Shaping an inclusive environment in an EFL classroom

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Master's Thesis

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Abstract

Every child should have an equal opportunity for success. Inclusive education is therefore the main goal of the contemporary education system. When we aim for inclusion, we aim for a change in the education system. This means that the child is not supposed to be made to fit in; the change is supposed to happen to the system. Previous research that dealt with inclusion in Croatia focused on attitudes and beliefs of teachers, however, there had not been enough research done on how the inclusive practice looks like in EFL classrooms. Based on that, the aim of this research was to examine inclusive practice in Croatian EFL classrooms. To collect the data an online questionnaire was used. Ninety-eight Croatian EFL teachers participated in this research study. Sixty-eight did not attend a course about inclusion or about students with disabilities during their higher education, and twenty-six did not attend any professional development programmes related to these topics. Teachers felt most prepared to teach students with specific learning difficulties. They believed that it was the hardest to provide inclusive EFL teaching to students with autism. The results showed that not enough experts from the field of educational rehabilitation were employed in Croatian schools. Although most teachers consulted with someone about students with disabilities, 54.1% claimed that the information they received was not enough. Since 40 teachers were not sure whether their practice was inclusive, the importance of professional development programmes which help teachers expand their knowledge and gain competencies to work with children with disabilities is undeniable. The three most frequently mentioned factors that presented problems with the inclusion of students with disabilities in an EFL classroom were time, giving attention to students and parents.

Key words: Croatian EFL teachers, inclusion in an EFL classroom, students with disabilities

1. INTRODUCTION

All children should have access to education as education is "both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights" (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1999, p. 1). If children with disabilities are excluded from education their opportunities to succeed later in life are threatened (Rioux, 2014; Bouillet, 2019). Today more than ever, diversity is in the center of attention as a feature of the modern world (Igrić, 2015a). Diversity is visible in classrooms around the world which involve students of different abilities, and Croatia is not an exception (Igrić, 2015a). Students who make up a school population not only have different abilities, but they also come from different cultures, they have different socioeconomic backgrounds, they have been exposed to different languages while growing up and they were brought up in different types of families (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). All these factors contribute to the aforementioned diversity.

Therefore, inclusive education is promoted to meet the individual needs of every child (Igrić, 2015c). Even though the idea of inclusive education is not something new, it is something that requires work and preparedness of teachers. Inclusive education is an approach that not only involves teachers, but also pupils, school staff, local community etc. However, since teachers' actions have a huge impact on their pupils, they are the focus of this research study. According to Karamatić-Brčić and Viljac (2018) teachers have a central role in achieving inclusion in schools. In other words, they have a significant role in implementing necessary changes to meet the individual needs of every child (Igrić, 2015a), and for that they need to be "well-trained" (Bouillet, 2013, p. 95). They are the ones who create "socially supportive learning environments" (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008, p.160) and an atmosphere that is friendly and warm (Dulčić & Bakota, 2008). They also create an environment which enables every student to have good academic and

social success (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008), and students with disabilities can feel successful (Zrilić, 2011) in such classrooms. In that kind of an environment, students with disabilities feel accepted, safe and respected (Zrilić, 2011). Successful inclusion depends on competent teachers who have positive attitudes towards inclusion (Skočić Mihić et al., 2016). Moreover, for the inclusive principle to be implemented teachers need to be ready to accept and teach students with disabilities (Ivančić & Stančić, 2010). On the other hand, incompetence of teachers hampers the development of quality inclusive education (Martan, 2018; Bouillet, 2019). Kudek Mirošević and Jurčević Lozančić (2014) report that Croatian teachers do not feel competent enough to work with children with disabilities. Similarly, in a research study by Bouillet et al. (2017) it is concluded that pre-service and in-service teachers in Croatia are not completely prepared to teach students with disabilities.

There are many studies dealing with inclusive education; some deal with general teacher preparation (e.g., Hay et al., 2001; Zagona et al., 2017), and some focus specifically on EFL teachers (e.g., Russak, 2016; Nijakowska et al., 2018). Beliefs and attitudes are the most researched topic related to inclusive education (De Boer et al., 2011, as cited in Žic Ralić et al., 2020). Bouillet (2013, p. 108) researched collaboration in inclusive education and found that teachers "would like to receive more concrete help in working with students with SEN[1], to get more information about students' SEN, and to have a greater degree of collaboration with their school counsellors". Although this research study did not focus on EFL teachers, it showed that teachers need support when working with children with disabilities and that they need professional support. There are also official guidelines (*Postupci prilagodbe i podrške u inkluzivnoj nastavi engleskog jezika* (2017) [*Adjustment and support in inclusive EFL teaching*, 2017]), published by the Education

[1] SEN = special educational needs. Different works use different terminology which covers different disabilities, difficulties or disadvantages. This distinction will be explained later in the paper.

and Teacher Training Agency, that should help EFL teachers with adjusting their teaching according to the type of disability of children in their classrooms. Nijakowska et al. (2018) explain that there is a small number of research studies that focus on EFL teachers' knowledge of inclusion and their inclusive practice in the classrooms. Therefore, the topic of this paper is quite relevant and important because it affects both pupils and teachers. Teachers without enough knowledge about students with disabilities are not competent enough to provide adequate support to students with disabilities and that affects how they perceive themselves (Russak, 2016).

This brief introduction points to a research gap. Croatian EFL teachers and their preparedness to work with children with disabilities in an inclusive environment has not been researched enough. Researching EFL teachers and how they work with children with disabilities is of significant importance because in an EFL classroom, just like in any other language classroom, a foreign language is both a means and a purpose of teaching. It is inevitable that teachers' attitudes play an important role and that they are a basis for inclusive practice in a classroom (Jurčević Lozančić & Kudek Mirošević, 2015). However, more attention needs to be given to the practice itself and the way an inclusive environment is shaped in the classrooms. Therefore, the main topic of this paper is the way Croatian EFL teachers shape and create an inclusive environment in their classrooms, what their inclusive practice looks like and whether they received any kind of education about inclusion before they started to work in a school. If they lack education about inclusion, which should serve them as a foundation in their teaching, then the question is where those in-service teachers get their support and knowledge from and how they provide support to students with disabilities. A lot is expected from teachers, but the question is whether they are able to respond to these expectations. This research study will therefore try to investigate this issue and provide answers to the previously mentioned questions. The answers will

be of benefit both to universities that educate Croatian EFL teachers and for those who provide additional support to those in-service teachers.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

When defining inclusive education according to Cerić (2004) it is necessary to mention UNESCO's World Conference on Education on Special Needs Education from 1994. During that Conference the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action were adopted (UNESCO, 1994). The Statement and the Framework "acknowledged the right of every child to be included in the education system regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, language or other condition" (Cerić, 2004, p. 1). Rioux (2014, p. 156) also identified the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action as a document which "has the clearest support to date recognizing inclusive education". However, a change in terminology does not equal changes in the practice (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011). Taking this into consideration it is necessary to establish the difference between integration and inclusion to provide support for how inclusion is understood in this paper.

Many authors agree that integration and inclusion are not synonyms. During the previously mentioned Conference it was decided that priority should be given to the term inclusion rather than integration (Karamatić-Brčić & Viljac, 2018). Inclusive education means creating an environment where every child will be respected, that is, we are not trying to fit the child into an existing system (integration) but adjust the system to the child (inclusion) (Igrić, 2015c; Miloš & Vrbić, 2015; Kranjčec Mlinarić et al., 2016; Bouillet, 2019; Ministry of science and education [MZO], 2021). Moreover, an individualized approach means that every student has a possibility to succeed (Zrilić, 2011). As Rioux (2014, p. 150) explains: "The responsibility of the school system is to develop and sustain a place of learning that enables every child to exercise her or his fundamental right to

education and learning." According to Booth et al. (2003, p. 1-2, as cited in Smith, 2008, p. 50) inclusion is "about reducing barriers to learning and participation for all learners. It is about reducing discrimination on the basis of gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity and family background".

For inclusive schools to become a reality, teachers have to be educated so that they have the necessary competencies. Claiming that an education system is inclusive is not enough if real changes in the system are not taking place. While explaining inclusive education in South Africa, Hay et al. (2001) put emphasis on the level of preparedness of teachers which has to be regulated so that it is possible to implement inclusive education. If our schools are to become inclusive, teachers need to be prepared for that. Consequently, when the schools become more inclusive and when they change, at the same time, the society changes as well (Livazović et al., 2015). In other words, "an inclusive society is built through inclusive schools" (MZO, 2017, p. 11).

2.2. EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

After establishing the difference between integration and inclusion, emphasis will be put on education of children with disabilities. This requires a lot of work but in the end it will result in inclusive classrooms. These classrooms are a result of adjusting the system to the child and not the other way around as already stated. However, a failure to ensure suitable education for children with disabilities is regularly reported by the Ombudsperson for Children in Croatia in the yearly reports (Bouillet, 2014; Igrić, 2015b) which points to a conclusion that real changes in the system are either slow or not taking place. In a research study by Nikčević-Milković et al. (2019) most of the teachers that formed the sample were not educated for working with children with disabilities during their higher education. This is quite important to point out because one of the reasons why children's rights are violated is teacher unpreparedness for working with children with disabilities

(the Ombudsperson for Children, 2022). The Ombudsperson for Children (2022) reported that the highest number of violations of the rights of children with disabilities happened in primary education. Even though the law promotes inclusion, teachers are not competent enough to adjust their teaching to the needs of children with disabilities and provide the necessary support (the Ombudsperson for Children, 2022). Bouillet (2014) also emphasized that teachers are not educated properly and that this results in their inability to shape an inclusive environment in their classrooms. Even though Bouillet (2014) focused on deinstitutionalization in her book, she proposed that a certain set of competencies should be developed during teacher education and that every teacher who works with children with disabilities would have to have this minimal set of pedagogical competencies acquired. Igrić (2015c) also pointed out that changes are not possible if the education of teachers does not change. This change can be achieved with professional development, lifelong education (Stančić et al., 2011; Kudek Mirošević & Jurčević Lozančić, 2014) and with reading the relevant literature (Zrilić, 2011).

When teachers have children with disabilities in their classrooms they cannot assume that all children with a certain disability share the same educational needs (Radetić-Paić, 2013; Igrić, 2015c; Sekušak-Galešev et al., 2015; Bouillet, 2019). Teachers should focus on strengths and not on weaknesses of children with disabilities (Sekušak-Galešev et al., 2015; Ajduković et al., 2017). Every child can succeed, but they need help in identifying their learning style, and teachers then need to adapt how they teach based on that (Stančić et al., 2006). Providing adequate support to students with disabilities results in their success (Ivančić, 2010). When making accommodations, for example for students with specific learning difficulties, teachers should keep in mind that those children are capable and that they should not lower their expectations for them (Kormos & Smith, 2012, as cited in Nijakowska, 2019). Teachers need to take a lot of factors into consideration while

teaching, from how they present the content to how they organize educational activities so they are able to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Ivančić, 2010). Moreover, every child should feel accepted in a classroom (Karamatić-Brčić & Viljac, 2018). In order to meet the needs of children with disabilities teachers need to make sure that their classrooms are stimulating and that no one is excluded (Ivančić & Stančić, 2013). On the other hand, Nijakowska (2019, p. 190) explained that foreign language teachers "claim they frequently find it challenging and troublesome to differentiate instruction, diversify and adjust teaching methods, tasks and modes of presentation or assessment".

2.3. LEGISLATION

Education of children with disabilities and their right to education is regulated by the law. Changes in Croatia started in 1980 when the Primary School Education Act was enacted (Igrić, 2015b). Up until then, children with disabilities were educated in special schools, whereas with this act it was possible for children with disabilities to be integrated in regular/mainstream schools (Igrić, 2015b; Žic Ralić et al., 2020).

It is important to clarify that in its Primary and Secondary School Education Act (Official Gazette, No. 87/08) Croatia adopted a tripartite system of special educational needs proposed by OECD (Robson, 2005). OECD moved from the term "special educational needs" because this term means different things in different countries (Robson, 2005). Furthermore, it is difficult to compare different countries and the number of students with special educational needs because definitions between countries are different (OECD, 1999). Instead, the terms disabilities, difficulties and disadvantages were adopted because they "broadly describe the students for whom countries make additional resources available so that they can access the curriculum more effectively" (Robson, 2005, p. 12). These three categories accepted by the participating member countries are:

- Students with disabilities or impairments viewed in medical terms as organic disorders attributable to organic pathologies (e.g. in relation to sensory, motor or neurological defects). The educational need is considered to arise primarily from problems attributable to these disabilities (cross-national category "A/Disabilities")
- Students with behavioural or emotional disorders, or specific difficulties in learning. The educational need is considered to arise primarily from problems in the interaction between the student and the educational context (cross-national category "B/Difficulties")
- Students with disadvantages arising primarily from socio-economic, cultural, and/or linguistic factors. The educational need is to compensate for the disadvantages attributable to these factors (cross-national category "C/Disadvantages"). (Robson, 2005, p. 3)

This tripartite division by OECD (2005) is visible in article 65 in the Primary and Secondary School Education Act (Official Gazette, No. 87/08; Sekušak-Galešev et al., 2015) where the division of students with disabilities[2] is as follows:

- students with developmental disabilities
- students with difficulties in learning and students with behavioural or emotional disorders
- students with disadvantages arising from educational, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic factors[3].

