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SCHOOL CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR A SOCIETY OF NON-VIOLENCE

School children with developmental disabilities demonstrate different abilities and possibilities. Therefore, they need adapted educational support. Inclusive education implies including school children with developmental disabilities in order to recognise, accept, and understand their differences and individual abilities. In such a process, an effort is made to provide school children with learning, growth and development opportunities. Inclusion, perceived as a social value in itself, as an understanding and acceptance of differences, contributes to the development of society in every sense. In that sense, in this paper, inclusion and inclusive practice will be observed and described from the aspect of pedagogical axiology, i.e., educational value, which contributes to developing a society of non-violence that is so needed nowadays. Contemporary research shows that violence directed at school children with disabilities is increasing. Hence, the paper will summarise findings based on a review of recent relevant research and conclude the importance of inclusive upbringing and education in perceiving this (modern) problem, primarily from the moral basis of inclusion.

Keywords: inclusion; non-violence; pedagogical axiology; education; school children with developmental disabilities

INTRODUCTION

Violence is a problem that is often mentioned not only in expert circles but also in everyday life and the media. Today, several types of violence are present every day, and the development of technology has also created electronic violence. Anyone can become a victim, but often, it is children, especially children with developmental disabilities. Given that modern society is faced with numerous challenges that are increasingly difficult to find appropriate solutions, this paper will consider the role and importance of including children with developmental disabilities, whereby inclusion will be described from an axiological position, i.e. its moral basis.

A child with disabilities, or a school child with disabilities, according to the definition stated in the Primary and Secondary Education Act, is the one whose abilities in interactions with factors from the environment limit his or her full, effective and equal participation in the educational process with other school children, which can be the result of physical, mental, intellectual and sensory impairments and dysfunctions or a combination of several types of impairments (Bilić and Balog 2019). According to the classification given by Baftiri (1999, according to Josipović, Najman Hižman and Leutar 2008), children with developmental disorders are one of the groups of children at risk of abuse. This fact points to the frequency of children with developmental disabilities being victims of violence in the family instead of receiving the necessary security and help within it (Josipović et al. 2008). There are many possible reasons for parental violence against children with intellectual disabilities, some of which are failure to accept their child as he is, and special care required by children with disabilities (Schillinger and Schinke 1984, according to Josipović et al. 2008) and family isolation from the community (Josipović et al. 2008). Josipović and his associates (2008) pointed out in their research that people with intellectual disabilities are very often exposed to violence in various environments such as family, kindergarten, school and even institutions.

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In kindergarten and school, children with developmental disabilities become victims of peer violence, where they become victimised precisely because of their primary disabilities and are, therefore, more at risk than children without developmental disabilities (Bilić and Balog 2019). The greater vulnerability of school children with

disabilities compared to their peers was also confirmed in the research of Sentenac and associates (2013 according to Bilić and Balog 2019). It has also been proven that in the total population, the number of school children who are victims of violence is between 20 and 35%, while in the group of school children with developmental disabilities, it is between 30 and 60% (Farmer 2013, according to Bilić and Balog 2019). In addition to the "usual" violence that occurs at school and the like, there is also electronic violence that is often intertwined with classic violence (Bilić and Balog 2019). In the context of electronic violence, children with developmental disabilities are more often victims than their peers without disabilities (Fridh et al., 2017, according to Bilić and Balog 2019). In addition to school children with developmental disabilities, school children with learning disabilities are frequent victims, 25-30% of them experience some form of violence (Mishna 2003). Parents also confirm the frequency of violence, with 45% of parents reporting physical and verbal violence, and 73.3% reporting peer relational violence (Pestel 2012). A potential reason for peer violence is external characteristics that make children with disabilities different from their peers, and peers perceive them as negative (Olweus 1998, according to Bilić and Balog 2019). Also, children with developmental disabilities often continuously need the help of teachers, while their peers work independently and, therefore, are perceived as inferior (Bilić and Balog 2019). Children with intellectual disabilities are affected by physical, verbal and relational violence in the way that their self-confidence and self-esteem decrease, they begin to have a negative self-image and are perceived as worse than others (Chatzitheochari et al. 2014, according to Bilić and Balog 2019).

