms used, it is important that each of them refers to the problem of exclusion of certain social groups, emphasizing the importance of their integration into the social and educational system.

Referring to Freiler, Donnelly and Coakley (Donnelly & Coakley, 2001), three interrelated dimensions of social inclusion are listed:

- spatial: social inclusion as a close social and economic distance;
- interpersonal personal: social inclusion as a feeling of belonging and acceptance; reciprocity and positive interaction; to be respected, to have useful social roles; participation; and
- functional: social inclusion as an increase in opportunities, abilities, competencies.

When these dimensions of social inclusion are considered in the context of the educational process, inclusion refers to inclusion in the specific sense, i.e. to the inclusive education. Inclusive education presupposes "an education system that is open for all children, especially for those who are marginalized due to their social status, or excluded from the education system, or if the system does not provide them with adequate support. Such children are children with disabilities, children belonging to different national minorities (especially Roma children), refugees and displaced children, children without parental care, and children from socially vulnerable families" (Center for Evaluation, Testing and Research, 2006: 5). Accordingly, educational inclusion is only one aspect of social inclusion.

It is significant to note the results of relevant comparative studies which have analyzed the socio-political, cultural, economic and educational situation in the countries of the Western Balkans. The research focuses on early education, and identifies it as a means to enable continuation of their education, social inclusion, as well as academic achievement. The results show that the provision of a high-quality early childhood education is still inadequate and exclusive and that children of poor socio-economic and cultural status are potentially at risk in primary and secondary schools. Also, it has been determined that a smaller number of these children continue their education at higher levels compared to other children. Accordingly, it is necessary to influence awareness about the importance of early childhood education, so that children from marginalized groups have equal chances (Macura Milovanovic et al. 2014).

Thus, the ultimate goal of developing an inclusive community is wellbeing not only for "to date excluded people", but also for the entire society. Inclusive education is not limited only to individuals with disabilities. It implies the involvement of all people regardless of their race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language, socio-economic status, and any other aspect of individual identity that can be perceived as distinct and different (Polat, 2011). Inclusion, in this regard, strives to build not only tolerance, but also an actual appreciation of individual, social, culturally-specific and other differences, respect for the dignity of every individual, and based on that the creation of mutual interaction and social relations.

An inclusion model offers to every community the opportunity to encourage the development of the entire community, in a way that every member of the community is honored and respected. It does not mean equalization of all people, but respect for the differences of every individual who has an opportunity to make decisions and take responsibility for his/her own life. Inclusion refers to social value, as well as to reduction and elimination of discrimination. Inclusion implies identification and removal of barriers. The inclusive approach strives towards continuous improvement in policy and practice. Education is the fastest mechanism of progress, and therefore we see it as a good basis for the inclusion of marginalized children into society. In this sense Braunholtz (2007) says the following: "People living in chronic poverty have two important exit routes, namely high dependency on their labor (in the absence of financial and material assets) and formal education, which improves the quality of their labor (Braunholtz, 2007: 3). If "education is the important determinant of an individual's income, health (and that of their children), shaping a person's capacity to interact and communicate with others, inequality in education will contribute to inequality in all other important dimensions of wellbeing, and hence must be addressed" (Singal, 2013: 3-4). However, inclusive education is rightly acknowledged by many as a global buzzword, with little-shared understanding of what it entails, and how to achieve it (lbid: 4).

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# STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL INCLUSION IN THE LIGHT OF HUMAN RIGHTS: THEORETICAL STANDPOINTS

Instead of social constructivism, which represents a very subjectivist point of view based on the postulate of "social reality is a social construct of people who live, act and think in it", an approach of the sociological theory of practice is more favorable for the constitution of the theory of inclusive education and its sociological foundation. It is a theoretical contribution from the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to contemporary social science (Mišković, 2013). Bourdieu named his theoretical position constructivist structuralism or structuralist constructivism. "By the term constructivism I want to say that there is a social genesis, on one side there is a model of perception, thinking and acting that create what I call habitus, and on the other side there are social structures, especially what I call field and groups, especially what are commonly called the social classes." (Bourdieu, 1998: 143).

Dispositions of habitus are acquired primarily in childhood, in two primary environments: in the family and in the education system. An important property of habitus is the function of categorization because it contains in itself "a sense of place for oneself", but also "a sense of place for another" (Bourdieu, 1998: 150). In this process, the stakeholders themselves immediately recognize their place in the society, that is, they categorize themselves, and they are subject to categorization as well. Habitus proscribes them a social status and social distance in relation to others. Position and distance could be manifested in each and every of us, in our body language, in our language, in time (Bourdieu, 1999).