It is evident that Croatia adopted the OECD division and implemented it in its educational policy. However, when it comes to the education of these groups of students there are differences. While for the students with developmental disabilities an IEP[4] is made, it is not made for students with difficulties in learning and students with behavioural or emotional disorders and for students with

[2] The phrase 'students/pupils/children with disabilities' in this paper covers all three categories: developmental disabilities, difficulties and disadvantages.
[3] This is not the official translation. Translation by the author of this paper based on the OECD classification.
[4] IEP = Individual Education Plan

disadvantages arising from educational, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic factors (MZO, 2021). An IEP is not made for them because they do not have a legal order that regulates they need an adjusted programme or curriculum.

The Regulation on Primary and Secondary Education of Students with Developmental Difficulties (Official Gazette, No. 24/2015) was adopted in 2015. This regulation only covers the first category of students with disabilities, that is, students with developmental disabilities. This regulation is the most comprehensive official regulation that deals with children with disabilities. An orientation list that enumerates disabilities is an integral part of this Regulation. The disabilities are grouped as follows:

1. vision impairments
2. hearing impairments
3. speech and language impairments and specific learning difficulties
4. organ system impairments
5. intellectual impairments
6. behaviour disorders and mental disorders
7. existence of different impairments in the psychophysical development[5] (Official Gazette, No. 24/2015).

When it comes to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, which is the most important legal act in the country, in article 1, Croatia decided to follow the social justice principle. This means that all children including children with disabilities have a right to a decent life (Official Gazette, No. 05/14). In article 58 it is stated that special care will be devoted "to the protection of persons with disabilities and their inclusion in social life" (Official Gazette, No. 05/14).

[5] This is not the official translation. Translation by the author of this paper.

Croatia also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. Although Rioux (2014) claims that when interpreting the Convention it is not obvious how it includes children with disabilities, in Article 2 disability is mentioned as a possible source of discrimination. Furthermore, in Article 23 the right of a mentally or physically disabled child to lead a decent life is also recognized, as well as their right to special care (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; Bouillet, 2019). Therefore, the signing of the Convention obliged Croatia to make sure that children with disabilities are protected – their disability, social origin or any other status should not be a basis for discrimination (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). In 2007, Croatia also ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Croatia was one of the first countries to ratify this Convention (Bouillet, 2014). In March 2007 the Convention was opened for signature, and it was ratified by Croatia in June 2007. The signing of the Convention obliged Croatia to make sure that children with disabilities have equal rights as children without disabilities (Bouillet, 2014). Signing of this Convention obliged Croatia to make sure that children with disabilities are not excluded from the educational system and that they have access to primary and secondary education, reasonable accommodation should also be provided to children with disabilities, and lastly help and individualized support should be provided to facilitate their education (MZO, 2021).

This is visible in the National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2021 – 2027 (Official Gazette, No. 143/2021). In the Strategy it is stated that the education of children with disabilities will be improved together with the education of teachers whose professional training has to enable them to plan IEPs. Inclusive education is one of the priorities in that document.

The last document that will be mentioned is the National Framework Curriculum (Ministry of science, education and sports of Croatia, 2011) which is in line with the principles of social constructivism. It proposes an individual approach to a student, working in pairs and in groups, discovery learning etc. However, it seems that our education system is still characterized by a traditional approach to teaching where diversity of students is not taken into account (Igrić, 2015a).

2.4. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

2.4.1. SHAPING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

According to Zagona et al. (2017) not a lot of research studies have focused on the preparedness of teachers to teach pupils with disabilities. As it has already been identified in the introduction of this paper, they also state: "There is a need to investigate educators' preparedness for inclusive education, including their skills and knowledge, rather than solely exploring their beliefs and dispositions because educators' knowledge of inclusive education may differ from their beliefs" (Pajares, 1992, as cited in Zagona et al., 2017, p. 164). Skills and knowledge of Croatian EFL teachers to shape an inclusive environment in their classrooms is of my interest because a lot of research has focused on teacher beliefs. Investigating inclusive practice will show how the inclusive principle is implemented in the classrooms rather than investigating what teachers think about inclusion. Zagona et al. (2017, p. 174) also claim, based on other research, that investigating that issue ("modifications and accommodations") is necessary and that there is a

> need to better understand how to meet individual students' needs in inclusive classroom (Dymond, Renzaglia, Gilson, & Slagor, 2007; Morningstar, Shogren, Lee, & Born, 2015; Ryndak et al., 2013); therefore, future research should address the strategies educators use to individualize instruction and adapt learning standards for students with significant disabilities.

In Croatia, a diploma to become an EFL teacher can be obtained at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and at the Faculty of Teacher Education, but the number of mandatory courses that enable students to gain competencies needed to teach students with disabilities is small (Fišer, 2019). This means that higher education institutions do not have adequate programmes to prepare future teachers (Fišer, 2018). Based on other research, Fišer (2019) concluded that teachers in Croatia in general together with EFL teachers are not equipped to attend to the needs of students with disabilities. Based on the research that involved students at the Faculty of Teacher Education, Bouillet and Bukvić (2015) concluded that programmes for educating future teachers could be improved. In other European countries as well, students with disabilities are not taught by qualified teachers (Kormos, Csizer & Sarkadi, 2009; Nijakowska, 2010, 2014; Nijakowskwa et al., 2011; Rontou, 2012, as cited in Russak, 2016).

2.4.2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ABOUT INCLUSION IN EFL CLASSROOMS

It was already stated that previous research dealt mostly with "the attitudes of teachers towards students with disabilities, attitudes toward inclusion and willingness and readiness to work in inclusive conditions" (De Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2011, as cited in Žic Ralić et al., 2020, p. 107). Even the way teachers perceive the quality of inclusion has not been researched very much (Žic Ralić et al., 2020). Therefore, only a few studies will be presented here because, as previously explained, teacher attitudes are not of primary interest in this research study. The main focus of this paper is inclusive practice in the teaching of Croatian EFL teachers.

Russak (2016, p. 1188) reported that even in the Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe "any mention of language learners with SEN or attention to teacher training in order to meet the needs of these pupils is conspicuously absent". Russak (2016, p. 1193) researched "the implementation of inclusion laws and language learning policy for pupils with SEN in Israel,

as well as teacher attitudes to inclusion and differences between teachers with and without training in special education through teacher practice". In Israel, just like in Croatia, there is no official inclusion law that regulates the teaching of a specific subject, in this case of English, and curriculums of both countries do not regulate the teaching of students with disabilities (Russak, 2016). In her paper she enumerated different testing and classroom accommodation types in an EFL classroom mentioned by teachers.

Savić and Prošić-Santovac's (2017) research dealt with English language teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. In this study, 84 out of 96 English teachers had negative attitudes towards inclusive education. Their negative attitudes were not related to the disabilities of children but to their own competencies and working conditions. However, this research study, as well as the previous one, was not conducted in Croatia.

As part of her master's thesis at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Split, Valenta (2018) did a case study on how children with developmental disabilities learned English, what methods two English teachers used in teaching two students with developmental disabilities and the difficulties they faced while teaching them. Valenta (2018) also explained accommodations made for students with vision impairments, hearing impairments, speech and language impairments, and specific learning difficulties, organ system impairments, intellectual impairments, behavior disorders and mental disorders, and for those with different impairments in the psychophysical development. Two English teachers that were participants in her study did not attend courses at their universities that focused on children with disabilities. One teacher adapted both the content she was teaching and her methodological approach – she also pointed out that it was not possible to plan out every single aspect of teaching because a lot of it was done on the spot. Both teachers believed that universities were not doing enough in educating future teachers,

that lifelong education was not developed, and that the other problem was the lack of material needed for working with children with disabilities. This paper is valuable because it focused on the practice in the classrooms, and it provided insight into how two EFL teachers teach two students with developmental disabilities. These two teachers were aware that every child is unique. Furthermore, they were aware of students' capacities, and they knew how to build on students' strong suits. Their experience, the atmosphere in the school, and their motivation to work with students with disabilities all led to inclusive teaching in their classrooms.

Karamatić-Brčić and Viljac (2018) conducted a research study on teacher attitudes about implementing inclusive education, and English teachers also took part in it. Participants thought that they needed additional education to be successful in implementing the inclusive principle. Out of the 97 participants, 60 believed they needed additional competencies to be able to work with children with disabilities (Karamatić-Brčić & Viljac, 2018). Teachers in their study recognized their key role in inclusion. Moreover, based on their results the authors concluded that participants in this sample were ready for additional education and lifelong learning so they can successfully implement the inclusive principle.

Benko and Martinović (2021) focused on EFL classes, however, they focused on the attitudes of English language teachers, on the attitudes of pupils with disabilities, and lastly on the attitudes of pupils without disabilities towards special education inclusion. This study was recently published, and the authors reported that not enough studies had been conducted in Croatia that deal with the inclusion of SEN students in EFL learning. EFL teachers agreed that further education was needed. It is encouraging that 60% of students with intellectual difficulties looked forward to learning English (the sample included 25 students with intellectual difficulties). This study is interesting because it compared the teachers' perception with the perception of students with

intellectual disabilities together with the perception of students without disabilities. This study showed that language teachers of students with SEN needed additional education, and that the ability of students with SEN to successfully follow the EFL programme needed to be reviewed.

2.5. PRECONDITIONS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

All the previously mentioned documents in the *Legislation* section are the basis for shaping an inclusive environment in schools. However, these documents need to be implemented by schools and the people who run them, but it is not certain whether schools are able to implement them (Bouillet, 2013). Despite the progress in legal acts there are difficulties in practice which make it harder to implement all the changes (Ivančić & Stančić, 2013; Kudek Mirošević & Jurčević Lozančić, 2014). Even though legal regulations are adequate "the process of providing all learners with equal educational opportunities is still considered a challenge" (Žic Ralić et al., 2020, p. 106).

In Croatia, a school board governs a school, and a school principal is a managing director and the head of the school (Official Gazette, 87/08). Inclusive education of every school depends on the principal (MZO, 2021). Ainscow et al. (2013) presented different research studies which prove that principals played a key role in implementing the idea of inclusion. They concluded that school leaders have to work with their colleagues to promote inclusive culture in their schools (Ainscow et al., 2013). Furthermore, the principal, as the head of the school, "needs to understand the inclusion policy and be familiar with both the country's legislation and international legislation which regulates the rights of children with disabilities" (Igrić, 2015d, p. 125). On the other hand, principals are not alone in doing this, there are other experts in Croatian schools, such as pedagogues, educational rehabilitators and psychologists, who help them in ensuring an inclusive environment (Igrić, 2015d). They all work together to create preconditions that will open possibilities for teachers to work on inclusivity in their classrooms. However, not all Croatian

schools have enough experts who could help teachers. Support from other experts, together with organizational and material support, is crucial for inclusion to be successful (Nikčević-Milković et al., 2019). Igrić (2015b) gave an example of an educational rehabilitator who had a key role in shaping the inclusive environment in one school in Zagreb. This example reinforces the idea that teachers need support. Given the number of students with disabilities, which in the school year 2021/2022 equaled 30533 (MZO, n. d.), experts working in a school have a crucial role in providing support to teachers in implementing the inclusive principle. However, the following figure shows that teachers lack the necessary support. An expert, who is either a social pedagogue, a speech therapist or an educational rehabilitator, was employed in only 50,6%[6] of primary schools, that is, in 434 schools (Švegar et al, 2020).

[6] The percentage is based on the data from 880 primary schools.