Children with developmental disabilities are generally more sensitive to the reactions of the environment and, therefore, try to be accepted and included by their peers (Bilić and Balog 2019). Establishing interactions with peers is hampered by their underdeveloped thinking, gullibility, difficulty in understanding manipulations, underdeveloped self-protection strategies and generally weaker communication and social skills (Bilić 2019; Kos and Žic Ralić 2010; Reiter and Lapidot-Lefler 2007 according to Bilić and Balog 2019). The goal of perpetrators of violence is to gain social power over the weaker, and given that children with developmental disabilities are more vulnerable and often do not have many friends to protect them, they are at risk of becoming victims (Pampel 2014 according to Bilić and Balog 2019). By conducting focus groups with children with disabilities, Bilić and Balog (2019) cite as the reason for physical attacks the primary difficulties that the perpetrators see as a weakness through which the perpetrators show their power. Qualitative research conducted by

Bilić and Balog (2019) suggests that children with disabilities are frequent victims of peer violence in the forms of verbal, relational, physical and electronic violence. In addition to sadness, anger, fear and anxiety, children with disabilities who are victims of violence can develop depression, low self-esteem and self-confidence, and a poor self-image, which can also be reflected in their primary difficulties (Bilić and Balog 2019). It is precisely for these reasons that it is necessary to work on the prevention of violence against children with disabilities, primarily through empowering victims in such a way as to inform them of their rights and encourage them to report violence. In addition, it is necessary to work with the perpetrators of violence and show them the consequences of their actions. Also, bystanders should be made aware to provide help and report violence when they see it occurring. Accordingly, inclusive values should be developed in children from an early age so that peers "different" from them not only accept but also understand.

According to research in the Republic of Croatia, children with developmental disabilities are mostly rejected by their peers without disabilities (Nazor, Nikolić 1991; Žic 2000 according to Žic Ralić, Ljubas 2013), but despite this children with developmental disabilities in younger primary school age, despite not being accepted by their peers, have the same experience of satisfactory relationships with their peers as their peers. The authors assume that cognitive immaturity contributes to an unrealistic assessment of one's relationships with peers (Žic Ralić, Ljubas 2013). Peer rejection or deliberate exclusion can also be seen as a form of violence. It is about the so-called indirect violence that marks the intentional exclusion of a child from group games and joint activities (Olweus 1998 according to Livazović, Vranješ 2012). Most studies of the incidence of violence against children with disabilities have shown increased levels of abuse (Ammerman and Baladerian 1993; Crosse et al. 1993; Spencer et al. 2005; Sullivan and Knutson 2000, according to Fisher et al. 2008). Crosse and associates (1993, according to Fisher et al. 2008) proved that children with developmental disabilities are more likely to experience violence than children without disabilities. In addition to violence, neglect was also studied, and it was proven that 31% of children with developmental disabilities experience violence or neglect, while 9% of children without disabilities experience the same (Sullivan and Knutson 2000, according to Fisher et al. 2008). Similar results were obtained by Spencer and associates (2005, according to Fisher et al. 2008) in their research, in which they found that children with behavioural disorders, psychological problems, learning problems, and speech and language difficulties are more likely to experience violence than children without difficulties. The stated findings are in accordance with the research findings

of Little (2004, according to Hershkowitz, Lamb and Horowitz 2007), in which it was found that children with disabilities are two to three times more likely to be victims of violence than children with typical development. An association between violence and the severity of difficulties was also found (Westcott and Jones 1999, according to Hershkowitz et al. 2007). The results are consistent and show a connection between children with disabilities and violence (Sobsey 1994, according to Davis 2011). Based on the reviewed literature, Milne (1999, according to Hershkowitz et al. 2007) concluded that children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable because they depend on their caregivers, tend to obey them, lack control over their own lives, and the like. In the research of Maclean, Sims, Bower, Leonard, Stanley and O'Donnell (2017), it was proven that children with developmental disabilities represent one out of three victims of proven abuse. Still, the analysis showed that the risk of violence is not consistent for all types of disabilities. An increased risk of violence was observed in children with intellectual disabilities and behavioural problems, while the same was not observed in children with autism spectrum disorders and Down syndrome (Maclean et al. 2017). Therefore, it can be concluded that most children with developmental disabilities are at risk of peer violence, while the same violence varies depending on the type of disability. Considering that due to cognitive difficulties, all children will not be able to develop coping mechanisms with the stress brought by violence, nor will they know and/or be able to act in accordance with the experienced violence, inclusive upbringing and education of all school children is offered as one of the possibilities for the prevention of violence.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – SOCIAL VALUE IN ITSELF AND NECESSITY

