

SOCIAL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH THE LENS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION THEORIES IN PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS

ma Milica Palačković¹

Abstract: This paper explores social inclusion and support for preschool-aged children with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Children with disabilities often face numerous barriers that hinder their equal participation in social activities. Focusing on preschool institutions as key actors in the process of social inclusion, the paper analyzes current practices, challenges, and opportunities for improving support for children with disabilities. Through a review of available sources, official statistical data, and existing research, the paper provides deeper insights into the experiences and needs of children with disabilities. Special attention is given to the role of preschool institutions in promoting inclusive education and creating a stimulating environment that enables every child to develop their full potential. The theoretical framework of this study is based on key social work theories that explain inclusion and social protection, including the theory of social justice, ecological theory, empowerment theory, and systems theory. These theories provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by children with disabilities and their families, as well as the ways in which society can respond to their needs. This paper contributes to a better understanding of the complexities of inclusive education and offers guidelines for improving practices in preschool institutions, emphasizing an integrated approach to supporting children with disabilities and their families within the context of social protection.

Keywords: social inclusion, preschool-aged child, disability, preschool institution, social work theories.

¹ A doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Banja Luka
Employed at the Public Institution Center for Preschool Education, Banja Luka
e-mail: mica_39@live.com

INTRODUCTION

Children with disabilities represent one of the most marginalized groups in the Republic of Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina. These children are often part of the most vulnerable and impoverished segments of the population, with limited access to educational and healthcare institutions. The term “children with disabilities” encompasses children with long-term physical, intellectual, mental, sensory, and other impairments who, due to various barriers, face difficulties in equal participation in society alongside their peers.

From a social work perspective, this reality highlights the need for developing social approaches that will enable children with disabilities to achieve greater inclusion and equality in all social processes, with appropriate support and integration. Each child is a unique individual with their own developmental path, which is why a multidisciplinary team, trained to recognize, develop, and evaluate measures and procedures aimed at meeting developmental needs, is essential. Today, the idea of inclusive education and the full inclusion of children with disabilities in all spheres of social life is increasingly prominent, regardless of the degree of disability (Vukajlović, 2010). In both global literature and practice, inclusion is seen as a process designed to ensure social participation for every individual. Social inclusion and support for preschool-aged children with disabilities play a key role in achieving their holistic development and well-being, enabling them to progress and reach their full potential (Vukajlović, Mešalić, 2021). The social inclusion of children with disabilities can also be viewed through the lens of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which emphasizes how various environmental levels—family, preschool institutions, community, and societal norms—shape a child’s opportunities for development and participation. In this sense, inclusion is not just a matter of educational policy but a broader social approach that entails removing barriers in all aspects of a child’s life. Contemporary discussions on inclusive education highlight various approaches to its interpretation. Cerić (2008) states that inclusive education can be viewed as a concept, an educational policy, and even as an evolving, unfinished theory. According to the theory of scientific revolu-

tions (Kuhn, 1962), inclusive education can be seen as a new paradigm in pedagogy, requiring a radical shift in how education is perceived. At the same time, critical theory emphasizes inclusion as a means of social justice and the emancipation of marginalized groups (Freire, 1970). Over the past three decades, interest in preschool education has been growing rapidly, not only in the European Union and developed countries but worldwide. Before this period, preschool education was primarily viewed as a service whose main function was child care while parents worked. However, new scientific findings have fundamentally changed previous understandings of early childhood development. Traditional views that children in the preschool period only need basic care and nutrition have been abandoned. There are evident differences between children who have been adequately stimulated and those who have not grown up in an encouraging environment during their preschool years. The experiences and stimuli to which a child is exposed in early childhood significantly influence their cognitive and emotional development, and later, these effects are difficult to alter.

From this, it can be concluded that the period from birth to six years represents the foundation of a person's entire development and life: academic success, cognitive and emotional growth, health status, curiosity and willingness to learn, as well as relationships with others and society. All these and other characteristics of an individual are shaped during the first six years of life. For these reasons, children with disabilities must be provided with equal conditions for early learning, growth, and development, all aimed at shaping their personalities and ensuring their future progress (Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, 2016).