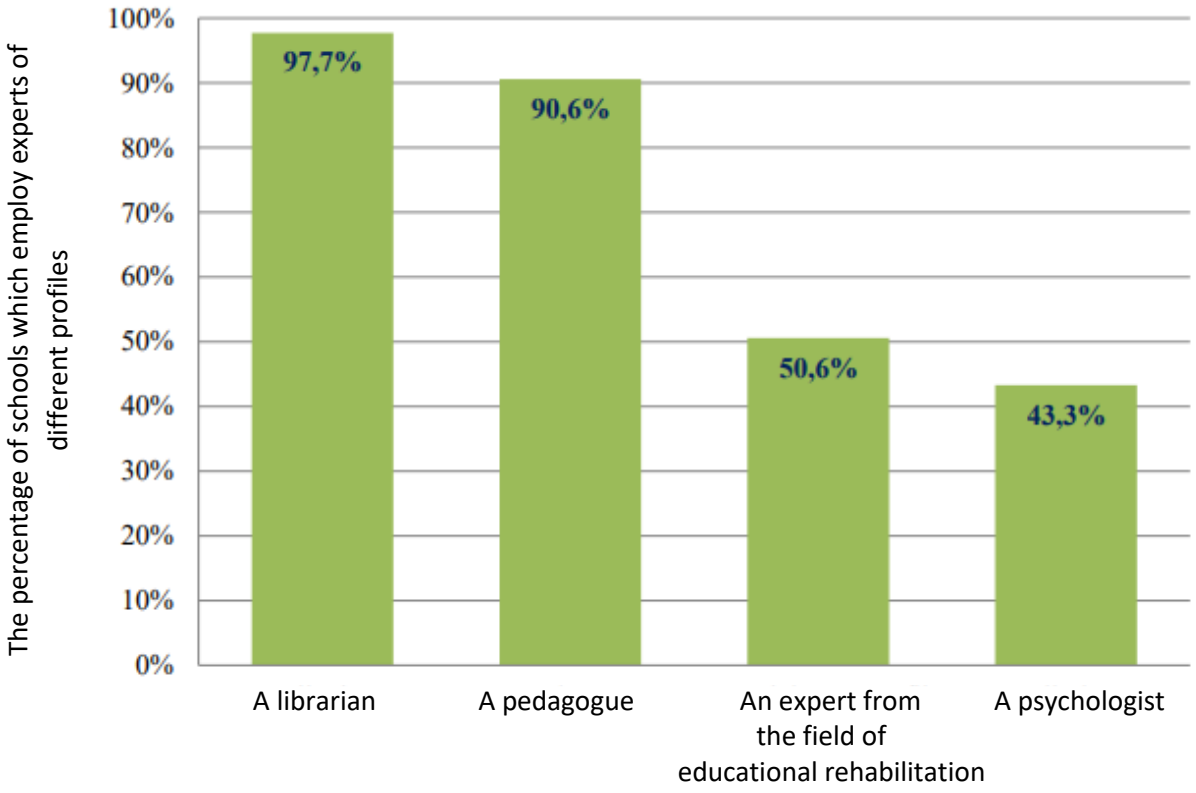

Figure 1 The percentage of primary schools which employ a librarian, a pedagogue, an expert from the field of educational rehabilitation and a psychologist (Švegar et al., 2020)

Based on the collected data, Švegar et al. (2020) proved that there were not enough psychologists, speech therapists, educational rehabilitators and social pedagogues employed in primary education. The lack of support can have negative consequences both on teachers and children with disabilities because even though teachers have a key role in implementing the inclusive principle they rely on the support of other experts in the school team. It can be concluded that besides attitudes, motivation, necessary skills and knowledge, teachers, as key figures in shaping the inclusive environment, need the support from their colleagues within the school and the support that is coming from the environment (Batarelo Kokić et al., 2009).

An inclusive environment in a classroom is created by an individual teacher, and in that process he or she relies on their own knowledge and skills (Igrić, 2015d) and, as already stated, on the support of the principal and other experts in the school and parents (Karamatić-Brčić & Viljac,

2018). Therefore, it is inevitable that teachers need to be prepared for shaping an inclusive environment (Igrić, 2015b). Croatian primary and high school teachers who took part in TALIS 2018, which is the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey, reported that they needed professional training in teaching students with special needs[7] (Markočić Dekanić et al., 2019). The need for professional training in teaching students with disabilities was also reported in TALIS 2013 (Braš Roth et al., 2014). It is necessary to ensure that teachers can take part in this kind of professional training so they can make sure that they are adequately prepared to provide the necessary support for students with disabilities. Russak (2016, p. 1196) claims that language teachers need to have training in special education "to adhere to the requirements of inclusion laws". It is important to note that an individual teacher will be more successful if all staff members work together (Karamatić-Brčić & Viljac, 2018). Interdisciplinarity is an important aspect of this cooperation (MZO, 2021).

2.6. PREPAREDNESS OF TEACHERS

Besides cooperating with members of the school team teachers need to be prepared to shape an inclusive environment in their classrooms. This can present a challenge because every classroom and every student are different. Each student is a unique individual – he or she has different needs and different abilities. This is a challenge for a teacher who has to work with up to 26 students when one student with disabilities is included in a regular classroom (Official Gazette, No. 124/2009). However, in Croatian schools, teachers work with more than 26 students even though the number of students should decrease depending on the number of children with disabilities in a regular classroom – one regular classroom can have a maximum of 3 students with

[7] In the report, authors used the term '*posebne potrebe*' (special needs). Students with special needs are those for whom a special learning need has been formally identified because they are mentally, physically, or emotionally disadvantaged" (OECD, 2021, p. 3).

disabilities and in that case the class can have up to 20 students (Official Gazette, No. 124/2009). This is also not the case in the classrooms where the number of pupils with disabilities can be higher.

Teachers who teach children with disabilities are faced with a challenge because disabilities can present 'obstacles' (Ivančić & Stančić, 2015) as teachers may need to change the way they teach to meet the needs of every child. A teacher of a certain subject should know how to use the strengths of a student with disabilities with the intention of developing the necessary competencies in that subject and helping students realize their full potential (Radetić-Paić, 2013). Ivančić and Stančić (2010) also emphasized the teacher's role in realizing the potential of students with disabilities. However, as mentioned before a teacher needs help from other experts and even parents (Karamatić Brčić, 2013). Ivančić and Stančić (2010) identified three aspects of support for teachers: organizational, material and professional support.

Nijakowska et al. (2018) found that EFL teachers did not have the skills and knowledge they needed to adapt their teaching to suit the needs of dyslexic learners. Dyslexia is mentioned here because it was the focus of their paper. However, educating teachers about working with children with different disabilities will help teachers to shape an inclusive environment and students to succeed. Unfortunately, teachers are not educated enough (e.g., Bouillet & Bukvić, 2015). Stančić et al. (2011) emphasized insufficient education of teachers as one of the main impediments in inclusive education in Croatia. An education institution for adults IDEM offers a programme for inclusive education which lasts 80 hours (Učilište za obrazovanje odraslih – IDEM, n.d.). However, from the information available on their website it seems that teachers or principals need to contact the institution and that the workshop is then organized on demand. Russak (2016, p. 1197) explained why educating teachers is important:

A teacher who does not have appropriate training in teaching EFL to pupils with SEN might think that by decreasing the workload, she is creating opportunities for these pupils to participate as best they can, when in actuality, her actions are often perceived by the pupils as being exclusionary, telling them that they are not good enough to participate like the rest of the class.

Igrić (2015a, p. 76) explained that "teachers should be aware of characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of every child and they should focus their education on the individual needs of each pupil". This, of course, is not an easy task. Even though Radetić-Paić (2013) focused on children with developmental disabilities, her recommendation for further education of teachers, based on the disability of the pupils they will have in their classroom, could be applied to all teachers who have children with disabilities in their classrooms. Children with the same disabilities do not necessarily share the same needs but learning more about their disability could help teachers make their classrooms more inclusive. Preparation and education of teachers lead to positive changes in accepting children with developmental disabilities (Žic, 2002, as cited in Radetić-Paić, 2013). Teachers who are educated and trained properly can more easily recognize students with disabilities and provide the necessary support (OECD, 2021). In Russak's (2016, p. 1198) study English teachers had positive comments about inclusion when they "felt competent at meeting the needs of the pupils with SEN, or when meeting the needs of the pupil with SEN was perceived by the teacher to enhance the learning experience of the whole class". Negative comments about inclusion had to do with feeling inadequate, the lack of training and knowledge and inadequate support (Russak, 2016).

Other factors that hinder inclusive education are inadequate material conditions and the lack of support (Stančić et al., 2011). In a research study by Kranjčec Mlinarić et al. (2016) the

teachers themselves pointed to the need for specific knowledge which they need in order to provide quality education for children with disabilities. Žic Ralić et al. (2020, p. 107) enumerated several research studies (e.g., Kranjčec Mlinarić et al., 2016; Martan, 2018[8]) to support the claim

> that Croatian teachers have a generally positive attitude towards inclusion, they are ready to accept students with disabilities, they have a tolerant approach and respect children's rights, and they understand the positive effect of inclusion on the social development of students with disabilities, but also on other students.

On the other hand, teachers, in this case teachers of history, who had positive attitudes towards integration[9] had unfavourable attitudes towards work conditions and implementation of integration (Dulčić & Bakota, 2008).

When it comes to the EFL classroom the main issues related to teaching students with SEN[10] are: "the lack of teacher training and knowledge to work with those students, teachers' attitudes, as well as inadequate curriculums and teaching methods that neglect students' abilities" (Bishaw & Javaprada, 2012, as cited in Benko & Martinović, 2021, p. 112).

2.7. ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Classrooms should be an encouraging place where every student feels supported and comfortable (MZO, 2021). In a such environment, differences are not a basis for discrimination, strengths and weaknesses of every student are respected and learning from your mistakes is welcome (MZO, 2021). The teacher is responsible for shaping this environment (MZO, 2021). Although the *Guidelines for working with students with disabilities* (2021) do not provide

[8] Martan's article offers an overview of Croatian scientific papers dealing with opinions, attitudes and competencies of primary and high school teachers about inclusion.
[9] The term integration was used in this article so it is used here as well.
[10] In the research study by Benko and Martinović (2021), the term SEN covers pupils with intellectual difficulties.

accommodations for the English classroom, general guidelines for teaching are given that can be helpful for English teachers as well. MZO (2021) emphasizes using a multimodal approach and helping students organize information. Support strategies (what to do during teaching, during reading aloud, when the reading skill is weak) are also explained together with explanations on how to give instructions. Moreover, advice on how to individualize and adjust teaching is given. This advice refers to adjustments related to content, time, including students in the learning process, evaluation, adjusting the space and materials. Despite the fact that comprehensive advice is included, it is highlighted that not everything is enumerated in the document.

Radetić-Paić's (2013) handbook focuses on students with developmental disabilities. Characteristics of children with developmental disabilities are explained. Tips in the handbook are general and could be applied to different subjects. This handbook is useful because it offers insight into developmental disabilities, and it offers advice on how to work with these pupils. This advice can then be incorporated in EFL classrooms. In a handbook by Livazović et al. (2015) an example on how to teach an inclusive lesson is given. Although it is not an English lesson it is explained in detail how to realize an inclusive lesson. In addition, some guidelines on working in an inclusive classroom are also provided. Russak (2016, p. 1196-1197) groups the accommodations for students with SEN who study English in three categories: "aids to help bypass difficulties with reading and writing (assistive technology and extra time); modifications of the class materials (reduced or easier tasks); and generalized personal attention". Assistive technology can pose a problem because of technical or other difficulties, modifying class material can have both positive and negative outcomes and personal attention is most useful when it focuses on language itself (Russak, 2016).

When writing about accommodations for children with disabilities most Croatian authors focus on developmental disabilities. On the other hand, Bouillet (2019) covers developmental disabilities and in addition the other two categories as well, that is, students with difficulties in learning and students with behavioural or emotional disorders and students with disadvantages arising from educational, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic factors. Bouillet (2019) also offers general guidelines on how to provide support for children with disabilities. Moreover, she dedicates space to every disability and to advice that is useful for teachers who can use it to adapt their teaching for children with disabilities. This book is a good starting point for teachers because it provides insight into every disability, and Bouillet (2019) gives practical advice from which both teachers and pupils can benefit. In the category of students with disadvantages, Bouillet (2019) mentions migrants who are students with disadvantages. In the light of current events, this category of students requires support not only in Croatia but in other countries as well. The Education and Teacher Training Agency reacted promptly and published Guidelines, instructions, recommendations and proposals for activities for teachers and other experts in primary schools and high schools for inclusion of a vulnerable group of student refugees. Furthermore, Bouillet (2019) puts emphasis on minority students, that is, Roma students, who, more often than not, are not able to exercise their full right to education.

