Review of the scientific monograph PEER ACCEPTANCE IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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The monograph,titled *Peer acceptance in inclusive education* by authors Milja Vujačić and Rajka Đević, is aimed at considering important issues concerning the implementation of inclusive education and represents a valuable scientific contribution in this field. In this publication, the authors focus on one of the key aspects of inclusive education, which is related to the provision, encouragement and improvement of social relationships among students in regular elementary school classes. Although inclusive education represents an important research field in the professional and scientific literature, scientific papers aimed at a more comprehensive overview of the inclusive education implementation quality and opportunities for improving the position of students with developmental difficulties in regular elementary schools are needed. Bearing in mind the importance of the selected topic, as well as the fact that the authors have made significant progress in the study of social acceptance compared to previous research in Serbia, the monograph and the research presented in it contribute to a more comprehensive overview of the social acceptance of students in the context of inclusive education.

In addition to the preface, the list of references and the author's index, the structure of the monograph consists of five, content-wise and logically connected, chapters in which important questions related to the selected research topic are answered through theoretical considerations and empirical findings of the research. In the first chapter, titled *Social acceptance of students in theory and research*, the authors review theoretical and empirical studies of social acceptance of students.It provides determination of key concepts, indicates the mutual connection of social acceptance and different aspects of individual's social functioning, also the importance of social acceptance for the overall development of the child, shows different methodological procedures applied in examining this phenomenon, and gives an overview of empirical findings in this area.

In the second chapter, titled *Children with developmental disabilities in the family and society*, the authors acknowledge the specifics ofchildren's family environment and their position in society. Difficulties in the family functioning of these children and problems in mutual relationships within the family are pointed out. The specifics of the family environment of these children are considered from the aspect of influence on their overall development, the formation of an image of themselves and others and functioning in various social interactions with their peers.Society's attitude towards these children and their parents is observed through available research findings on institutions of different social systems providing support. Looking at the contextual conditions in which these children grow up is of

particular importance for a better understanding of their functioning and social position within the school context.

The third chapter, titled *Inclusive education - towards social acceptance of students with developmental disabilities*, presents a synthesis of important issues concerning inclusive education. In this chapter, the authors review the origin and development of this idea, different definitions of this term, basic principles and theoretical assumptions, legislative and legal regulations in this area and the key role of teachers in this process. Analyzing the role of teachers in encouraging and improving the social acceptance of students with developmental disabilities in the peer group, it is of great importance that teachers focus on the formation and development of positive attitudes towards students with developmental disabilities, the creation of a favorable socio-emotional climate in the classroom, and the creation of a flexible learning environment, which will serve the purpose of respecting diversity among students, and developing and improving students' social skills as an important condition for achieving positive social interactions and adequate functioning in a peer group.

In the fourth chapter, the methodological framework of the research carried out in Belgrade primary schools and research findings were presented. Unlike previous research in this area, in which the problem of social acceptance of students with developmental disabilities was considered only from the aspect of sociometric findings and answers received from students, in the research carried out by the authors, the perspectives of teachers were also included by looking attheir perceptions of these studentssocial position in the peer group, their opinions about the key factors that influence the given social status and ways in which they encourage and improve social acceptance in teaching practice. Combining quantitative and qualitative data and including the perspectives of bothstudents and teachers made it possible to see the problem of social acceptance more comprehensively and bring it into relation with all important aspects of teaching practice and realization of inclusive education. The contribution of this research is also reflected in the fact that the problem of social acceptance is considered at different ages of primary school students (4th and 8th grade), which provides an insight into the specifics of the social position of students at different levels of primary education. These insights, among other things, can be useful for a better understanding of the roles of teachers and the characteristics of their teaching practices. The main findings of the research indicate that students with developmental disabilities are accepted to a lesser degree compared to their peers, and that they more often occupy the status of neglected and rejected students. The findings obtained from teachers indicate insufficient preparation for the application of a differentiated approach and individualization in teaching. Teachers lack knowledge on how to design and implement joint activities for all students in the classwhich would create conditions for greater mutual acceptance and group cohesion. Through the skilful application of interpretive phenomenological analysis, the obtained findings were discussed through the lens of key aspects of the inclusive education implementationand the role of teachers in this process, connectingthose results withprevious theoretical and empirical findings in this area and the current state of educational practice.

In the fifth chapter, the key conclusions of the research were presentedand important pedagogical implications related to the work of the school and teachers, but also to the family and society as a whole, were pointed out. In this chapter, the authors have also given detailed proposals for studying the social acceptance of students with developmental disabilities in regular elementary schools.

The monograph *Peer acceptance in inclusive education* is the result of well-designed research based on comprehensive theoretical and empirical foundations. It can be of great importance for policy-makers to plan and design further activities primarily concerned with

the professional development of teachers and their initial education. In addition, the monograph and the findings of the research presented in it, can serve teachers for further reflection on their work and attitudes towards students, and can be an incentive for changing teaching practices and improving the competencies necessary for the quality implementation of inclusive education. The monograph can also be useful to researchers in the field of inclusive education as an incentive for further studies of the social acceptance of students in regular elementary school classes.