Protection of Persons (Children) with Disabilities in International Frameworks and Domestic Legislation

Key international documents concerning the rights of persons with disabilities were adopted relatively late compared to other international human rights instruments.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted on December 13, 2006, with the aim of pro-

moting, protecting, and ensuring the equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities (Gadžo-Šašić, 2020). All state parties to this Convention are obligated to take measures to ensure that children with disabilities fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children. In all activities concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration (Article 7). Furthermore, all state parties are required to guarantee children with disabilities the right to freely express their views on all matters affecting them. Their views must be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and they must be provided with appropriate assistance in expressing those views, in line with their disability and age (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2006). Another crucial international document addressing children's rights is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989. This Convention establishes universal standards that must be guaranteed to every child. It is the only international instrument that treats the child as a subject of rights rather than merely an individual in need of protection. The CRC consists of 54 articles, with the Preamble explaining the rationale for its adoption. Articles 1 to 46 define the concept of a child (a person under the age of eighteen) and outline the obligations of states upon ratification. Articles 42 to 45 specify monitoring procedures for the Convention, while Articles 46 to 54 contain formal provisions regarding its entry into force (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

According to Gavrilović (2005), Article 23 of the CRC is particularly significant for children with developmental disabilities, as it states that:

- “State parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions that ensure dignity, promote self-reliance, and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community.”

- “State parties recognize the right of the disabled child to special care and shall encourage and ensure, within available resources, the provision of assistance to eligible children and those responsible for their care, upon request and in accordance with the child’s condition and the financial capabilities of their parents or caregivers” (pp. 385-386).

When analyzing Bosnia and Herzegovina's legal framework as a country striving for European integration and the development of a society that respects fundamental human rights and freedoms while prohibiting discrimination, it is necessary to highlight key national documents relevant to persons with disabilities and children with developmental difficulties. The first document introducing a new human rights-based approach to disability, grounded in the social model, was the Policy on Disability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, published in the Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2008. Based on this document, an operational strategy was developed: The Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2011–2015). Since the implementation period for this document has ended, the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina appointed a working group, consisting of representatives from all relevant sectors and organizations for persons with disabilities, to draft a new strategy: The Strategy for the Advancement of Rights and Status of Persons with Disabilities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2016–2021) (Gadžo-Šašić, 2020). In Republika Srpska, the rights of persons with disabilities are prescribed by the Constitution of Republika Srpska, which, as the highest legal act, prohibits all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against persons with disabilities. According to the Constitution and the law, all individuals are equal. A crucial step in legally regulating the status of persons with disabilities was the adoption of the Strategy for the Advancement of the Status of Persons with Disabilities in Republika Srpska (2017–2026).

However, achieving full social equality for persons with disabilities requires the engagement of all societal institutions. The legal framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina reflects both the medical and social models of disability. While the medical model emphasizes the individual characteristics of the child as the basis for categorization and support, the social model views disability as a consequence of societal barriers that limit inclusion and participation. An analysis of existing laws reveals that, although inclusive policies are formally in place, their implementation still reflects a medical approach, relying on diagnostic criteria and specialized programs rather than ensuring full inclusion.

Definition and Classification of Children with Disabilities

Throughout history, society's attitude toward children with disabilities has changed significantly. In early communities, such children were often considered unproductive, as their disabilities prevented them from performing the tasks expected of them. In Sparta, newborns with disabilities were killed and regarded as a form of divine punishment. It was not until the Age of Humanism and the Renaissance that these children became more visible, and during the Enlightenment, the idea of educating children with disabilities alongside their peers emerged. However, it was only after World War II that awareness truly developed regarding the possibility of a dignified life for persons, including children, with disabilities (Gadžo-Šašić, 2020).

A variety of definitions exist in the literature to describe disability. However, one of the most comprehensive is found in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which defines persons with disabilities as individuals with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, sensory, or other impairments who, due to various barriers, experience difficulties in participating in society on an equal basis with others (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006). From this definition, it is evident that the focus is not on the individual's impairment but rather on the societal barriers that prevent them from achieving equal participation in society.