Questionnaire for EFL teachers by Benko and Martinović (2021) had different questions that involved different accommodations for students with intellectual difficulties: coming up with different tasks and activities, encouraging students with intellectual difficulties to address the teacher if needed, motivating students with intellectual difficulties to participate, presenting new material in an appropriate way to facilitate understanding, giving the best possible explanation if needed, helping students with intellectual difficulties, motivating other students without

disabilities to help, working with parents of students with intellectual disabilities, and advocating inclusion in the classroom. Strategies that an English teacher can use when planning a lesson to teach students with SEN include using methods and materials suitable for these children, planning extra working time, adapting the curriculum, and devising an IEP (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education & EURYDICE, 2008, as cited in Padurean, 2014). Moreover, repeating things is necessary, and correcting mistakes all the time can be counterproductive (Padurean, 2014). It would also be useful if the teacher familiarized himself or herself with the learning style of children with SEN in their classrooms (Padurean, 2014).

To my knowledge, the most comprehensive guide for Croatian EFL teachers on how to make their teaching more inclusive is *Postupci prilagodbe i podrške u inkluzivnoj nastavi engleskog jezika* (2017). This guide provides information on how the authors adapt their teaching of English, and it contains examples that EFL teachers can use as a basis to create their own materials. The focus was on children with developmental disabilities, however, minority children, that is, children with disadvantages were partially covered. This guide is the most specific and concrete because it involves suggestions and techniques that could be used in teaching with pictures, such as Colour Coding, Language Through Colour etc. (Ajduković et al., 2017). Useful links are also provided. There is some advice for teachers and their actions and the adjustment of the classroom. Furthermore, advice for adjusting written exams is also given and it can be seen in Figure 2 below.

ASSIGNMENT	A REGULAR PROGRAMME	A REGULAR PROGRAMME WITH INDIVIDUALIZATION / A REGULAR PROGRAMME WITH ADJUSTMENT OF CONTENT AND INDIVIDUALIZATION
1.	**Write three animals for each category.** Pets: Farm animals: Wild animals:	**Put these animals in the correct group.** **a dog a hare a cat a cow a tiger a pig** Pets: Farm animals: Wild animals:
2.	**Circle the correct answer.** A monkey A parrot likes bananas. A hare	**Look at the picture and circle the correct answer.**  A monkey A parrot likes bananas. A hare

Figure 2 Exam adjustments (Ajduković et al., 2017, p. 25)

The previously mentioned guide is the most comprehensive one because it deals with different developmental disabilities. However, there is one specific learning difficulty which has been researched in the context of EFL classrooms in Croatia. Kałdonek-Crnjaković and Fišer are two authors, who besides publishing research articles about dyslexia, published a book *Dyslexia in teaching English as a foreign language* (2021). Apart from offering general guidelines on how to adapt the teaching of English for students with dyslexia, authors also focus on four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, and how to teach these skills to students with dyslexia. They also deal with teaching grammar and vocabulary to children with dyslexia. EFL teachers can also find lesson plans in this book which can serve them as guidance in planning lessons for students with dyslexia.

A few other resources that are not specifically targeted for EFL teachers but could be of help are: *Okvir za poticanje i prilagodbu iskustva učenja te vrednovanje postignuća djece i učenika*

s teškoćama (2017) *(Framework for fostering and adapting the learning experience and the assessment of children and students with disabilities*, 2017*), Handbook for working with students with developmental disabilities in high schools* (Velki & Romstein, 2018), *Students with disabilities in regular school system* (Krampač – Grljušić, 2017), and *By accepting together: integration of children with special needs* (Kiš – Glavaš & Fulgosi – Masnjak, 2003). Even though Krampač-Grljušić's (2017) handbook is written for primary school teachers from grade 1 to grade 4, it offers answers to questions that may seem straightforward but can be confusing for teachers. It also offers 25 IEPs and despite English not being covered as a subject, these IEPs are quite detailed and can serve as a base for English IEPs. On the other hand, Kiš Glavaš's and Fulgosi-Masnjak's (2003) handbook is a bit older, however, it covers 10 different topics, and not only does it offer theoretical insight into those topics, but it also offers ideas for activities that teachers can use. While the two previously mentioned handbooks focus on primary school children, Velki's and Romstein's (2018) handbook offers guidelines for high school teachers who have children with disabilities in their classroom. Teachers can find advice on how to adapt their teaching in the Framework (2017) as well. They can also familiarize themselves with what each member of the school team is responsible for when working with children with disabilities.

To sum up, there is no recipe book on how to achieve inclusion in a classroom. Different sources listed here prove that point. However, teachers need to be prepared so they know what to do and how to adapt their teaching if necessary because having children with the same type of disability, as already stated, does not mean that they have the same needs. Teaching a foreign language can be challenging, but if EFL teachers are focused on the success of every child, and they see teaching as a process and not something prescribed, then they are working towards achieving inclusion in their classrooms.

3. THE STUDY

3.1. AIM

The aim of this paper was to examine what inclusive practice in EFL classrooms in Croatia looks like. This research study looked into whether teachers had enough support in the schools they work in, whether they were educated about children with disabilities during their higher education, and whether they had attended professional development programmes. We inquired into their experience with different disabilities and the challenges they faced in the inclusion of students with disabilities.

3.2. METHODOLOGY

The design of this research study was descriptive because the phenomenon of inclusion and inclusive classroom was examined in practice. In terms of the research type, this was a qualitative study that involved interpretation of open-ended questions.

Since not a lot of research had been done in this area, in order to collect the data to lay the groundwork for future research, a questionnaire constructed by the author of this paper was used. By using a questionnaire it was possible to collect more data from more participants, and it provided a more comprehensive overview on different topics related to inclusion. The online questionnaire was available for almost two weeks. The link to the questionnaire was posted in different Croatian EFL teachers' Facebook groups. A potential obstacle was that not all Croatian EFL teachers have Facebook or that those who see it on Facebook will not want to participate. To avoid this and to get to participants that do not have Facebook, e-mails were sent out to schools, and they were asked to forward the questionnaire to their EFL teachers. However, the response

rate from the persons who received the e-mail with the request to forward it to their EFL teachers was small.

The questionnaire was in Croatian because this research study was not looking into the teachers' language knowledge. The questionnaire was piloted on four Croatian EFL teachers and minor changes were made based on their feedback.

Since this research study was done with teachers and not pupils with disabilities there were no potential ethical issues. Teachers were not asked to provide specific information about pupils in their classrooms. There was a possible benefit of teachers participating in this study because it might have motivated them to focus more on inclusive practice and to do some research to expand their knowledge.

3.2. SAMPLE

One hundred and three EFL teachers took part in this research study. After eliminating those who did not finish their higher education in Croatia, 98 Croatian EFL teachers made the final sample. The youngest participant was 24 years old, while the oldest participant was 62 years old. The mean age of the participants was 41.49. Most participants that took part in this study were in their 40s, 45 of them to be precise. From that age group the highest number of participants, 8 of them, were 46 years old. The sample consisted of 95 female EFL teachers and 3 male[11] EFL teachers.

[11] One teacher that choose the male gender gave one answer as he were a female ("*Nisam sigurna što bi navela.*") so it is not clear whether that person made a mistake and chose the wrong gender or he/she identifies differently.

Table 1 Participants' age range

AGE RANGE	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
24 – 29	11
30 – 39	26
40 – 49	45
50 – 59	12
60 – 62	4

When it comes to their workplace, 5 teachers taught grades 1 – 4, and 61 taught grades 5 – 8 in primary schools, so 66 participants were primary school teachers. Thirty-two participants were high school teachers. Two teachers taught at a grammar school and thirty at a vocational school. The teacher with the least experience worked as an EFL teacher for 3 months and the one with the most experience worked as an EFL teacher for 39 years. Nine participants had 18 years of experience, seven had 14 years of experience, and an equal number, six of them, had 15 and 22 years of experience.

Table 2 Participants' work experience

MONTHS/YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
3 months – 11 months	2
1 year – 9 years	20
10 years – 19 years	44
20 years – 29 years	24
30 years – 39 years	8

More than half of the participants, 75 of them, got their degree at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. To be more precise, 38 of them at the Faculty in Zagreb, 14 of them at the Faculty in Zadar, 13 of them at the Faculty in Osijek, 7 at the Faculty in Rijeka and 1 at the Faculty in Split. Answers of two participants were not counted towards the final number of participants who went to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences because their answers included two institutions. One participant reported going both to the Faculty in Zagreb and Rijeka, while the other went to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences OOUR pedagogical sciences and got

her postgraduate diploma at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb. The rest studied at the Faculty of Teacher Education. Six of them specified that they studied in Zagreb. Two of them studied at the Department in Čakovec. One participant just wrote the Faculty of Teacher Education. Two participants got their degree at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Gospić and one at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek. Two participants got their degree at the Teacher Education Academy[12] (*Učiteljska akademija*), one of them specified that she got her degree in Zagreb. Two participants got their degree at the High Pedagogical School in Petrinja[13] (*Visoka učiteljska škola u Petrinji* and *Pedagoški fakultet u Petrinji*). Three participants studied at the Faculty of Pedagogy in Osijek[14] (*Pedagoški fakultet u Osijeku*). Even though in the question participants were asked to provide specific answers as to where they got their degrees from, four participants wrote University of Zadar as their answers.

3.3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.3.1. PARTICIPANTS' EDUCATION ABOUT CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

In this sample more than two thirds of participants, 68 teachers, did not attend a course about inclusion or education of children with disabilities during their higher education. Twenty-two Croatian EFL teachers attended a course or courses related to[15]: Language disorders, Education of students with SEN, Inclusive pedagogy (three teachers that studied at the Faculty of Teacher Education attended this course), Special pedagogy (three teachers that studied at the Faculty of Teacher Education attended this course), English language, Social pedagogy, The pedagogy of students with SEN, Defectology and lastly Visually impaired. One teacher wrote that she forgot the name of the course but that she attended it during one semester, and another wrote

[12] Later it became the Faculty of Teacher Education.
[13] Today, the Department in Petrinja is part of the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb.
[14] Today, it is called the Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek.
[15] Each course was mentioned by one teacher if not stated otherwise.

that she had one lecture on autism. Two teachers attended two courses each. One attended Learners with special needs: blindness and SLA, and Individual differences in language acquisition. The other one attended Psychology, and Child Psychology. One teacher listed five courses: Psychology, Pedagogy, Didactics, a teaching methods course and Phonetics. As part of her Phonetics course she had regular visits to the SUVAG center. One teacher wrote that she attended a course about inclusion or education of children with disabilities but that she does not remember the name of the course. Three teachers answered that they attended a course about inclusion or education of children with disabilities, but they did not provide their name. Eight teachers did not remember if they attended a similar course.

Table 3 Participants' education about children with disabilities

EDUCATION ABOUT INCLUSION/CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Attended a course	22
Did not attend a course	68
Did not remember if they attended a similar course	8
Attended a professional development programme	66
Did not attend a professional development programme	26
Did not remember if they attended a professional development programme on these topics	6
Attended a course and a professional development programme	14
Did not attend a course and a professional development programme	17

The importance of education about children with disabilities is unquestionable. Professional training is one of the mechanisms of teacher improvement. According to the Primary and Secondary School Education Act (Official Gazette, No. 87/08) teachers have a right and an obligation to continuously attend professional development programmes. Since more than two

thirds of teachers did not attend a course about inclusion or education of children with disabilities it is encouraging that more than two thirds of teachers (66)[16] attended a professional development programme about inclusion or education of children with disabilities. However, this was a small sample, and even in this small sample 26[17] teachers did not attend such programmes, and 6 did not remember if they attended it. Attending these programmes is important because teachers expand their knowledge and work on their ability to provide adequate support to students with disabilities so teachers should have an opportunity to learn about these topics.

Topics that were mentioned by teachers that were covered on these professional development programmes were inclusion, ADHD, Down syndrome, learning difficulties, autism, blindness and low vision, dyslexia, dysgraphia, developmental language disorder and EFL teaching – theory and practice, digital tools for children with disabilities, the use of technology in working with children with disabilities, digital education of children with disabilities, difficulties in learning and learning disorders, phonological difficulties and academic performance, preconditions for successful inclusive education, English learning for students with hearing impairments, working methods for students with vision impairments in a regular classroom, guidelines for working with students with disabilities, and individualization of the learning process and behaviour. The variety of the mentioned topics suggests that teachers have opportunities to attend different professional development programmes.

Most teachers were educated on the topics of inclusion and education of children with disabilities as part of the professional teacher obligatory in-service training. Institutions or organizations that provided professional development programmes mentioned by teachers were

[16] One teacher chose yes and no as her answers and explained that topics connected to inclusion and education of children with disabilities are part of professional teacher meetings at the county level (*županijski stručni skup*).
[17] Twenty-seven if the teacher who chose both yes and no is counted.

the Education and Teacher Training Agency, the Ministry of Science and Education, Studientage Goethe Institute, Oxford University Press, Pearson, Cambridge, Korak po korak, Alfa, Profil, Centre for Autism, British Council, HUPE, EMA[18] and Udruga za život. One teacher explained that she took part "*in MOOC[19] on SEG[20] and PD courses on Twinspace… there are a lot of them … each lasted for at least 3 weeks with assignments at the end of each module and with a lesson plan to apply what we have learned… + peer evaluation.*" This teacher did not just participate in a programme, but she had to apply the things which she had learned which is extremely valuable for the learning process. Three teachers were specific with the people whose lecture they had attended, and they provided the names of those people. Some teachers mentioned the types of programmes they attended. These included programmes that were part of projects, training that was part of the e-Schools project, lectures, webinars, conferences, seminars and workshops.