By using the notion of habitus it is possible to explain a way of mediation between the objective living conditions of an individual or a group and behavior that the individual (or members of the group) will tend to adopt in everyday life. The living conditions of children from marginalized groups in the global social space condition similar systems of their permanent dispositions and interests, which means that they act in a similar way according to their habitus. Dispositions acquired in the position taken in the global social space by children from marginalized groups imply adjustment to the position ("a sense of one's own place", but also "a sense of the others' place"), which during interaction leads "modest people" towards "modestly" sticking to their place, and others to "be at a distance", "to be at their level", or "not to interfere", according to Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1998: 148).

Accordingly, the self-exclusion of children from marginalized groups from the educational process is structurally conditioned. Their vision of the social world and their interactions depend on the position which they take in a given social space, which is

extremely unfavorable (poverty, deprivation, discrimination, segregation, etc.). Their habitus, i.e. mental structures which understand the social world, is mostly the product of interiorization of structures of the social world in which they have an under dominated position. As their views tend to adapt to the position, so marginalized groups tend to take for granted such a social world (Mišković, 2013).

It could be said that in the relatively near future there will be changes of perspective within the psychological and pedagogical sciences in observing the causes of low achievement of pupils from socially and economically deprived backgrounds. Leaving aside the "biologist" perspective in observing human capabilities and relativizing and contextualizing scores on aptitude tests, different countries have come to the conclusion about how important the environment in which a child grows up is to his intellectual development and educational achievements (e.g. OECD, 2012a; 2012b). This has resulted in the adoption of educational measures that are sensitive to appreciation of the contexts and fact that all children do not have the same initial conditions that could affect their successful education (Gajić et al. 2008). As education is one of the basic human rights and the way to break the vicious circle of social exclusion, this means that the responsibility for the failure in education ceased to be sought either in the children or in their parents, and that it should be set in the social and educational context that has not sufficiently corrected the inequalities of initial conditions of children who begin their educational journey. Although in the period of transition to a market economy most of the responsibility is transferred to the family and the individual, this individualistic conception of responsibility could have an extremely negative effect on the poor (UNICEF, 2007).

A paradigm shift in the interpretation of educational achievements has played a very important role in the assessment of responsibility for the poor educational outcomes of certain marginalized groups of children. A number of empirical and theoretical insights have influenced the educational practice, where the introduction of inclusive education could be viewed as one of the results. It is primarily a standpoint of Vygotsky on the zone of proximal development, on what the child cannot do alone, but can do in interaction with peers and adults, as well as a range of empirical evidence that social interaction promotes educational achievements, and in some cases promotes achievements in aptitude tests (Moll, 1990; Baucal & Jovanović, 2008; Jovanović & Baucal, 2007; Panofsky et al. 1990, Pere-Klermon, 2004; Vygotsky, 1993). This means that positive, high-quality experience in education can improve children's ways of thinking and make them more competent, which can have a number of positive effects on their future life. In this way, education becomes increasingly responsible for the achievements of pupils from deprived backgrounds, generally accepting the role of leveler of social differences which pupils bring into the education system. Thus, by increasing fairness and respect for human

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rights, the education system increasingly recognizes its responsibility for producing desired social outcomes for marginalized groups who come from deprived backgrounds.

Children and young people originating from poor and socially deprived backgrounds are seen as individuals who do not have equal starting conditions as other children to reach certain educational achievements, because they are influenced by many negative factors from their immediate environment, in addition to what is happening at school. They are stricken by difficulties in satisfying their basic existential needs through the reduced support they could get when learning school lessons, since their parents are usually insufficiently educated, or they grow up without a parental support. Also, it has been determined that exclusion causes significant consequences for the health and physical and mental life of children, which in such cases usually respond to various forms of self-destructive behavior, aggression and additional social retreat and isolation (Begen, Turner-Cobb, 2015). The only way in which it is possible to prevent the social exclusion of these children is an education which will enable them to acquire skills necessary for successful employment, and which will, at least partially, reduce the initial inequality in their efforts to acquire such an education. In this sense, it is important to emphasize that access and participation in the education system alone, without a developed support system, do not represent a good enough chance and opportunity for all children (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008).