One of the most modern classifications of disability is the one adopted by the European Union, which is among the few classifications that explicitly include autism and autism spectrum disorder as disabilities. According to the EU classification, the following types of disabilities exist:

- Sensory impairments
 - Visual impairments (blindness and low vision)
 - Hearing impairments (deafness and hearing loss)
- Intellectual disability (previously referred to as “mental retardation,” a now outdated and inappropriate term)
- Physical disability

- Causes of physical disability (paraplegia/quadriplegia, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, amputation, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, poliomyelitis, spina bifida)
- Mobility impairments (difficulty walking, mobility aided by a cane or crutches, or reliance on a wheelchair)
 - Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
 - Multiple disabilities (Gadžo-Šašić, 2020).

When examining Bosnia and Herzegovina, differences in the understanding of disability can be observed across its entities. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Law on the Basics of Social Protection, Protection of Civilian War Victims, and Protection of Families with Children categorizes 24 types of disabilities and impairments in children and adults, grouped as follows: blind and visually impaired children; deaf and hard-of-hearing children; children with speech, voice, and language disorders; children with physical impairments and permanent physical developmental difficulties; children with mental/intellectual developmental difficulties (mild, moderate, severe, and profound intellectual disabilities) and children with combined impairments (multiple disabilities). In Republika Srpska, the Law on Social Protection, adopted in 2012, defines seven categories of disability: children with visual impairments; children with hearing impairments; children with speech, voice, and language disorders; children with physical impairments and chronic illnesses; children with intellectual disabilities; children with multiple disabilities and children with other impairments that lead to difficulties in psychomotor and sensory development.

In Brčko District, the concept of disability is defined by the Law on Social Protection, specifically in Article 13, which states that a minor with a physical or mental developmental impairment is considered an individual with visual or hearing impairments, speech or voice disorders, physical impairments, intellectual disabilities, or multiple disabilities (UNICEF, 2017). Despite Bosnia and Herzegovina being a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there is still no unified definition of a person with a disability, and different terminologies are used across various sectors and legal frameworks.

Theoretical Foundation of Educational Inclusion within Social Inclusion

Educational inclusion is one of the key aspects of broader social inclusion, with its fundamental goal being to ensure equal access to education for every child, including children with disabilities. According to Stubbs (1998), educational inclusion is a strategy aimed at fostering an inclusive society where all individuals, regardless of gender, age, abilities, ethnicity, or difficulties, can participate and contribute. Educational inclusion does not only encompass the physical presence of students in educational institutions but also the creation of learning environments that provide equal access to resources and ensure emotional and intellectual support, thereby enabling every child to reach their full potential.

For the development of educational inclusion, it is crucial to consider theories and approaches that facilitate its implementation in educational systems. Clough and Corbett (2002) identify multiple theories of inclusive education, emphasizing “five key perspectives” that address the needs of different groups, including children with disabilities, as well as the socio-cultural and economic barriers that hinder full participation in educational processes. The following perspectives represent various theoretical frameworks and approaches to inclusive practice and educational policy:

- **Deficit Perspective** – This perspective assumes that learning difficulties and developmental challenges stem from individual deficiencies, whether congenital or acquired. In this model, inclusion is seen as a process of adapting the child to the system rather than modifying the system to meet the child’s needs. This perspective is now widely criticized as it fails to account for social and educational factors that influence a child’s success.

- **System Response Perspective** – This approach is based on the idea that the causes of children’s exclusion from education do not lie solely in their individual characteristics, but also within the educational system itself. It draws attention to how structures, policies, pedagogical practices, and the organization of preschool institutions can disproportionately contribute to the marginalization of certain children.

- **Social Justice Perspective** – This perspective emphasizes that barriers to inclusion result from social injustice, discrimination, and systemic inequalities. Here, educational inclusion is viewed as part of a broader struggle for human rights and social justice, where the educational system must ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of social, economic, or physical obstacles.

- **Critical Pedagogy Perspective** – This perspective analyzes education through the lens of power and hegemony. Inclusive education, in this context, is seen as a tool for empowering marginalized groups, where children are not passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in their education and social transformation.

- **Political and Economic Factors Perspective** – This perspective highlights how broader social, economic, and political factors shape educational policies and inclusion opportunities. Poverty, unequal resource distribution, and political decisions directly impact children's ability to access quality education.

