



EDUCATORS -THE ONES THAT CARRY INCLUSIVE CHANGES IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION REPUBLIC SERBIA

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Abstract

The work presented hereafter is an attempt to provide overview and explain place and role of the educator in implementation, and improvement of inclusive education practical approach in preschool institutions. During the last couple of years, adaptation and reform of the Law of Republic of Serbia as well as working towards, within its systems of education in all levels, European standards and European "Child Friendly School" concept, this question in our country is becoming more topical and receives deserved attention and importance. As a first link in the education system is pre-school institution, and therefore, it's understandable the fact that the educator is the most important factor of the education work and at the same time main actor in the inclusive education changes in the pre-school education in the system of education. It is not possible to measure the importance of the educator's role in the process of inclusion, but it is worth saying that it is multi dimensional and multi disciplinary and exactly with this work we will try to present some of those dimensions and disciplines.

Keywords: inclusion, educator, pre-school institution

INTRODUCTION

In so far pedagogical practice, it is a well known fact that traditional system of education has been used; therefore, it was often criticized and analyzed. Basically, this sort of education implies gathering and selection of children measured by average that is measured by "damage", which, at the same time has created parallel system of regular and specialized schools, and as that, it created fertile ground for segregation.

Only until the end of the last century it was approached to more critical reassess of this parallel model of education, education of children which requires special help and support (specialized schools) and vis-a-vi, on the other hand, children with no nuisance in their development and advance (regular schools). Result of critique and analyzes, in the period 1970-1980, sort of movement comes along, named "Integration" (including). Approach of education of children with special needs in their development, was based on medical module, differently speaking means that damage is treated as a medical problem which should be solved or as a sort of disease which should be cured, and at the same time implies that individual should adjust to educational and wider social environment. This movement aims to including children with damages to regular kindergartens and schools whereby the accent is on preparation and adjustment of a child average to children of that institution, in which is also seen his basic weakness, because environment in which child is entering stays unchangeable and their educators, teachers and parents are unprepared.

Later on examinations of the international concept and system of special education lead to existence of ideas that schools should be modified to pupils' needs and not other way around, and at the end of 20th century, those ideas are being transformed to movement "Inclusion". The word Inclusion (lat. inclusio) is of Latin origin and means including, involvement, containment in itself, crediting, sub audition. According to Mr. Suzic (2008), Inclusive education and bringing-up, implies activities of individual and the society as a process of learning in which relatively permanent and progressive changes of individual comes, in terms of simeodonic support and social involvement" (pg. 11). Inclusion involves changes and adjustment of regular educational system and



society in general, in order to meet special needs of damaged children but also to other children to whom particular social support is required (Ministry of education and sport RS, 2004).

Important thing to say is that social model dominate in inclusion in approach to damaged persons. That actually means that social model considers damage as consequence of influence of physical, communicational and social obstacles and attitudes which disables participating of challenged personas in social life to be equal whit others. Social Model is based on equalization of possibility, non-discrimination and considering of variety.

Social model implies inclusive education as a process of changing the educational system in which barrier is systematically removed, and in educational institutions atmosphere of support comes along, appreciation and acceptance of children no matter on differences. In this challenged person model approach focus is moving from individual as root of a problem to society and its institutions. Identification of children who's got difficulties in learning is replaced with identification of terms and barriers to education of all children.

Inclusive model of education treats educational model as a problem. We include child developed with certain difficulties in educational system without trying to "fix" it and/or adapt to system. Child goes to same school which he/she would have been going if that there are no difficulties in development, and the program and working methods are modified to his/hers needs.

Preschool Inclusion in Serbia

We already mentioned that one of the priorities of Serbian Ministry of Education and Serbian Government, is inclusive education, relatively, increasing education availability and education quality to all children in order to meet the educational needs and possibilities of each and every single child (Ministry of Education RS, 2010).

The most important legal Acts by which educational sector is defined (preschool, elementary and secondary education) are Act on preschool education (Službeni glasnik, 2010) and Act on the basics of educational system (Službeni glasnik, 2009). Basic principles of international documents are embedded In these legislative Acts, and they refer to the challenged children and their right to be educated, availability of education, equal possibilities for all and quality education for all.

Importance of including challenged children in regular system of education is long-term, expedient and justified. However, it should be mentioned and stressed that because of more active stimulation of psychomotor development, as well as successful socialization, including challenged children on preschool level is immeasurable significance (Karić Butković, 2008). It is considered that early involvement in ruling conditions of "real world" will prepare children better for further everyday life in "typical "environment".

On this level, children still don't have formed prejudices upon certain groups or their single-out and rejection caused by the differences. At the same time that downsizes the risk of stigmatization, teasing and leaving out, and it is presumed that early positive experiences among peers, challenged or not, increase the possibility that in later periods, from childhood to adult period, non challenged personas would be more willing to accept the challenged ones more genteelly (Buysse & Bailey, 1993, according Brojčin & Glumbić, 2007). Therefore, clearly leads to conclusion that preschool institution is firstly and determinant route on the implementation road and conduct of inclusive practice on all education levels, same as acquiring universal living model with all its differences.

Bearing in mind mentioned characteristics of preschool institution, looking through the lenses of inclusion, both broad and narrow, it is necessary to be organized and reinforced, on both meaning-physical-technical and personnel, so it could fully answer to positive streams of inclusion. In other words, implementing of inclusive practice in education requires firm connection between preschool institutions and local community, changing the system so it could fit to the children (adaptation of the space), providing adequate teaching aids, flexible in designing curriculum, training the educators, working methodology and changed attitudes of teachers about inclusive education.