If such deprivation is explained as incapacity, and if accordingly decisions are made in the education system, then particular groups are trapped in a vicious circle in this way, denied prospects for their progress and full social inclusion, what could be treated as cultural reproduction, according to Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu 1992; Bourdieu, 1999). Cultural reproduction refers to the ways in which the school, together with other institutions, help in continuous maintaining socio-economic inequalities from generation to generation. Schools do it through the hidden curriculum, thus influencing an adoption of attitudes, habits and system of values. When this is additionally accompanied by stereotypes and prejudices that exist among different stakeholders or future stakeholders within education, inclusive education becomes something that could radically change educational practice.

All this means that the cognitive efficiency of children and youth who derive from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds *must be viewed in the context of poverty and cultural diversity*, as well as in the context of the specific (unfavorable) circumstances in which they grow up. Of course, it does not mean that these children will be able by themselves to reach the educational level of peers who do not come from deprived backgrounds. On the contrary, they will be able to acquire achievements with the additional work that will be provided for them at school (Jovanović et al. 2013).

Inclusion is about a human/child's rights to "belong to her/his local mainstream school, to be valued for who s/he is and to be provided with all support s/he need to thrive. Since mainstream schools are generally not organized in this way, planned restructuring of the whole school is required. This restructuring should be seen as an extension of the school's equal opportunities policy and practice. It requires a commitment from the entire staff, governors, parents/custodians, and pupils/students. Inclusion is not a static state like integration. It is a continuous process involving a major change in school ethos and is about building a school community that accepts and values difference" (Rieser, 2012, 204).

# UNDERSTANDING AND DEVELOPING THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION<sup>2</sup>

Research of relevant issues was undertaken in order to establish a qualitative indicator of knowledge, understanding, and interest in human rights and the rights to education, especially the inclusion of marginalized groups and individuals at the University of Novi Sad. The evaluation objective was to acquire a basic idea of knowledge, interests, and understanding of human rights and the right to education, especially the inclusion of marginalized groups and individuals by students, as well as to assess the questions and concerns of students in relation to human rights, especially the right to education and the inclusion of marginalized groups and individuals.

For this purpose a discussion was held in 3 focus groups recorded by video-camera (video recording), with each group consisting of undergraduate and master students from different study groups of the University of Novi Sad.

The following topics were suggested for discussion in the focus groups: What do human rights mean to you? To what extent do you believe human rights, especially the right to education, are respected / promoted in your academic environment, society, state administration, public institutions? Did you talk about human rights and inclusive education in some of your courses? What would you like to learn about human rights (the right to education, especially for marginalized groups and individuals)? Who do you want to learn about human rights (the right to education)? What good can human rights education be in your personal and professional life? In addition to courses at the faculty, where else would you like to learn about human rights (the right to education)? Do you think that media devote enough attention to basic human rights?

<sup>2</sup> The research is a segment of a broader study within the international Project of EACEA – Tempus Project -517319: Developing Human Rights Education at the Heart of Higher Education 'HEART' and the research taken within the scientific-research Project 'Quality of Education System in Serbia in the European Perspective' (KOSSEP) no. 179010 financially supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (2011-2015).

The research was conducted during the academic year 2012/13. When it comes to the course of the research, most interviewers complied with the proposed topics and items of the survey. However, since all students present already had plenty of experience in the work, additional questions were inevitably opened. In that way, topics were covered relating to the establishment of an Ombudsman, and the importance of his/her existence for the protection of citizens' rights. Then, individual study programs were discussed in relation to the issue of human rights. Throughout the entire conversation, the issue of the harmful influence of media was brought up, while, at the end, the issue was raised of the judiciary in Serbia (whether and how low imprisonment contributes to easier and more frequent violations of human rights, etc.). As an illustration, the text below includes the most significant of students' answers:

The respondents' answer to the question: if they discussed human rights and inclusive education in classes and what they have learned, was that the way to exercise human rights was painstaking, with many obstacles, and that it was very difficult to achieve respect to the full extent. They considered especially important the fact that human rights were insufficiently respected in the segment of inclusive education, and that in this segment there was a large gap between theory and practice, declarative and practical. When the respondents were asked what they would you like to learn about human rights (the right to education, especially for marginalized groups and individuals), the students answered that they would like to gain knowledge on the types of right, relations among them and reciprocity of rights and responsibilities. In addition, they searched for answers to the question of which way to develop tolerance in relation to the diversity of other cultures and nations, i.e. how to accept diversities? An especially important question was how to practically implement inclusion of marginalized groups into the education system and local communities? It was also emphasized that there was a need for implementation of content concerning inclusion and human rights into the curricula of all teacher training faculties.