Each of these perspectives provides a different insight into the challenges and opportunities of inclusive education. Their combination enables a more comprehensive approach to developing inclusive educational policies and practices. As a specific subfield within the broader theory of education, the theory of inclusive education holds great significance, as its goal is to ensure full participation of all members of society, regardless of their specific needs. In this regard, Primorac (2003) considers the theory of inclusive education to be an unfinished theory that is still in development. He emphasizes the need to precisely define inclusive education as part of general education and to clearly determine its scope of application. This is crucial for shaping educational policies that are suitable for all students, particularly those with specific needs. In context social work, educational inclusion plays a significant role in the social integration and empowerment of vulnerable social groups. The theory of empowerment, one of the fundamental approaches in social work, highlights the need for actively involving all individuals in the educational process and developing their potential through support and the strengthening of their abilities. Empowerment does not merely entail physical support but also includes emotional, psychological, and social assistance,

enabling children with disabilities to integrate into society on an equal footing (Saleebey, 1996).

The Role of Preschool Institutions in the Process of Social Inclusion

Preschool institutions play a crucial role in educational inclusion, as they allow children with disabilities to engage in the educational process from an early age. Through attendance at preschool institutions, children with disabilities—who often face barriers to social and emotional integration—are given the opportunity to develop social skills and interact with their peers from an early stage.

Rawls (1971), through his theory of social justice, clearly emphasizes that all individuals, regardless of their physical or intellectual challenges, have the right to equal access. In this sense, preschools are not only educational institutions but also key socialization agents that help children with disabilities integrate into social life and develop the skills necessary for their future success in society.

Bronfenbrenner (1979), through his ecological systems theory, highlights the importance of preschool institutions in the socialization process of children. This theory suggests that different levels of the environment (family, preschool, societal) influence a child's development. Preschool institutions, as the first formal educational setting, play a fundamental role in providing a stable environment that helps children with disabilities integrate into broader society, participate in educational activities, and achieve emotional stability and social skills.

Additionally, the systemic approach plays an important role in this analysis. According to this approach, educational institutions and other social services should collaborate to create conditions for the social integration of all members of society. In the context of social work, this approach enables the development of strategies that help children with disabilities overcome barriers in education and social life. For example, social workers can assist in organizing transportation for children with disabilities from socially disadvantaged families.

The Importance of Social Workers in Educational Inclusion

Social workers play a vital role in the process of educational inclusion, as they not only provide emotional and psychological support to children but also work to overcome practical obstacles that hinder equal access to education. Their role encompasses a wide range of activities, including advocating for children's rights, supporting families, mediating between different institutions, and directly working with children to ensure their inclusion in the education system (Payne, 2005).

Empowering families, particularly those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and families with children with disabilities, helps create societal balance, reduces social exclusion, and contributes to the development of an inclusive society. Their work reduces social inequalities and ensures that children with disabilities, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to quality education and the opportunity for full social integration. In the future, strengthening the role of social workers through better institutional cooperation and additional training could significantly enhance the process of educational inclusion and ensure a higher degree of social justice within the educational system.

Educational inclusion, as a key aspect of broader social inclusion, provides essential support for children with disabilities. The development of social work theories, such as the theory of social justice, the empowerment theory, ecological theory, and the systemic approach, enables a better understanding of how educational and social workers can facilitate the inclusion of these groups within the educational system.

Preschool institutions play a critical role in social integration, as they provide children with opportunities to develop social skills and emotional stability. Through the collaborative efforts of educational and social institutions, combined with the application of social work theories, a foundation has been laid for an inclusive society that guarantees equal access to education for all its members, regardless of their specific needs.

Analysis of Previous Research

After analyzing and presenting the international and domestic legal framework, defining and classifying children with disabilities, and exploring the theoretical foundations of educational inclusion, the question arises as to how effectively these regulations are implemented in practice and what kind of support is available for preschool-aged children with disabilities. In the 2023/24 academic year, the number of children enrolled in preschool education programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina was 41,214, of whom 544 had developmental difficulties (Zavod za statistiku Bosne i Hercegovine). In the same academic year, in the Republic of Srpska, 16,807 children were included in preschool education programs, 113 of whom had developmental difficulties (Zavod za statistiku Republike Srpske). The state of inclusion of preschool children with disabilities varies and depends on economic resources, political priorities, and cultural factors. Although inclusion is formally developed in our country, its practical implementation is often limited by a lack of resources and support. Given the statistics, it can be concluded that the rate of inclusion of children with disabilities in regular preschool institutions is low, particularly in rural areas. The Ombudsman for Children highlights that, while progress is evident in the position of children with disabilities, further efforts are needed to improve their status (OECD, 2023).