Emphasizing the need of closer connections between local community and preschool institutions as a precondition for positive results of inclusive practice on preschool level of education, we have in mind the fact that challenged child and its family needs help from different sources outside the kindergarten in which that child goes. Therefore, we point out that the goal and the task of preschool institutions is sort of a networking with local community, more precisely, with other educational, health and cultural institutions, but also with NGO sector, in other words with all the services of the system which develops elements of good practice. In adapting spaces of preschool institutions, firstly we should think of removal of architectural barriers and providing easier approach to kindergartens.

Providing approach means that all the barriers should be removed, the ones that disables challenged children to independently participate in all activities of the kindergarten just as any others do. Also, in didactic material terms, particular care should be taken are there adequate resources used or aids for persons with disabilities allows reaching higher level of independence and which simplify execution of tasks and responsibilities.

In terms of realization successful learning and interaction between challenged children in development and their educators, the key moment is flexible and measured designing curriculum, as well as the respect and satisfaction of individual needs and specifics of those children, which actually involves educators' understanding and knowing the child's' difficulties. The types of learning which fits those best and which is possible to be realized, we'll be talking more about it, paying attention on educator as carrier of inclusive changes.

Competency of kindergarten to introduce the educational politics, viz, awareness and interest, ability and willingness of the engaged staff to properly support, initiate, plan and prepare the model of inclusion is the basic precondition of successful inclusion education (Jablan, Jolić, Grbović, 2009). The first individual that child meets in the kindergarten is the educator, that's why inclusive process requires an educated, competent, pro-social oriented educator. As Carrier of educational process it is required from educator to be open for changes. Accepting the changes, basically, represents, long term process of learning, and all the participants of inclusive changes, from teachers, must learn on experiences of others important participants of inclusive changes, with this, at the same time, it becomes necessity to specialize professional training.

At the same time, educators carry great responsibility for the successful realization of inclusive reform on preschool level, that requires from them certain professional ability and educational level. Organized support and adequate training should allow them to be able to apply the best possible pedagogical practice while working with children who's got different educational needs.

In this regard, common attitude and opinion of professional pedagogical public is that it is necessary to improve quality and training content of educators during their regular studying as well as professional training with practice, in addition to empower their work motivation and endeavor to improve the social status of these professions. Special attention should be given to individual working plans training, to planning time for individual work and to creation of simulative and accepting atmosphere in the group and kindergarten.

The curricula for teachers should be improved in terms of methodological approaches necessary for working with children with various levels of expressed difficulties in learning.

The area of professional development of teachers in pre-schools and teachers in mainstream schools in Serbia is regulated by the Rules of Professional Development and acquisition of teachers, educators and professionals (Ministry of Education RS, 2008). The New Law about basics of Educational System (Službeni glasnik, 2009) determines teachers and educators to be obliged for permanent professional training in order to establish and improve educational work in-general.

Except professional and personal training, being in possession of certain expert knowledge, there as well should achieve and fulfill a number of preconditions which concerns educators and whose gratification should create favorably inclusive ground of kindergarten.



That's why is, rightly stated role of teacher is the most important and decide full but at the same time the most complicate variable in kindergarten working activities (Getzels & Jackson, 1963, according to Djordjević, 2008).

Including children who needs special social help and support in pre school institution, should create favorable emotional climate with parents but as well in the group with their peers, in which these children should be included, and only educator can encourage this. That's why, the educator has to be adequately prepared for working with children who need special social support, so the balance could be made between every child in the group. There's also need for being able to cooperate and coordinate with parents, either by working in movable teams, additional work with those children and wider social enviornment.

Successful including of children who needs special social help in kindergarten requires more often and more quality cooperation with parents, usually in prompt exchange of information, defining the problem and his roots, including the pedagogical and psychological assistance and some additional professionals such as: dialectologists, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors and others so any of the problem that occurred with pupil could be properly considered.

Knowledge of family problems is the starting point in the interpretation of emotional and social needs of the child as a basis for solving the problem of learning and behavior. It is very important to find out the need of a child on time, so they could be balanced and so the child's learning environment could be ensured and in the end so that children could have benefit of it. This requires longer following and diagnostics (explicitly avoid labeling children).It would be far more righteous and more successful to focus on potential positive, and preserved potentials and on that what child can do, rather than to focus on limits and barriers which already exists at that child. Strengthening of partnership and sincere relations of educators and parents is invaluable not only for challenged children but for every child which goes to pre school institution. Partnership relation with parents in inclusive educational program is reflected in mutual acceptance and carrying out the obligations that parenting implies, as well in forming the team for each child that needs support, whereby teacher and parent jointly plan individualized working program both places, home and in the kindergarten, and they follow their effects (Srdić, 2010).

In order to this, it is essential to design and define individual program support and/or, as we call it, individual educational plan. On this occasion we wont specially deal with individual support program and the rest that goes with it, but still, we cannot avoid to mention that that's what's needed to provide optimal conditions for educational achievement and educational goals for child whom special care is needed, and which fits its developing status and abilities (Hrnjica, 2009). For education of the children with special social needs and support, it is important that teachers adapt their own expectations as well as to be prepared to make flexible individual educational plan, because only possible achievement is application of the individual approach to work for everyone included in the group. Observed by educators' eye, important thing is, that activities which are predicted by individual help program realize in team, where role of teacher in team is irreplaceable but at the same time without parents and other professional members of the team is incomplete.

Based on this brief review of the role and responsibilities which puts the process of inclusion in front of the teacher; and there are more of them, we must repeat that teachers are valuable messengers of inclusion, inclusion as a process which is born in cradle of preschool institutions. For this reason it is very important to give attention to strengthening themselves preschools, both in its organizing capabilities through the material, technical, methodological, to the training of its personnel, primarily teachers as main practitioners, practitioners will be closely competent to present and implement a process of inclusion at this level of education.

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