According to his essential human definition, a man is, in addition to knowledge, also a valuable being who evaluates, measures and directs his actions according to value criteria (Vukasović 2010). (Non)violence cannot be observed outside of man and outside of man's actions because, guided by his value system, an individual decides on a particular act. Axiology, as a scientific discipline, is based on the value axiom that focuses on what is good and directs us to the insight that actions and thoughts have more or less good or bad properties (Edelheim 2022). Therefore, education for a nonviolent society should be one of the educational maxims because social progress rests on social harmony. Fitz-Gibbon (2021) states that human violence in all its forms is

the biggest obstacle in personal and social life; that is, nonviolence as a practice, whenever possible, seeks the welfare of others by refusing to use violence as the key to solving problems. Vukasović (2010) sees the necessity of educational transformation in revitalising moral and educational values. As an educational institution, the school becomes a meeting place for diversity from the world around us. Schools are institutions that also include school children with developmental disabilities. Through this, specific efforts are made to include school children with developmental disabilities in the regular classes of their peers through inclusive education. In this process, school children's opinions about children with developmental disabilities who are included in the regular education system are, among other things, one of the necessary assumptions for successful inclusion (Svedružić, Svedružić 2020). And inclusion, as a contemporary philosophical-sociological concept that advocates not only tolerance of diversity but also the encouragement and strengthening of coexistence with those who are different and special training for that coexistence, is most often implemented in practice precisely through institutionalised forms of education (Romstein, Sekulić-Majurec 2015) while the inclusive culture of an educational institution is based on fairness, tolerance, solidarity and respect for human dignity (Kudek Mirošević, Tot, Jurčević Lozančić 2020). Therefore, inclusion is also a social value per se (Bailey, McWilliam, Buyse, Wesley 1998). Moreover, in a relatively short time, inclusion has become a global and generally accepted social value (Romstein, Sekulić-Majurec 2015), and that it is a value in itself can be concluded based on its moral basis and therefore should not be viewed by excluding its value dimension.

Modern science has a wide range of definitions and understandings of the term *inclusion*. Booth and Ainscow (2002) define inclusion as a process of increasing the participation of all school children to reduce their exclusion from the school curriculum, cultural and broader social community, i.e. "as a principled approach to action in education and society. It encompasses such commitments as the idea that every life and every death are of equal value" (Booth, Ainscow, Kingston 2006: 3). Inclusive education refers to the education of school children with developmental disabilities and typical school children in regular schools and prevails in the educational policy of developed countries (Rafferty et al., 2010 according to Skočić Mihić, Gabrić, Bošković 2016). Croatian education policy is inclusive and aligned with international conventions and ensures the inclusion of school children with disabilities in the regular education system (Skočić Mihić, Gabrić, Bošković 2016).[3]

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3   The Act on Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the Croatian Parliament at its se-

Inclusion is based on the interaction of family beliefs and values, educational activities and the approach of educational workers and social processes/politics and value systems in the community (Hanson et al. 2001, according to Kudek Mirošević, Tot, Jurčević Lozančić 2020), and is often defined as "a system of beliefs shared by every member of the educational community, i.e. educators and teachers, educational administrative staff, children, parents and other members, about the responsibility in the upbringing and education of all children in a way that they can realise your potential" (Friend and Bursuch, 2006 according to Rudelić, Pinoza Kukurin, Skočić Mihić 2013: 133). Karamatić Brčić (2013) talks about inclusion in a broader and narrower sense, thus stating that in a broader sense, educational inclusion refers to the inclusion of children and adults who, due to social, cultural, educational, ethnic and other differences, are subject to social exclusion, exposed to social marginalisation, and thus disenfranchised and vulnerable. In a narrower sense, educational inclusion is a requirement that emphasizes that every child is educated in accordance with individual possibilities in the school as an educational institution. Martan (2018) emphasises that an inclusive educational policy ensures the availability of the regular education system for school children with disabilities by respecting individual needs and providing support that will ensure the development of their potential.