In addition, studens of undergraduate and master studies expressed great interest in gaining knowledge of how to respect human rights and the right to education more appropriately, and how to live in compliance with these rights, because only in that way could our society develop and everybody live a life of higher quality. That was a true expression of democracy in society. Furthermore, the young people wanted to learn how to suppress prejudices about the history and culture of other nations (especially in post-conflict societies), as well as how to develop sensitivity to the violation of children's rights, and readiness to protect their own rights and the rights of others. Leaning on human rights, i.e. the right to education, is a way to respect them; that is the way to recognize discrimination and enable a timely reaction in the case of violation. Only undersanding the nature of human rights can enable the establishment of social, ethical, and legal norms and rules which are essential for coexistence.

When it comes to the question of the way in which education about human rights could be useful for all, both at personal and professional levels, the young people took the standpoint that it was possible if teachers and experts in educational institutions informed children and young people about the concept of human rights, and developed a proper attitude to respect fundamental human rights. Such an approach would enable us to understand and promote democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Besides courses at the faculty, today young people learn about human rights (the right to education) via TV shows, within educational broadcasts, and in workshops organized by NGOs (non-governmental organizations).

It shoud be emphasized that media pay enough attention to the mentioned problem, although sometimes in a wrong direction or in the wrong way. In general, the media is a powerful resource that can contribute to a better understanding of the common cultural heritage and social processes, and accordingly they are the most competent to inform the public on human rights violations as well. They can also significantly contribute to promoting institutions and organizations established in order to affirm European cooperation.

On the basis of all the foregoing, the following could be concluded:

- All participants in focus groups have a positive attitude towards human rights education and the inclusion of marginalized groups and individuals;
- Participants agreed that human rights are highly promoted, but, at the same time, there is a lack of compliance with them; the fundamental right to life for a large number of people has been violated since they live in poverty or on the margins of society;
- Access to the affirmation of human rights, the right to education and social inclusion requires persistence, perseverance and comprehensive, systemic solutions. Education can launch the first impulse, but later it must be supported by systematic solutions;
- In recent times, citizens' initiatives and non-governmental organizations have made an increasingly important contribution to the promotion of human rights and inclusive education. However, it is necessary to make this an inseparable segment of the formal education system (Gajić & Lungulov, 2014).

# CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, inclusive education is considered as an instrument in the fight against poverty, social deprivation and discrimination, due to the fact that the exercise of the right to education is a prerequisite for the realization of many other human rights (work,

social life, and decision-making). In that sense it is necessary to have the following: the promotion of inclusive education, teacher training for the implementation of inclusion and development of teachers' competencies, as well as a variety of activities intended to develop awareness and sensitivity in the local community.

In order to provide equal opportunities for all children in the education system regardless of their differences, it is necessary to reform educational practice, which would redefine those educational standards and evaluation criteria that determine cultural capital, going to the detriment of children and students with marginalized social status (Mišković, 2013).

Since education is one of the main channels of upwardly vertical mobility, in a society it is essential to consistently implement the principle of *equal life chances* (every child must have the same, system-enabled life chances, especially in education). In addition, with appropriate pedagogical and didactic approaches it is necessary to sensitize educators, teachers, and other stakeholders in the educational process for the specific situation of children and students from marginalized and other groups with subordinate social status, including the need to redefine the traditional forms of recognized cultural capital at schools. As Bourdieu said: "in order to change the world, it is necessary to change the way in which the world is created, i.e. the perception of the world and practical actions by which the groups are created and maintained" (Bourdieu, 1998: 156).

Being observed through the prism of human rights and social inclusion of marginalized individuals and groups, there is a clearly indicated existence of a universal need to review the curriculum of education, the roles of teachers, and a new approach to defining the teaching competencies in line with social changes and challenges (the development of a competent relation towards social problems, a reflection of one's own social role, respect for different cultures and understanding of different cultural models, the importance of scientific and technological development for professional work, etc.). In this sense, to teach and educate somebody for social justice means to identify exclusion and marginalization in all their numerous forms, and take appropriate actions in the classroom that reveal, criticize, challenge and transform ideas and behavior which oppress or disobey an individual or a group (Hawkins, 2014). Teachers can demonstrate how they value diversity by including content that reflects a diverse range of interests and perspectives. It is important to consider not only what content is included, and whose perspectives are heard, but also which contents are excluded and whose voices are silenced, and what messages this might send to students. If curriculum content does not reflect diversity, this signals to students that diversity is unimportant, and that the people who are not being represented are not important (Broughan & Hunt, 2013: 194).