Taking part in different programmes is also beneficial because it enables teachers to get the information they need from different sources. One teacher who recognized the importance of lifelong education offered her explanation

> *taking into consideration my long work experience and the idea that lifelong education is necessary, I regularly attend professional development programmes. I take part in lectures that are organized in the school, the professional teacher meetings at the county level and at the country level, at HUPE, on webinars, Erasmus KA101 on the topic of inclusion,… Each year I take part in several professional development programmes.*

On the other hand, another teacher complained that there was only one training related to students with disabilities and that it did not have enough practical examples. Similarly, another

[18] An application for the education of teachers.
[19] Massive Open Online Course.
[20] A platform School Education Gateway.

teacher wrote that topics related to students with disabilities were not covered in relation to other topics but in isolation. Therefore, it would be valuable to consult with the teachers about what professional development programmes they would like to attend. Teachers know where they lack knowledge so their needs should also be taken into consideration when devising professional development programmes.

Seventeen Croatian EFL teachers did not attend a course about inclusion and students with disabilities, and they did not attend professional development programmes on these topics. This number shows that changes need to be made, and teachers need to be educated on these topics. The National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2021 – 2027 (Official Gazette, No. 143/2021) puts emphasis on the professional development of teachers and other experts employed in schools about inclusion, so it could be assumed that these 17 teachers will have an opportunity to attend such programmes in the future either in the schools they work in or at the professional teacher meetings at the county or country level. As explained above, asking teachers what professional development programmes they would like to attend could motivate teachers to attend them because they would learn about the topics they asked for. Moreover, teachers appreciate practical examples so bringing another teacher or expert with experience could be beneficial.

Overall, it can be concluded that 17.3% of teachers were not educated about inclusion and students with disabilities during their higher education or later when they became teachers. This sample proved that higher education is still not in line with the ideas promoted by the law. Therefore, the higher education of teachers about inclusion needs to be reviewed because 69.4% of teachers were not educated on these topics during their higher education. Teachers, who did not have a course on the topics of inclusion and pupils with disabilities, may unintentionally not

recognize a pupil with disabilities in their classrooms. They may not be sure how to promote inclusion in their classrooms. For that reason, professional development programmes should be available to teachers. Attending these programmes raises awareness about pupils with disabilities, and teachers may feel more confident in responding to various pupils' needs in their classrooms. Even though 67.3% of teachers in this sample attended a similar programme, it is worth noting that one third did not or did not remember. This leaves room for progress since only 14.3% of teachers attended both a course and a professional development programme about inclusion or students with disabilities.

3.3.2. THE SCHOOL TEAM

Inclusive schools are not built by one person. They require cooperation and teamwork. The school team, which has experts who are there to help teachers, should be there for teachers and help them when they encounter difficulties.

Teachers were asked who the members of the school team in their schools were. According to their answers, a pedagogue was employed in 93 schools, a psychologist in 52 schools, an educational rehabilitator in 15 schools, a speech therapist in 13 schools, a social pedagogue in 17 schools and a librarian in 79 schools. Unfortunately, these results support the claim by Švegar et al. (2020) that a small number of schools have an educational rehabilitator, a speech therapist and a social pedagogue as part of their school team of experts. Considering the crucial role these experts have in supporting teachers, not enough schools employ these experts. The graphical representation can be seen on Figure 3 below. Table 4 shows the members of the school team and the number of schools which have them.

According to the National Pedagogical Standard for Primary Education System (Official Gazette, No. 63/08) and the National Pedagogical Standard for Secondary Education (Official

Gazette, No. 63/08) each school that has up to 180 pupils has to employ a pedagogue and another expert. Schools with more than 180 and less than 500 pupils employ 3 experts while schools with more than 500 pupils employ 4 experts (Official Gazette, No. 63/08). The Standard, however, in these two cases (for schools with more than 180 and less than 500 pupils and for schools with more than 500 pupils), does not specify which experts need to be employed. The same applies for both primary and high schools. From Table 4 it is visible that one school only had a psychologist, two had a psychologist and a librarian, and five only had a pedagogue. Even though participants were not asked how many pupils the schools they worked in had, based on these answers it can be concluded that the schools in question had 180 or less pupils because they employed either one or two experts. Švegar et al. (2020) found that 41 schools did not have a pedagogue even though they should have one. From the schools with 180 or less pupils that had only one expert employed, they found one school that only had a psychologist and ten schools that only had a pedagogue. Considering that the number of experts in a school team is prescribed by the law these 8 schools in this research study were not following it. Since there was no question about the number of pupils it cannot be deduced with certainty if other schools were employing the number of experts prescribed by the law.

In this sample, a pedagogue and a librarian made a school team in 22 schools. A psychologist together with a pedagogue and a librarian were a school team in 22 schools as well. It is visible that these numbers are very similar to those by Švegar et al. (2020) which can be seen on Figure 1.

6 Who are the members of the school expert team in the school you work in?
98 answers

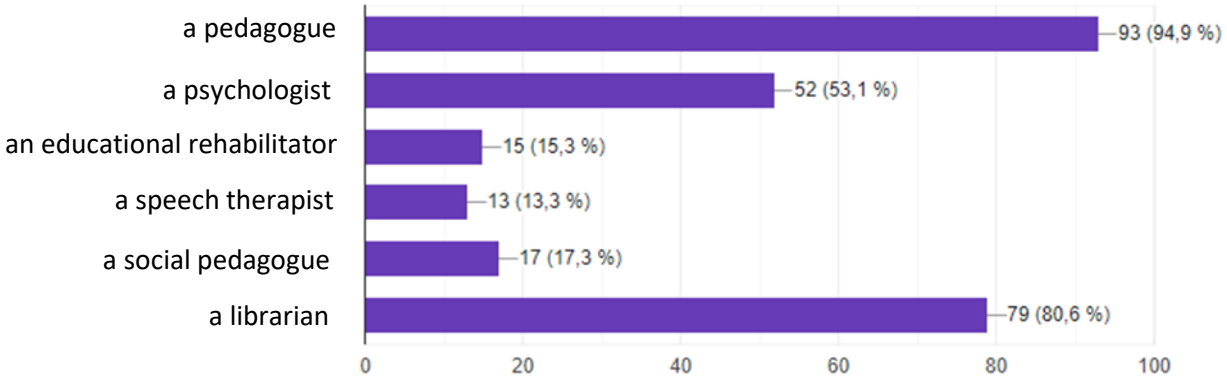

Figure 3 Number of experts who make a school team

Table 4 Who makes a school team?

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL TEAM	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
a psychologist	1
a pedagogue a psychologist a speech therapist	1
a psychologist a social pedagogue a librarian	1
a pedagogue a psychologist an educational rehabilitator	1
a pedagogue a speech therapist a social pedagogue a librarian	1
a pedagogue an educational rehabilitator a social pedagogue a librarian	1
a pedagogue a psychologist an educational rehabilitator a social pedagogue a librarian	1
a psychologist an educational rehabilitator	1

a speech therapist a social pedagogue a librarian	
a pedagogue an educational rehabilitator a librarian	2
a pedagogue an educational rehabilitator	2
a psychologist a librarian	2
a pedagogue a psychologist a social pedagogue a librarian	3
a pedagogue a social pedagogue	3
a pedagogue a speech therapist a librarian	4
a pedagogue	5
a pedagogue a psychologist	6
a pedagogue a social pedagogue a librarian	6
a pedagogue a psychologist a speech therapist a librarian	6
a pedagogue a psychologist an educational rehabilitator a librarian	7
a pedagogue a psychologist a librarian	22
a pedagogue a librarian	22

3.3.3. CROATIAN EFL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

It can be seen on Figure 4 how many teachers worked with each disability. In this sample, only 9 (9.1%) teachers did not have experience in working with children with specific learning difficulties, everyone else (89 teachers/90.8%) either worked with these children before or were working with them when they completed the questionnaire. Eighty-four (85.7%) teachers had experience in working with children with difficulties in learning and students with behavioural or emotional disorders. Seventy-seven (78.6%) teachers had experience in working with children with behavior disorders and mental disorders. Only 6 (6.1%) teachers had experience in working with all the enumerated disabilities. One teacher only worked with children with specific learning difficulties, while everyone else had experience in working with children with at least two different disabilities.

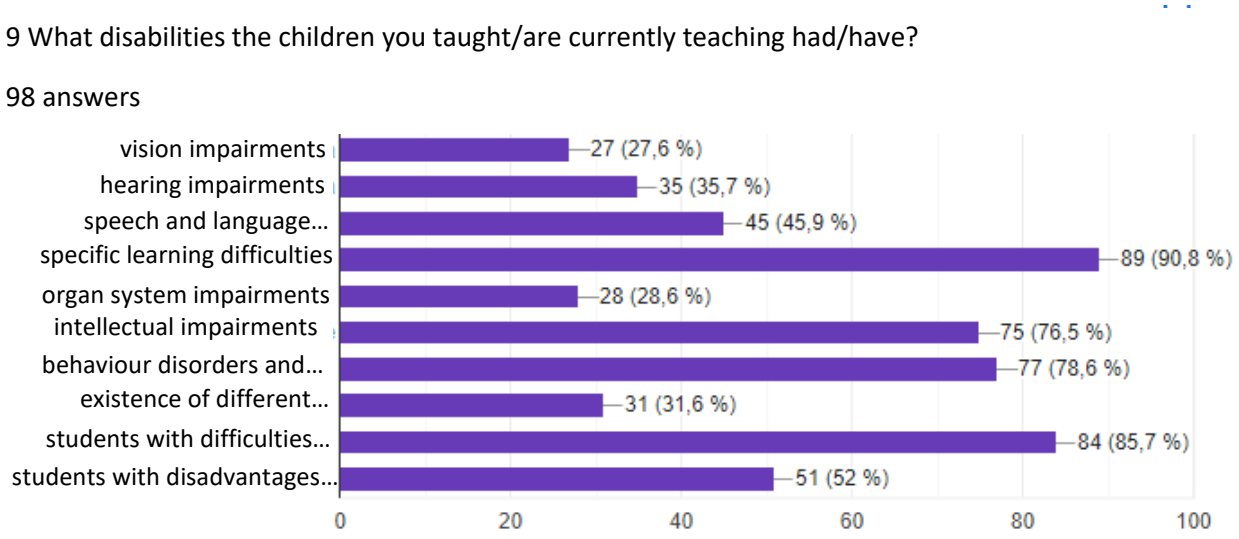

Figure 4 The types of disabilities teachers worked with or were working with

Teachers were asked what disabilities they felt most prepared to teach. Their answers were analyzed, and a table (Table 5) was made based on their answers. Dyslexia and dysgraphia were difficulties with which 19 teachers felt most confident. Fifteen teachers felt most prepared to work with children with specific learning difficulties. Since 90.8% of teachers had experience with

specific learning difficulties, it was no surprise that 34.7% of teachers felt most prepared to work with children with specific learning difficulties, that is, with students with dyslexia and dysgraphia. Moreover, if we count the answers of teachers who just wrote dyslexia (8) and dysgraphia (2) as their answers, the number of teachers who felt most ready to work with children with specific learning difficulties goes up to 44 (44.9%). One teacher offered an explanation and wrote that she felt most prepared to work with these children because she "*feels like there are strategies she can apply*", while another wrote that "*physical barriers*[21] *and dyslexia are the most concrete*". Teachers were not asked to provide a comment with their answers. However, these two answers suggest that it would be useful to look into whether teachers truly feel most prepared to teach students with disabilities for whom they have the most concrete techniques and methods they can apply.

Fourteen teachers felt most prepared to work with children with intellectual impairments. This is interesting because another teacher wrote that she felt prepared to work with every disability except intellectual impairments. In Table 6 it can be seen that 19 teachers believed that it was most difficult to provide inclusive EFL teaching to students with intellectual impairments. The difference in numbers with teachers who felt most prepared to work with children with intellectual impairments and with teachers who believed that it was difficult to provide inclusive teaching to these students is only 5. It seems that teachers' opinions diverge when it comes to intellectual impairments, and it would be interesting if teachers were asked to explain their opinion to understand why they believe so.