Based on previously published scientific information and insights, the following section of this paper will provide an overview of existing research to better understand current preschool practices and the complexities of inclusive education. It is particularly important to consider the role of social workers in the inclusion process. Research by Milošević (2021), which included 50 social workers, showed that 72% believe that preschool institutions are not adequately prepared to support children with disabilities. Additionally, 65% of the surveyed social workers emphasized the need for greater collaboration between preschools and social services, while 80% identified the lack of personal assistants as the main challenge in inclusive practice. Financial difficulties and a shortage of specialized personnel further complicate the inclusion process.

By reviewing various studies, this paper will highlight the importance of a multidisciplinary approach and continuous professional development for early childhood educators to ensure effective social inclusion. Educators play a key role in working with children with disabilities, and their attitudes are crucial for the quality of the inclusion process (Kundek Mirošević & Jurčević Lozančić, 2014). A study by Nikolić, Vantić-Tanjić & Mešalić (2006), involving 35 educators, found that they generally hold positive attitudes toward the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream preschools. Their attitudes did not significantly differ based on age, education level, or work experience. A large percentage (80%) believed that regular preschool institutions should be adapted to accommodate children with disabilities and that specialized support teams are necessary (74.28%). Similarly, Stančić and Stanisavljević Petrović (2013) conducted a study with 135 educators, of whom 57.8% (78 participants) expressed positive views on inclusion as a means of ensuring the rights of children with disabilities to education. The authors emphasized that most respondents believed successful inclusion requires appropriate organizational conditions and support from expert services. According to Miloš and Vrbic (2015), out of 53 educators surveyed, the majority (89%) had a positive attitude toward the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular preschool groups. This research highlights the importance of professional development for educators in improving inclusive practices and underscores the need for expert team support.

A study by Ćorluka (2017), which included 150 educators, reported that they had neutral to moderately positive attitudes toward the inclusion of preschool children with disabilities in regular preschool groups.

Based on these studies, it can be concluded that educators generally have a positive attitude toward inclusion, but targeted interventions are needed to improve the inclusion of preschool children with disabilities in mainstream preschool settings. Research findings also suggest that inclusion is not at a satisfactory level according to educators' assessments, indicating the need for further development of inclusive practices and stronger support for preschool education. From an ecological systems theory perspective, a child's environment consists of a complex system of interrelated levels that influence their development. Preschool institutions

belong to the microsystem, the immediate environment in which children socialize directly. However, the mesosystem, which includes interactions between families and preschools, is also crucial for inclusion. Effective collaboration among parents, educators, and expert associates leads to more successful inclusion. Conversely, the exosystem and macrosystem influence educational policies, societal attitudes, and legal regulations related to inclusive education (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parents bear the greatest responsibility in raising children. The family provides the initial foundation for a child's upbringing, which is later expanded through various educational institutions. Children with disabilities require parental support for a much longer period than their peers.

Research by Bihorac (2020), which included 55 parents of children with disabilities, found that 83.6% (46 parents) reported encountering daily obstacles that act as barriers to their children's everyday functioning. The same percentage of parents stated that the lack of government and institutional support further complicates their daily lives. Additionally, 92.7% (51 parents) reported being unable to afford specialized therapeutic services essential for their child's development. Empowerment theory provides additional insight into the importance of supporting families of children with disabilities. This theory emphasizes strengthening the capacities of parents, educators, and institutions to enhance inclusive practices (Saleebey, 1996). A study by the Institution of the Ombudsman for Human Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2010) found that inadequate treatment of children with disabilities begins at birth and that parents often lack knowledge about their legal rights and available services. Many parents emphasized that early intervention, which is often absent, is essential for improving the child's functionality and increasing their inclusion in educational institutions. This highlights the need for greater education and systematic empowerment of parents through counseling services and professional teams. These findings align with research by Repalust (2017), which included 20 parents of children with disabilities. Most parents emphasized the need for more specialized treatment options, better-trained assistants, and easier integration into regular preschool groups. Research conducted by Gojnik (2023), which surveyed 133 parents and educators, found that 54.9% (73 respondents)