This requires a new strategy in teacher education - finding different modes for teacher professional development in order to be ready to respond to new social demands through changes in the general concept of education and curriculum development, to strengthen cooperation among institutions and social groups that are interested in the education process, as well as through the redefinition of the roles of researchers and practitioners. The application of constructivist principles to the assessment process can enable practitioners to honor these ideas (Benner & Grim, 2013).

It is evident that changes in our education system are inevitable if we want to reach its genuine democratization. First of all, it is necessary to amend and update legislation, coordinate the initiative at local level in the central systems of the reform, enable participation of all stakeholders in the educational process (pupils/students, teachers, experts, parents, local communities, professional associations, nongovernmental organizations, etc.), as well as to clearly define their roles. It is also necessary to provide access to information, coordination in the field of curriculum reform, teachers' professional development and enhancement of their competences, quality control and evaluation, development of accreditation and licensing systems, and linkage of formal with non-formal and informal education system. At the very least, such requirements and changes require a redefinition of the relationship between the quality of education and social inclusion, so that quality without the dimension of social inclusion is considered to be decreased (Gale & Hodge, 2014).

Unfortunately, there are still plenty of obstacles to achieving the foregoing, such as limited financial resources, lack of traditionof democratic culture in the broader social context, insufficient motivation of all participants, unrealistic expectations of rapid changes, on the one hand, and fear of innovations on the other hand, as well as fears that the democratization of education will lead to de-professionalization.

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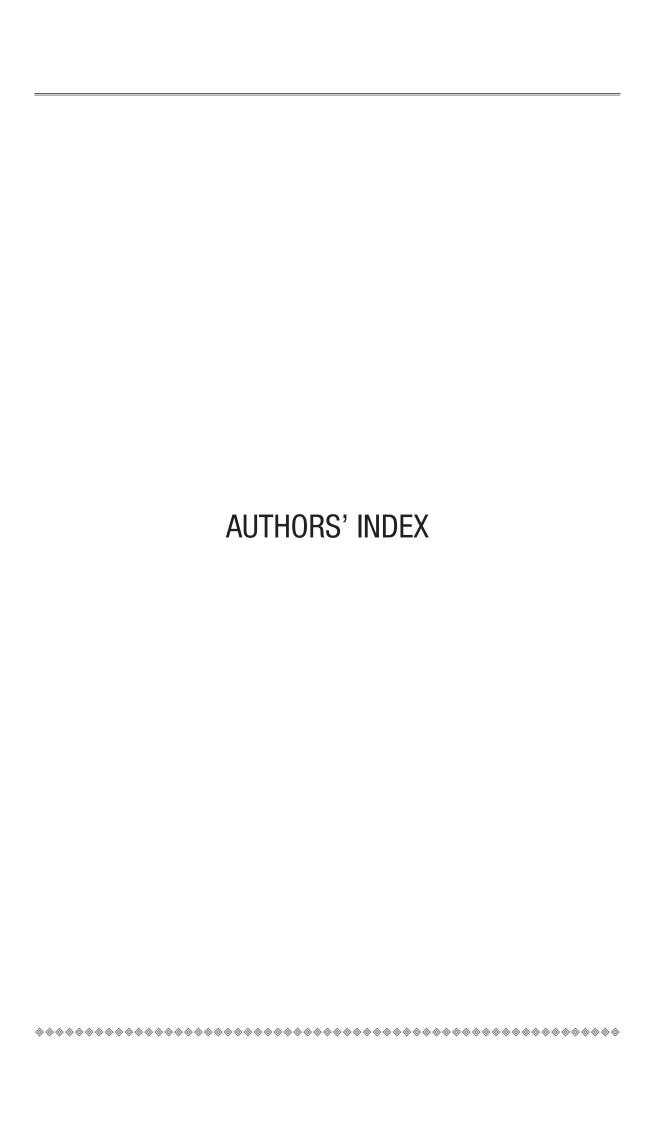
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Milja Vujačić

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)