Unfortunately, 12 teachers felt that they were not ready to work with children with disabilities. Only two teachers provided comments with their answers. One wrote: "*I do not feel*

[21] Physical barriers are understood by this author as impediments from physical disabilities.

ready. I improvise." and the other "*With none, I prefer having a teaching assistant.*" Without the possibility of asking additional questions it is difficult to draw conclusions as to why these teachers did not feel prepared to teach students with disabilities. However, from their answers to other questions possible explanations can be offered. Their experience does not seem to play a big role. Only two teachers had less than 5 years of experience, one 3 years and the other 2 years. All the other teachers had more than 10 years of experience. One of them had even 33 years of experience. Nine[22] out of twelve teachers did not attend a course about students with disabilities. As already stated, initial education of teachers is important if the idea of inclusive education is to become a reality in Croatian schools. Seven out of these twelve teachers only had two members of a school team in their schools. Five of them had a pedagogue and a librarian, one had a pedagogue and a psychologist, and the last one had a pedagogue and an educational rehabilitator. Three teachers had four members of the expert team in their schools, while two teachers had three members. In one of the questions teachers were asked with whom they consulted about students with disabilities, and they were also asked whether the information they received from these persons was enough. Out of these 12 teachers, 9 of them answered that the information they received was not enough. Interestingly, two teachers who had 4 members of the school team answered that they sought help, but those experts could not help them. It is possible that they did not feel prepared to work with students with disabilities because the information they got when they sought help was not enough and because their higher education did not prepare them for that.

One teacher who felt ready to work with all children with disabilities wrote: "*I do not have issues with any disability, and I support the idea that sign language is learned in all schools as part of the curriculum."* Another teacher who had 13 years of experience in teaching wrote that

[22] Nine or even ten teachers because one teacher who marked that she attended a course about children with disabilities wrote that she only had one lecture about autism.

she felt ready to work with all children with disabilities *now*. It is worth noting that three teachers did not write a type of disability they felt most prepared to teach. These were their answers:

1. "*I do not think like that. Every school year and every student with a disability is a special challenge. Maybe it has become most common to have students with dyslexia and dysgraphia.*"
2. "*It is not specific; I believe that every child and every disability is unique.*"
3. "*I have a lot of experience and I can say that disabilities are never the same, in other words, every child with a disability requires an individualized approach. Moreover, disabilities are often combined."*

These answers support the claim that even though students may have the same disability they have different needs. These teachers were clearly aware of that, and they pointed out that every child is specific. It would be interesting to observe their teaching to see how their attitudes that every student is unique shape their teaching.

Table 5 What disabilities do you feel most prepared to teach?

What disabilities do you feel most prepared to teach?[23]	
DISABILITY	NUMBER OF TEACHERS
Vision impairments	5
Hearing impairments	3
Speech impairments	1
Specific learning difficulties[24]	15
- Dyslexia and dysgraphia	19
- Dyslexia	8
- Dysgraphia	2
Organ system impairments	1
- Cerebral palsy	1
- Locomoter system disabilities	1
Intellectual impairments	14

[23] It has to be noted that some teachers wrote disabilities that they did not mark having experience in working with.

[24] Answers that included specific learning difficulties without additional explanation were counted in this category. Exceptions were answers that had dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia in parentheses. If a teacher wrote specific learning difficulties but added for example dyslexia and dysgraphia in parentheses their answers were counted in the dyslexia and dysgraphia category.

Behaviour disorders and mental disorders	
- Autism spectrum disorders	1
- Activity and attention disorders	1
- Behaviour disorders	1
- ADHD	1
Impairments in the psychophysical development	1
Students with difficulties in learning and students with behavioural or emotional disorders	2
- Emotional disorders	3
- Behavioural disorders	2
- Difficulties in learning[25]	6
Students with disadvantages arising from educational, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic factors	3
Physical difficulties/barriers	3
With none	12
With everything[26]	5
- With everything except behaviour disorders (autodestruction and aggression)	1
- With everything except intellectual impairments	1
Disabilities are different and each child requires an individualized approach	3

Table 6 shows the number of teachers and the type of disability they believed was the hardest to provide inclusive teaching for. Autism spectrum disorders (22 teachers), intellectual impairments (19) and behaviour disorders (12) were three disabilities that according to this sample of teachers were the most difficult to provide inclusive EFL teaching for. Even though teachers were asked to provide an answer based on their experience, one teacher added a comment that her answer was her general opinion and not the one based on experience. There were a few others who named a disability but did not mark having experience in working with children with those

[25] *Teškoće u učenju* and *poteškoće u učenju* were categorized under difficulties in learning.

[26] Two teachers who wrote that they felt equally ready to work with all disabilities were also counted in this category. Their answers in Croatian were just one word *podjednako*.

disabilities. There was a teacher whose answer was not categorized in the table because she offered characteristics of a disability or more disabilities rather than providing the type/name of disability.

Vision and hearing impairments presented a challenge for one teacher because they require "*additional education (sign language, writing system…)*". A teacher who wrote that it is the hardest to ensure inclusive education for students with intellectual impairments added an explanation and wrote "*pupils with adapted programmes cannot acquire a foreign language on the conversational level*". However, for pupils who have adapted programmes the content is reduced but the level of their acquisition should be determined based on their capacities. It is not about what pupils with disabilities cannot do but about what they can do. This is what one teacher explained when giving examples for adjustments she made for students with intellectual impairments: "*I do not insist on the explicit acquisition and the use of grammar, but I focus on receptive and productive skills with the help of the glossary"*. Unlike the other teacher, this teacher focused on what students can do. By doing so, she enabled students with disabilities to feel more successful.

For one teacher having children with intellectual impairments in a classroom without a teaching assistant was exhausting. Another teacher had a firmer attitude and wrote that children with intellectual impairments "*simply do not belong in this school, they hinder the work and progress of other pupils*". Using a different method and asking additional questions could help understand this teacher and similar attitudes better. There could be various reasons for this. This teacher in particular does not feel ready to work with any disability, however she specifically pointed out that "*intelligence*" was the biggest problem when providing inclusive EFL teaching.

A teacher who believed that it was hard to provide inclusive teaching for all disabilities wrote that an exception was "*a child with disabilities who has an ear for languages*". On the other

hand, there can be children without disabilities who do not have an ear for languages and acquiring a foreign language can be a challenge for them. Having "*an ear for languages*" does not define student's capacity to acquire a foreign language. Another teacher from this category wrote "*Every disability is a challenge in its own way, but it is difficult to cooperate with those who do not want it.*" The last teacher in this category believed that all disabilities, besides dyslexia and dysgraphia, present a challenge.

In the category '*it depends*' one teacher wrote "*It depends on the student and cooperation with the parents, there can be difficulties with everyone when providing inclusive teaching.*" Another wrote that "*inclusion is based on emotional intelligence that unfortunately many lack*". For the last teacher in this category "*it all depends on the effort and awareness of the child and parents*". A teacher whose answer has been categorized as '*a high level of disability*' wrote:

> *Regardless of the disability, it is really difficult to provide inclusive teaching to pupils who have a high level of impairment. In these situations having a teaching assistant is preferred (and that is not always the case). Also, someone at home has to work with them because they are not able to do it alone.*

If a student with a high level of impairment has an individualized approach and an adapted curriculum then the content that he or she has to learn has to match his capacities and abilities. In other words, it is not about whether students have the help of parents at home but whether the content has been adapted so that students with disabilities can acquire it.

Table 6 For what type of disability you have worked with so far do you believe is the hardest to provide inclusive EFL teaching?

For what type of disability you have worked with so far do you believe is the hardest to provide inclusive EFL teaching? [27]	
DISABILITY	NUMBER OF TEACHERS
Vision impairments	5
- Blindness	1
- A high level of vision impairment	1
Hearing impairments	9
Speech and language impairments	7
- Speech impairments	1
Specific learning difficulties	1
- Dyslexia and dysgraphia	1
- Dyslexia	2
Organ system impairments	
- Down syndrome	3
Intellectual impairments	19
- A high level of intellectual impairment	1
- Combined intellectual impairments (LMR)	1
Behaviour disorders and mental disorders	6
- Autism spectrum disorders	22
- Low-functioning autism	1
- Severe types of autism	1
- Asperger's syndrome	2
- Behaviour disorders	12
- ADHD	3
- Mental disorders	5
- Activity and attention disorders	2
- Attention disorders	1
Impairments in the psychophysical development	2
Students with difficulties in learning and students with behavioural or emotional disorders	3
- Emotional and behavoural disorders	2
- Behavioural disorders	9
- Emotional disorders	3
- Learning difficulties	1
Students with disadvantages arising from educational, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic factors	
- Students with disadvantages arising from socio-economic, cultural and linguistic factors	1
- Students with disadvantages arising from educational and socio-economic factors	1

[27] Even though they were asked about disabilities that they had worked with, some teachers wrote disabilities that they had not chosen in the previously asked question where they were asked what disabilities children they were working with or have worked with had.

A high level of disability	1
For every disability	3
Every student is an individual	1
It depends	3

3.3.4. NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO PROVIDE INCLUSIVE TEACHING

Seventy (71.4%) Croatian EFL teachers believed that the skills and knowledge needed for providing inclusive EFL teaching should have been part of their higher education. Nineteen (19.4%) teachers believed that was not necessary, while nine (9.2%) teachers were not sure.

Teachers' answers on the question what knowledge and skills an English teacher needs to have to provide inclusive teaching were categorized into different categories. Because of the nature of the open-ended questions some answers belonged to just one category while some belonged to more than one category. One teacher did not provide an answer to this question and two teachers offered ambiguous answers. Four teachers were not sure how to answer this question, and one of them identified that "*Each situation requires a different approach*" so this answer belonged to two categories – '*not sure*' and '*each student is specific*'. One teacher just wrote '*impossible*' while two teachers wrote '*everything*'. One teacher offered an explanation: "*Everything, but we are not educated for anything.*" One teacher who wrote that inclusive teaching does not exist added that children with disabilities should be with the same children: "*Inclusive teaching is a travesty. It is difficult for children who do not know the language because they feel isolated and stupid, and we are not social pedagogues and defectologists. Children should be in groups where they have peers that are on the similar level of knowledge.*" Unfortunately, this answer promotes segregation, and all the relevant documents are against it. Moreover, this teacher mentioned that teachers are not social pedagogues or defectologists. Despite the shift of terminology in Croatia in which

defectology was changed with educational rehabilitation 11 more teachers mentioned defectology/defectologists.

Twenty-two teachers mentioned that the knowledge that they needed belongs to different domains: pedagogy, psychology, defectology, social pedagogy, special pedagogy, logopedics, educational rehabilitation, psychiatry, mediation, didactics, medicine, information sciences, psychotherapy, methodology and/or physiotherapy. Besides mentioning these different disciplines in this category which was called '*expert knowledge*' some even wrote that they should be another expert. Examples include:

1. "*to be a psychologist/a pedagogue*"
2. "*you need to be a defectologist, a psychologist…*"
3. "*you need to be a psychologist, a pedagogue, a defectologist and an English teacher*"
4. "*besides finishing your faculty you should finish another one and be an educational rehabilitator*"
5. "*An English teacher should also get a degree in defectology or get prepared programmes for pupils who have been approved for the adaptation of the content*"

Two teachers wrote that they would need to be wizards. Attending professional development programmes proved to be an important factor with 6 teachers mentioning some form of it. Participants mentioned different qualities and characteristics of English teachers needed to provide inclusive teaching so a big category '*qualities*' had different sub-categories based on the participants' answers. An English teacher who could create an inclusive environment was described as creative, responsible, patient, interested, willing to learn, motivated, open, tolerant, organized, principled, persistent, understanding, calm, enthusiastic, adaptable, authoritative, caring, empathetic, flexible, experienced and cooperative. Moreover he/she would have to develop

a trusting relationship, have to know how to use digital tools, he/she would have to be willing, seek information, work on their own and have emotional and social intelligence. Lastly, he or she would need to know the subject they teach. A teacher who mentioned that teachers were often left to their own devices wrote that the professional development programmes they had were not enough and that "*teachers are often forced to fend for themselves*". On the other hand, from an answer of one teacher it is visible that she disagreed: "*Knowledge does not play such a big role; it is important to develop a positive trusting relationship with the student. If that does not exist, then all the methods of adjustment will not bear fruit.*" Developing "*a positive trusting relationship*" is important, but teachers need to be aware of the tools at their disposal that can help them in achieving that so knowledge can play a big role in this since it can present a basis for developing such a relationship. When it comes to teachers being flexible, one teacher emphasized that "*teachers need to be flexible and step away from some principles which they learned on their methodology courses (for example 'English only' classes, high assessment criteria)*". The context of each classroom determines the teaching. Teachers need to be able to apply what they have learned, but at the same time they need to be aware that classrooms are living organisms (Slunjski, 2008) that require them to adapt.