In addition to respect, it is important to sincerely accept the person through understanding the school child's difficulty that they are facing, keeping in mind that the difficulty does not have to and should not, in a moral sense, be a limiting obstacle in mutual human relations. In this sense, in the context of inclusive education, the importance of an accepting and supportive institutional environment in which a child with disabilities grows up is particularly emphasised (Mikas, Roudi 2012, 2019, according to: Kudek Mirošević, Tot, Jurčević Lozančić 2020). When it comes to school children with developmental disabilities, the special importance of an accepting and supportive institutional environment should be emphasised because children with developmental disabilities are a special group of children in need of a special support during their growing up and childhood. They form a group of school children with multiple, different and changing needs. Following the individual abilities and possibilities of school children with disabilities during teaching, some of them need constant, occasional or limited educational support. Such school children must be provided with quality inclusive education. In the Croatian legal regulatory framework,

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ssion on June 1, 2007. Cf. Law on Confirmation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Official Gazette 6/2007.

school children with developmental disabilities are defined by law. According to *the Primary and Secondary Education Act* (2008) in the Republic of Croatia, Article 62 defines school children with special educational needs: "(1) School children with special educational needs are gifted school children and school children with disabilities."

The support of peers also contributes to the quality inclusive practice of school children with disabilities in primary schools. Peer support positively impacts all participants in the educational process because it enables empowerment, responsible behaviour, mutual acceptance, appreciation and understanding, which leads to the absence of discrimination, and consequently violence, among school children. "Educational inclusion implies a new attitude towards diversity emphasising different possibilities, not shortcomings" (Kudek Mirošević, Tot, Jurčević Lozančić 2020: 548). Therefore, when it comes to the implementation of educational inclusion in school practice, the emphasis should be on opportunities because educational inclusion presupposes changing the organisation of school work with a particular focus on changes in the organisation of teaching and learning and the application of inclusive education, that is, the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills and abilities and attitudes about all kinds of diversity and their combination in the value of man and human dignity (Vican, Karamatić Brčić 2013).

Given that inclusion is described as "including/involving", it should be taken into account that such an approach denies children with developmental disabilities the possibility of equal social participation because during such "inclusion", they are passively introduced into the environment that has been prepared for them and which is controlled by persons without disabilities. In addition, inclusion, which is interpreted as "including/involving", assumes that all children with developmental disabilities can fully function in a regular environment and that a special education system is not necessary, and this entails the issue of the possibility of family and child choice. The interpretation of inclusion that can result in depriving an individual of the possibility of choice and active participation in the society in which theyfind themselvescontrasts with inclusion (Romstein, Sekulić-Majurec, 2015: 42). In conclusion, inclusion should not be interpreted as mere inclusion but as active participation that assumes equality and the possibility of choice (Odom et al. 2002 according to Romstein, Sekulić-Majurec). If we want a systematic change in values then we must create conditions which will result with an interaction between persons with developmental disabilities and persons without disabilities (Kobešćak 2000).

In today's educational system, there are special schools where school children with more complex difficulties who cannot be included in regular schools are raised

and educated. Moreover, there are special class departments with special programs within the regular school, inclusion of school children in regular classes according to an adapted program, and inclusion in public life, which includes different spheres. It is important to elaborate, analyse, and constantly adapt approaches and needs towards school children with disabilities to these needs, as well as societal and social changes. Zrilić (2013) states that children without developmental disabilities, growing up among groups similar to themselves, do not have the opportunity to learn to appreciate differences and recognise the values of persons with developmental disabilities, which mainly leads to the creation of prejudices. Therefore, creating a new school open to all children, regardless of diversity, becomes the basic goal of including children with developmental disabilities. The purpose of inclusion is the inclusion of children with developmental disabilities in the regular education system in order to develop the intellectual, emotional and social qualities of the school children (Karamatić Brčić 2013).

CONCLUSION

Inclusive education is based on providing quality education to all participants in the educational process. It is a process that aims to enable school children with difficulties to join a group of their peers with the aim of learning, socialising, playing and having fun, and all this in the service of creating a functional citizen. Inclusion can also be described as the process of involving people in a certain activity and area, whereby each person will be accepted with his abilities and individual possibilities, with respect and understanding of individual differences and the rights of individuals as persons. The very goal of inclusive education is to create learning opportunities in the least restrictive environment.

