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Inclusion in Education: Research Approaches and Problems

Extended summary

The problems this paper is focused on relate to inclusive education. They are examined from the scientific-research aspect, and the objective was to point to important problems in this area in Serbia. Being aware that the legal framework for inclusive education has already been provided in Serbia and that the school year 2010/2011 was the year when the laws and by-laws began to be implemented, the intention of this paper was to find out which problems occupied the attention of researchers in this field during the decade of implementation, as well as which topics and study and research methods were dominant in the papers dealing with inclusive education. The research results at various levels, from the national level to peer community, are important for monitoring inclusive education. The needs of educational practice and policy are directed to research concepts and ways of studying inclusive education and there is not much discussion in our country on how inclusive education is researched.

The aim of the research presented in this paper is to critically review and consider the framework and approach in researching the theory and practice of inclusive education, as well as to identify needs and possible directions for further study and research of this phenomenon, which will contribute to improving inclusive education practice. The content analysis technique included 135 papers that focused on various problems related to the inclusive theory and practice research which have been published in pedagogical periodicals in the last ten years. Two sections have been singled out in the analysis: theoretical and problem approach in study and research (including the following categories: theoretical and historical aspect of inclusive education; critical review of ideological discourse and practice of inclusive education; assess-

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ments of inclusive education; competences for inclusion; principles, models and strategies of inclusive education in relation to the purpose of providing additional support; support for inclusive education through knowledge, strategies and approaches of special pedagogy; inclusive education effects) and methodological approach to inclusive education research (including the following categories: category of work in relation to study approach; research methods; research techniques and instruments; and sample research).

The results show that in the first decade since the introduction of inclusive education in Serbia, the authors have mostly dealt with problems related to critical consideration of the ideological discourse and practice of inclusive education, as well as teachers' assessment of various issues related to inclusive education and their inclusive competencies. There are only few papers that present and analyze the inclusive education effects. It has been determined that empirical papers dominate in relation to theoretical ones, and the most common methods used are descriptive and survey methods. Most of the analyzed researches were conducted mainly by applying techniques and instruments on one sample and there are no participatory researches.

Pedagogical implications relate to the need for more objective research into the effects of inclusion given the ten-year implementation period. There is also a need to study innovative approaches to inclusive teaching, providing the possibility of finding adequate solutions that would contribute to overcoming numerous obstacles affecting its implementation, and the implementation of study results would improve the effects and quality of inclusive teaching and inclusive education. Therefore, it is important to continuously encourage and systematically develop inclusive education, which includes the development of teachers' inclusive competencies through initial education and professional development. More valuable research results in the field of inclusive education are provided by research approaches that include all actors of inclusive education through participatory and qualitative research. Such results should be important to the creators and initiators of the education reform, and as guidance for further direction of improving the idea and practice of inclusive education.

Keywords: effects of inclusive education, competencies for inclusion, inclusive practice, research of inclusive education

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