Teachers also mentioned '*general skills and knowledge related to disabilities*'. This category had a subcategory called '*specific skills and knowledge*'. In the category general skills and knowledge teachers mentioned that it was necessary to be familiar with different disabilities, how to approach those students and adapt the material, they needed to have all the relevant information about the student's disability, they needed to know what to expect from these students and how to provide support. Specific skills and knowledge included knowing sign language or Braille, knowing what was important, being able to identify a disability, knowing how to plan a

curriculum, how to solve problems, knowing what the needs of students were and being able to simplify the matter. Answers of only 4 teachers belong to the category '*each student is specific*'.

It is interesting that a small number of answers show that the question was related to EFL teachers. Teachers offered answers about skills and knowledge they needed to have that could apply to all teachers and not just EFL teachers. More interestingly, 22.4% wrote that, besides being an EFL teacher, they needed to have skills and knowledge of other experts or even be a different expert. On the contrary, teachers are the ones who know the most about their subject, other experts can help them with methods and features of every disability, but they do not know what is specific about, for example, developing the listening skill in the English language. For instance, a school psychologist who does not have a degree in English language teaching cannot teach pupils how to write essays in English. Cooperation and teamwork make it possible for teachers and members of the school teams to be experts in their field and work together on achieving inclusion in schools.

3.3.5. INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS

Teachers were asked whether their school supported inclusive education and to explain their answers, that is, how they recognized that their school supported or did not support inclusive education. One teacher explained that her school supported inclusive education because she worked in a private school. Teachers were not asked whether they work in a private or a state school. This could be of interest in future research in which beliefs between these two categories of teachers could be researched to explore the difference between inclusion in private and state schools. Two teachers wrote that their school supported inclusive education in theory. Two teachers wrote that their schools supported inclusive education, and one offered an explanation:

> *I believe that my school supports it but not enough. It all comes down to teachers because there are not enough experts in the school (despite having 736 pupils we only have a*

pedagogue) and teachers cannot do everything on their own. After finding out they have a student with a disability in their classroom they are left to their own devices. For example, I am a class master and a teacher to an autistic boy (high-functioning autism, problems with learning languages and social problems) who is in the first grade of a vocational high school. He only has individualized instruction and not an adapted programme, many teachers and even a school pedagogue treat him like a child with special educational needs and they speak to him like that (they use baby talk and similar things). And when there are problems with his behaviour they leave me to handle that because I am the class master which is really difficult.

This answer shows that this teacher did not have the support she needed. The idea of inclusive education is hard to implement when a teacher is left on their own. What is even more disturbing is that this school should have had 4 experts, and they only had a pedagogue and a librarian. One teacher wrote that they only had a pedagogue who worked part-time which also did not enable that teacher to get the needed support. Six teachers explained that their schools did not support inclusive education. For example, "*The school does not support it. Formally yes like others, but in reality inclusion as a commitment does not exist.*" Answers of 3 other teachers were not included in the 'no' category. One wrote that the school partially supported this idea because she could print the materials, and she had a workshop, but it was requested by parents. The other one wrote that teachers were not competent to teach students with disabilities. The last one wrote that the school

supports it because they have to follow the orders of the school administration. This is visible when autistic children cannot work with 20 students, when there is shouting during recess, with children with different problems whose problems are swept under the rug because it is not nice to involve the school expert team or the social welfare centre.

It seems that in this school children were not getting the necessary support and help which is not in line with the idea of inclusive education. Moreover, just enrolling students with disabilities in schools without changing anything is also not inclusive education. For most teachers, inclusive schools were characterized by students with disabilities enrolled in schools and cooperation within the school. Thirty-six teachers mentioned (in some form) that their schools were inclusive because they had children with disabilities in regular classrooms and special classrooms or in mixed programmes. This would equal inclusion if these schools were making the necessary changes to meet the needs of those children. Some did mention individualization and adapted programmes, but this still does not mean inclusion. A legal order that determines the educational programme for a child with disabilities needs to be implemented because the fact that it exists still does not mean that the school is making the necessary changes.

Even though it seems that certain schools supported the idea of inclusive education some teachers did not agree with it:

1. "*My school supports this idea because some students who would be better off in a special classroom are in regular classrooms."*
2. "*This idea is supported without any criteria. Children who are fit for inclusion are included in classes together with children who are not fit for inclusion. Taking into consideration the level of their disabilities these children should go to special educational facilities."*
3. "*The school supports this idea because every student (even those with disabilities for which it is impossible to provide support in regular classrooms) are enrolled into the school regardless of their disabilities. The school, however, does not support (they do not provide the adequate help) teachers in implementing inclusion."*

The last teacher explained that even though this idea was supported, teachers were not receiving the necessary help. Although teachers have a crucial role, they are not able to do everything by themselves, and they need help. Furthermore, in these three examples teachers believed that not all students who were included in their schools were fit for their schools. Their answers could be connected to their attitudes about children with disabilities which were not of primary interest in this research study. However, in the future it would be beneficial to use different methods to link the attitudes of teachers with the way they shape the inclusive environment in their classrooms.

Some teachers mentioned that students with disabilities took part in different activities that happened in the school, meaning that they had opportunities and rights as other children without disabilities. Schools which support inclusive education had teachers and members of the school team who cooperated. Moreover, these experts also worked with students with disabilities. Giving attention to these students was mentioned by two teachers. Supporting and helping children with disabilities was also one way of promoting the inclusive principle. Talking with children with disabilities and their parents also showed that the school promoted inclusion as well as taking part in professional development programmes. Furthermore, writing a curriculum for students with disabilities was also part of inclusive education.

Assistants employed in schools to help teachers were characteristic of these schools. Two teachers mentioned cooperation with assistants while one teacher specifically pointed out that in her school they had excellent collaboration with the psychologist and the assistant. The other one commented that her student with Asperger's syndrome was able to attend regular classes because of the help of the assistant. Assistants are of great help to teachers, and they are there to provide support to the student. Their duties are regulated by the law, and they cannot replace the teacher (Official Gazette, No. 102/2018). Even though some teachers wrote that students with disabilities

who have assistants showed that the schools were inclusive, there has to be communication between the teachers and the assistants so that both sides have relevant information about students (Official Gazette, No. 102/2018). Assistants also have a coordinator[28] who creates their work plan, so their duties are planned, and they know what they need to do.

Teachers were asked whether they talked about and consulted about students with disabilities with other teachers and members of the school team. Some answers of teachers who answered yes include:

- "*Yes, because we are all unqualified*"
- "*Yes, but no one can help you (a magic wand does not exist)*"

Some teachers who answered no also offered their explanation:

- "*No, I do not have anyone.*" (a pedagogue and a librarian were employed in her school)
- "*Not really, there is not enough staff and professional training*" (a pedagogue, a psychologist and a speech therapist were employed in her school)
- "*No, I rely on myself because each child is specific*" (a pedagogue and a librarian were employed in her school)
- "*No, because members of the school expert team are not trained enough to give advice to the teachers. I consult with the members of societies that work with children with disabilities.*" (a pedagogue and a librarian were employed in her school)

Although the school expert team should be able to help teachers, the last teacher believed that they cannot help her. There was only a pedagogue and a librarian employed in her school. However, the law states that a pedagogue "advises and helps teachers (…), identifies and monitors students with disabilities (…)" (Official Gazette, No. 34/2014). The pedagogue employed in that school

[28] A coordinator is a member of the expert team appointed by the principal (Official Gazette, No. 102/2018).

should be able to help her. Furthermore, if the pedagogue does not know an answer to a specific question from a certain teacher, he/she can ask for help from other institutions that are specialized for that issue because his/hers duty and right is to cooperate with other institutions (Official Gazette, No. 34/2014). It would be beneficial if future research investigated why teachers believe that the members of the school expert cannot help them.

In this sample, nine teachers did not consult with anyone while everyone else either consulted with someone or searched the Internet for advice.

Teachers wrote that they consulted with the school expert team (12 teachers), with the principal (2 teachers), a pedagogue (32 teachers), a psychologist (15 teachers), a social pedagogue (8 teachers), a defectologist (7 teachers), an educational rehabilitator (4 teachers), a speech therapist (3 teachers), a class master (11 teachers), experts from their field (5 teachers), an assistant (1 teacher), other colleagues from or outside their school (22 teachers), with experts outside of school (4 teachers), with teachers who teach that student or that student's class (5 teachers), with teachers who make the class council (2 teachers), and with parents (1 teacher). Two teachers mentioned Internet as their resource. One mentioned a Facebook group, and the other was not specific, she wrote teacher groups on the Internet and special forums. A teacher who wrote that she consulted with the members of the school expert team wrote that "*it is not really helpful so we are mostly on our own*". In a similar vein, one teacher talked with her colleagues because she got "*minimal and inconcrete help*" from the members of the school expert team. Although one teacher tried to talk with the school pedagogue, she mostly talked with colleagues from other schools who had experience with a particular disability. As previously explained, the cooperation between teachers and members of the school expert team about students with disabilities should be researched to understand these answers better. On the other hand, another teacher had a different

experience, she wrote "*We are all like a team and we help each other.*" There are also teachers who learned from their colleague's experience.

Even though 15 teachers answered that there was an educational rehabilitator in their school, only four wrote that they consulted with them when they needed advice about students with disabilities. The teacher who answered that her school only had a pedagogue who worked part-time wrote that she talked about students with disabilities with her friend who was an educational rehabilitator. Talking with someone with whom they had a personal connection was also mentioned by one more teacher. Thirteen teachers had a speech therapist at their school, but only three sought advice from them. A teacher commented that she rarely asked for advice from the school expert team because "*they do not understand issues related to her subject so they cannot help*" her. However, her school expert team had enough experts that should be ready to provide help with different disabilities. The team in her school consisted of a pedagogue, a psychologist, an educational rehabilitator and a librarian. Either these experts could not help her, or the teacher was not aware of the duties of those experts.

Teachers who cooperated with members from outside the school consulted with societies which work with children with disabilities (1 teacher), with experts from the Education and Teacher Training Agency (1 teacher), with colleagues from the Vinko Bek Centre (1 teacher) and with a social worker (1 teacher). In this sample, a small number of teachers cooperated with members who were not employed in their schools. On the other hand, schools have a right to ask for additional support from advisors from education agencies and other expert teams (MZO, 2021). For instance, members of the school expert team can receive support when they design a curriculum for a student with a certain disability (MZO, 2021).

The shift in the terminology with defectology was already explained. When asked with whom they consulted, seven teachers mentioned that they consulted with a defectologist. Two teachers had an educational rehabilitator in their schools, and two had a speech therapist who could be classified possibly as defectologists. It is more interesting that 4 teachers wrote defectologist, but they did not have someone in their team who fits into that description. Two of them marked that they had a pedagogue and a librarian in their school, and one marked that there was a pedagogue, a psychologist and a librarian in her school. It is unclear whether they would have marked that they had a defectologist in their school if that were offered, or they made this mistake by accident.

After being asked with whom they consulted about students with disabilities, teachers were asked whether the information they received from these persons was enough. They could answer yes, no, I do not know or write their answer. Only 15 (15.3%) teachers answered yes, more than half, 53 (54.1%), answered no, while 14 (14.3%) were not sure. Seven teachers wrote that the information they got was sometimes enough. One teacher commented on this: "*In some cases it is, in some it is not. There are some really difficult cases, that in my opinion, do not belong to a primary school but to a specialized facility*." This teacher did not provide an example of those "*difficult cases*", so it is not possible to deduce what she meant by that. However, it is clear that she believed that some pupils with disabilities did not belong to her school. One teacher wrote that her colleagues were always helpful but that they "*usually have to try out different approaches to find out what works best in our subject and in our relationship with that student*". In addition to advice, one teacher searched the literature. One explained that additional training was necessary, and the last one wrote that even though the advice was sometimes useful she mostly had to manage on her own. Two teachers commented that the advice could be better. Four teachers commented

that the information they got was not always enough, while one teacher just wrote yes and no as her answer. One teacher wrote that more experts were needed in schools (her school only had a pedagogue and a librarian), and another teacher commented that the information was always the same. One teacher elaborated more on why she believed the information she got was not enough:

> *Not completely, learning is made easier for students, but for quality results (every student is different) more time and support are needed. I believe that these students do not get enough attention, and that the programme is often made easier for them without going deeper into their problems and finding the best way to help them.*

Teachers should not lower their expectations for students with disabilities. For example, reducing the workload does not mean that these students will succeed, but it can have an opposite effect (Russak, 2016). Therefore, proper education of teachers and support are needed so students with disabilities have the same rights as students without disabilities.