Support in the work of school children with difficulties is provided by all participants in the educational process: teachers, teachers, members of the class and teacher's council, principals, professional associates, school doctors, parents and other specialised experts involved in rehabilitation support for school children. Applying inclusive educational practice enables school children with developmental disabilities to join the educational system with their peers. Teachers are at the center of the educational process and represent an important factor on which depends the integration of school children with disabilities into regular classrooms. Teachers decide whether to accept or reject the presence of school children with disabilities in their class. Teachers plan and implement educational activities of the teaching process while cre-

ating a stimulating work environment that is an integral part of inclusion. School children, parents and teachers should accept a child with developmental difficulties in a regular classroom, where it is necessary to create the necessary material and organizational conditions for the smooth development of the teaching process. Teachers, as key subjects of the process of inclusive education, have the freedom to create inclusive classrooms where every child feels welcome and accepted regardless of the present and possible differences (Karamatić Brčić 2013).

Teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes towards inclusive education are crucial for the successful education of school children with developmental disabilities in regular classes. In the educational process, teachers mediate educational values and with their way of working, as well as implicit pedagogy, exemplify desirable behaviour. Accordingly, by accepting and understanding differences, school children adopt inclusive values as desirable values in society. Education in an inclusive society is an ideal that should be based on people's values and beliefs (Sunko 2016). By accepting the concept of inclusion, the teacher should accept that each school child is a special individual who is not marked by their difficulties, which should be in accordance with inclusive principles on the equality of all school children in the educational process (Martan 2018). The family of a school child with disabilities is also an important participant in education that plays a key role in inclusive education because, regardless of the child's impairment, cooperation with parents and communication with peers is recommended (Bouillet 2010).

One of the crucial roles of teachers is to support parents of school children with disabilities. This includes familiarising parents with the child's obligations and rights, frequent conversations with their parents, familiarising parents with the child's difficulties in mastering the teaching content, familiarising parents with the forms of educational support that can be provided to the child, and organising lectures for parents. The cooperation, respect and partnership between the parents of school children with disabilities and those responsible for inclusive education contribute to better-integrating school children with disabilities into the educational process.

Inclusion as a process does not imply the equalisation of all people, but its educational value is reflected in the appreciation and understanding of the diversity of each individual. Inclusion contributes to the development of understanding and acceptance of individual differences and needs, the expansion of knowledge, the enrichment of experiences and the development of humanity. Inclusion was developed as a process to enable children with disabilities to attend the nearest educational institution and live with their peers. "The application of inclusive education in school practice

presupposes the development of awareness in children about acceptance and appreciation of diversity. Developing awareness of accepting diversity in children and changing attitudes towards children with special needs is an important prerequisite for the successful implementation of inclusion in school" (Karamatić Brčić 2013: 73). Ultimately, a society (school, family, local community, etc.) that has adopted inclusion as a desirable social value can hope and strive for a lower rate of violence because most research shows that children with developmental disabilities are more likely to experience violence than children without disabilities. In this sense, inclusion should not be viewed exclusively through its legal basis in terms of ensuring the rights of all children but also through its empirical and moral basis, which should be the main starting point in considering inclusion as a desirable social value that can contribute to reducing and suppressing violence.

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UČENICI S TEŠKOĆAMA U RAZVOJU I INKLUZIVNI ODGOJ I OBRAZOVANJE ZA DRUŠTVO NENASILJA

Sažetak:

Učenici s teškoćama u razvoju iskazuju različite sposobnosti i mogućnosti te im je potrebna prilagođena odgojno-obrazovna podrška. Inkluzivni odgoj i obrazovanje podrazumijevaju postupak uključivanja učenika s teškoćama u razvoju s ciljem priznavanja, prihvaćanja i razumijevanja njihovih različitosti i individualnih sposobnosti. U takvom se procesu učenicima nastoji osigurati prilike za učenje, rast i razvoj. Inkluzija, shvaćena kao društvena vrijednost po sebi, kao razumijevanje i prihvaćanje različitosti, pridonosi razvoju društva u svakom smislu. U tom smislu u radu će se inkluzija i inkluzivna praksa promatrati i opisati s aspekta pedagogijske aksiologije, odnosno, odgojne vrijednosti po sebi, koja doprinosi razvoju za društvo nenasilja kao nasušne potrebe današnjice. Suvremena istraživanja pokazuju da se nasilje usmjereno prema učenicima s poteškoćama povećava, te će se u radu temeljem pregleda novijih relevantnih istraživanja sumirati spoznaje i donijeti zaključak o važnosti inkluzivnoga odgoja i obrazovanja u sagledavanju ovoga (suvremenoga) problema, prvenstveno s moralne osnove inkluzije.

Ključne riječi: inkluzija; nenasilje; odgoj i obrazovanje; pedagogijska aksiologija; učenici s teškoćama u razvoju

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