believe that assistants must be highly competent to provide quality and effective support for inclusive education. Inclusion can also be examined through empowerment theory, which stresses the importance of strengthening parents' and educators' capacities to support children with disabilities. Studies indicate that parents often lack sufficient information about their rights, highlighting the need for education and institutional support through counseling centers and expert teams. Strengthening both parents and educators can directly contribute to more effective inclusion, reduced prejudices, and improved educational services for children with disabilities. While there are varying opinions among preschool educators regarding children with disabilities and their inclusion, research suggests that their overall attitude toward inclusion is positive. However, many enter this complex field unprepared and insufficiently trained, despite the fact that inclusion demands more than just empathy and goodwill.

Theoretical frameworks help us understand the challenges these children face while also identifying potential solutions. The role of preschools, parents, educators, and social workers is crucial in creating an inclusive environment that enables every child, regardless of disability, to reach their full potential. Studies show that inclusion in preschool settings significantly contributes to better social integration of children with disabilities later in life, this underscores the need for comprehensive and systemic solutions to support their successful inclusion in preschool education and beyond.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Preschool education serves as the first stage of upbringing and education and represents the foundation for a child's holistic development. To ensure the success of inclusion, the following guidelines for improving practices in preschool institutions are provided.

Based on a detailed analysis of previous research on the social inclusion of preschool children with disabilities, the following recommendations can be made:

- Improve initial education and lifelong learning for educators and professional associates in the field of early identification and intervention for developmental difficulties and deviations in children (regular training

for educators and professional associates working with children with disabilities).

- Ensure additional capacities within preschool institutions for providing professional support in identifying and intervening early for children with developmental difficulties (e.g., sensory-motor rooms).

- Adapt preschool institutions to accommodate children with disabilities (provide appropriate didactic resources, materials, and aids, and remove all architectural barriers within institutions).

- Establish a package of services tailored to children with disabilities (conduct pedagogical observation and create an individualized developmental and educational program).

- Expand preschool education programs to rural areas, ensuring the inclusion of children with disabilities (e.g., mobile teams, implementation schedules, etc.).

- Ensure the presence of specialized staff in preschool institutions to work with children (speech therapists, special education teachers, rehabilitation specialists, psychologists, social workers, physiotherapists).

- Develop a support system for parents (enable education and psychosocial assistance through the establishment of counseling centers or parent associations to provide early-stage professional support, guidance, and instructions for inclusion).

- Foster strong collaboration between parents and preschool institutions, particularly with educators and professional associates, to ensure the child's developmental progress.

- Establish a more organized early intervention system (ensure more financially accessible services and improve cooperation among different professionals).

- Guarantee a personal assistant for every child with a disability (if the personal assistant lacks prior experience working with children with disabilities, it would be advisable for them to undergo specialized training).

Based on a comprehensive analysis of prior research, necessary targeted interventions have been proposed to enhance the social inclusion

of preschool children with disabilities. Improving inclusive education requires strengthening the role of social workers, who are often the first line of support for families of children with disabilities. Inclusive education necessitates a comprehensive approach that includes support for children, parents, and educators. From the perspective of the theory of social justice (Rawls, 1971), inclusive education is not only a pedagogical issue but also a matter of social equity. A just society is measured by its ability to provide equal opportunities for all its members, including children with disabilities. Therefore, the proposed recommendations should not be viewed merely as technical adjustments within preschool institutions but as part of a broader strategy for social inclusion, which entails changing awareness, policies, and approaches to education. Cerić (2008) emphasizes that further theoretical conceptualization of inclusive education is only possible through a multidisciplinary approach. This means that social workers, educators, and psychologists must work together to ensure the comprehensive inclusion of children in preschool institutions. In conclusion, social inclusion and support for preschool children with disabilities represent a crucial step toward building a fairer society—one that creates an accessible and supportive environment for every child, regardless of their abilities.

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