Even though most teachers believed their schools were inclusive, they believed that the information they got from the experts employed in the schools was not enough. It would be worth investigating what information teachers need. If we know what they need we would be able to understand why the information they receive from the school experts is not enough.

When asked whether they believed their teaching was inclusive, almost half of the participants, 48 (49%) to be precise, answered 'yes', while 10 (10.2%) teachers answered 'no'. Forty (40.8%) Croatian EFL teachers were not sure whether their teaching was inclusive. Future research should address this uncertainty and the reasons why it exists.

Teachers were asked how they adapt the content, material, space, their methods of teaching, and how they assess knowledge based on the disabilities they have encountered. Some teachers wrote how they make adjustments based on the disability while some wrote the type of adjustments

they make. Disabilities that were mentioned were vision impairments, hearing impairments, specific learning difficulties, dysgraphia and dyslexia, motor impairments, organ system impairments, intellectual impairments, ADHD, cerebral paralysis, autism, speech impairments and mental disorders. Adjustments that teachers mentioned included additional time, adjusting the content, reducing the content, adjusting the letter font, individual approach, visual representation, using mother tongue, seating arrangement and so on. Some teachers put students with disabilities in the first row, while two explained that students with disabilities sat where they felt comfortable. Two teachers mentioned Colour Coding that was given as an example in the Guide by Ajduković et al. (2017). When assessing their knowledge teachers considered students' preference or whether that student would perform better orally or on a written test. For one teacher, an assistant who knew sign language was of great help.

One teacher explained that she made "*minimal adjustments because there is a high number of students with disabilities (sometimes even 7 in a class of 27)*", therefore she was not able to adjust the content for everyone. This was already mentioned in the theoretical part of this paper. Teachers in one classroom work with more than 3 students with disabilities, but according to the law only 3 students with disabilities can be in one classroom (NN 124/2009). As her answer to this question one teacher just wrote "*materials from the publishers do not exist*". Since this teacher did not explain her answer it cannot be concluded what she meant. However, materials from the publishers are not an only source of information for teachers, and these materials are generic, so teachers should not fully rely on them because students with the same disabilities might not share the same needs. They can serve as guidelines, but some degree of adjustment will always be necessary to meet the needs of students because only teachers who work with those children know what works best for them.

English teachers sometimes have to do things that are done in different subjects. One teacher provided an example: "*I have been doing numbers 1 to 6 for four months now with a fourth-grade pupil, and two weeks ago we added the number 7; she does not understand the concept of numbers in Croatian as well*". In order for this student to understand what she was learning and not just learn the words without understanding their meaning, this teacher had to make sure that the student understood the concept first. Another teacher commented that it was hard to assess students who did not understand certain concepts in Croatian and "*they have to be assessed based on the lowest appointed outcome level of the curriculum. Those outcomes do not exist.*" The teacher further explained "*We assess whether the student has fulfilled all the tasks, what his work ethic is like and what his limit is. We assess him/her according to his/her limit and based on that the student is generally excellent.*" For this type of assessment the teacher needs to be aware of the student's capacities so he or she can make a valid assessment. The *Guidelines for working with students with disabilities* (MZO, 2021) highlight that work ethic of students with disabilities should be taken into consideration when their final grade is calculated. Moreover, their final grade should not be the sum of other grades, but it should be based on the analysis of the student's progress (MZO, 2021). One teacher commented that she needed "*to juggle to do everything*". Students without disabilities needed to do something else so she could work with the child with disabilities and in the end "*it is exhausting and no one profits from it*".

EFL teachers have to take into consideration that words in English are not pronounced the same way they are written. One teacher did not use phonetic symbols for transcription. She wrote the words the way they are read and put Croatian translation next to them so students knew how to read the word and what it meant. Additionally, for students with a hearing impairment it is crucial to see their teachers' lips so they are able to understand what they are saying. During the

pandemic teachers had to wear masks, and one teacher explained that she used a clear visor so a student with a hearing impairment could read from her lips. This shows how teachers had to think of the way they teach during the pandemic and not neglect the needs of different students.

Four teachers wrote that it was impossible to write everything that was done in a classroom to make accommodations for these students. One teacher explained that all the adjustments cannot be explained because each child is different, but she gave a general conclusion "*I did everything I could for these children, but I still believe that is not enough because I am just a teacher and not a speech therapist, a defectologist or an educational rehabilitator.*" However, these experts do not have the knowledge and skills of an EFL teacher. They would not be able to teach the English language to students just because they were educated for working with students with disabilities. Skills and knowledge of these experts should be combined with the skills and knowledge of EFL teachers through teamwork to promote the inclusive principle in EFL classrooms. Another teacher explained that she adjusted every lecture not only for a specific class, but she also individualized assignments within every class. This answer shows that adjustments differ from classroom to classroom. Two teachers wrote that adjustments only existed on the paper, one explained that it was difficult to implement them because of the number of students and the other that there were "*no means, time or possibilities*" to implement it. Consequently, this is then not inclusion, and the second school would not be an inclusive school even though the teacher believed it promoted the inclusive principle. Surprisingly, one teacher wrote that she did not have students with these disabilities. However, on a previous question where she had to mark what disabilities the students she worked with or was working with had, she marked specific learning difficulties and behaviour disorders and mental disorders, so it is not clear why she wrote that she did not have students with these disabilities. Two teachers did not provide an answer.

Future research should address adjustments that may seem improper for a certain disability. For example, one teacher, who however did not mark that she had experience in teaching students with a vision impairment, wrote that for these students the content is reduced. They, for instance, were expected to acquire less words. If a student with a vision impairment has no other impairments that would hinder his/her acquisition of words or a legal order that regulates that it is necessary to reduce the content, it is not clear why it is expected from them to acquire less words.

For students with difficulties in learning and students with behavioural or emotional disorders as well as students with disadvantages arising from educational, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic factors an IEP is not made, and there is no official document that covers these two categories of students. A number of teachers wrote the same answer for all three categories. When it comes to students with difficulties in learning and students with behavioural or emotional disorders one teacher offered her explanation:

> *The adjustments are the same as in the previous answer. However, this is more exhausting because it is difficult to explain to the student that his/her behaviour is not appropriate (swearing, shouting, inappropriate comments, possible aggression towards other students or towards the teacher during the lecture) because he/she either does not understand or does not care.*

Another teacher wrote "*It is the same as the previous answer. Unfortunately, I cannot neglect the rest of the class, and I am not sure what more I can do because I do not have necessary materials and knowledge.*" Non-cooperation between experts in the school and teachers led one teacher to write this

> *It is a chaos of a special kind. I had a student, and I knew almost nothing about his emotional or mental problems (the school expert team kept it secret, that is, the pedagogue*

just stated mild adhd). That student ended terrorizing everyone in the classroom, he was hostile towards me and did not let me teach. Cooperation was only possible with homeschooling.

On the other hand, there were positive examples. For example, one teacher tried to predict the problem – "*if I know that the student will get frustrated when he cannot find a word in the text I stand next to him and help him find the word before he starts yelling and throwing things*". Moreover, one teacher made a plan together with the student to plan when that student would be assessed, together they specified "*when, what and how the assessment will be done*". Other adjustments included having conversations with the student, identifying, and recognizing their needs, helping teachers (they got small tasks from the teacher), creating a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom, expressing approval, having other students help, seating arrangement, individual approach, additional time, reducing the content, talking with the members of the school expert team and so on. Six teachers did not provide an answer to this question.

Fifteen teachers wrote that they did not have experience with students with disadvantages arising from educational, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic factors. One teacher wrote "*I believe I do not have students with these disadvantages, but I am not sure.*" The uncertainty of this teacher points to the need of raising awareness about these students. Nine teachers did not write anything. When she had students with disadvantages arising from socio-economic factors one teacher made sure that students had the necessary material, the other tried to lower the pressure arising from the SES status. For example, when she asked her students to make a project digitally she accepted this project in a form that this student could make. There is a space for students to talk about their culture. One teacher "*often has children who have been educationally neglected*[29]",

[29] „odgojno zapuštena djeca"

and she explained that "*it is a pleasure and a challenge to work with them because results can be seen fast*". Another teacher wrote that problems arising from educational factors were the most challenging for her. However, it is not clear why these two teachers did not choose that they had experience in working with children with disadvantages arising from educational, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic factors. This is also the case for 25 other teachers who also wrote their answer to this question but when asked with what disabilities they had experience in teaching they did not choose this group. Since it is not possible to reach those participants to ask them what the reason behind it was, an answer from one teacher might allow a partial understanding. She wrote that "*Most of the Roma children in the high school barely understand any English. They do not have the status of a student with disabilities, but the material certainly must be adapted.*" For students with difficulties in learning and students with behavioural or emotional disorders and for students with disadvantages arising from educational, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic factors an IEP is not made because they do not have a legal order that regulates their status. A legal order only exists for children with developmental disabilities, and it seems that the lack of regulation causes confusion.

The problem of not understanding certain concepts was mentioned by one teacher. She explained it like this:

> *It has to be taken into consideration that students come from poor socio-economic backgrounds and that many of them are cognitively weaker so I need to be cautious not to assume what they know and what their knowledge of the world is (I often had to work with first graders on concepts such as up and down, short and long, etc., prepare them for reading – children would not know that when I am talking about the first picture I am talking about the picture that is positioned up and left on the page and etc.).*

This teacher emphasized that assuming what students know can be counterproductive. Getting to know the students and their capacities help teachers understand what they can expect from students and what they need to focus on so these students can succeed.

One teacher learned the Roma language and used it during the revision of words while the other mentioned using the student's mother tongue (the Albanian, Macedonian, Ukrainian and Roma language). One teacher tried to learn more about the student's culture, their socio-economic conditions, and their mother tongue. One teacher explicitly stated that she "*pays for the expenses of additional materials*". "*All adjustments are pointless*" according to one teacher "*if that student does not get the help to come to the school fed, clean, peaceful and healthy*". Other adjustments included a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom, talking with students, adjusting the content and the material, reducing the content, additional time, encouraging the student, seating arrangement, using digital tools and other sources ("*Pupils from Ukraine use Google Translate to translate the Latin script into the Cyrillic alphabet so they can know how to solve a task.*"), cooperation with colleagues and so on.

3.3.6. DIFFICULTIES WITH INCLUSION

Teachers were asked what the biggest problem when including children with disabilities in EFL classrooms was. Ninety-six teachers provided an answer to this question. One teacher did not provide an answer, and one did not have any problems. Teachers' problems were related to parents, time, cooperation, the level of knowledge of children with disabilities, their knowledge about disabilities, the availability of materials and equipment, creating materials and motivating students with disabilities. Moreover, the disability itself presented a problem, teachers did not get enough information about the students, the content presented a problem, and grading as well. Teachers did not get enough support and help. They did not have enough professional training programmes, and

the number of pupils was a problem. Other pupils and the pleasant atmosphere in the classroom were also a problem. Teachers found it difficult to balance between students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Sometimes attitudes and behaviour of students were a problem. According to one teacher, some students with disabilities should not attend English classes. Problems teachers encountered could depend on students since every student is different, and problems could depend on whether there was an assistant. Three teachers mentioned salary while one teacher mentioned paperwork.

Although teachers rely on parents and other experts in the school, sometimes those people who should help them can also be a problem. Parents can have high expectations, be uncooperative, unsupportive, and unwilling to communicate. Teachers explained that they lacked the necessary support and help from experts in the school that should help them.

The lack of time to work with students with disabilities presented a problem. Teachers found it difficult to work with students with disabilities and students without disabilities at the same time – the time and the attention they gave to each group of students presented a problem for them. It is even more difficult when they have to balance between gifted students and students with disabilities. Some students do not understand Croatian properly, and they do not understand certain concepts. It was already established that not all schools follow the law when it comes to the number of students in one classroom. One teacher explained "*I have 4 pupils in one class with adjustments, two of them have assistants and two of them have individualization*". Two teachers explained that adapting materials takes a lot of time. In a similar vein, making their own materials for some was the biggest problem. Teachers recognized that motivating students with disabilities was also difficult. Since previous research did not look into this issue it is particularly valuable to understand what presents a challenge for teachers to implement the inclusive principle.

In conclusion, three problems that were identified by the highest number of teachers were time (24.5%), giving attention to students (18.4%) and parents (15.3%). Time was related to the 45-minute class periods, the time needed for preparation, and finding time to work with everyone at the same time. Giving attention to students presented a problem for teachers because they found it difficult to give everyone the attention they needed and required. As already explained, parents can be uncooperative.

3.4. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Some limitations that arose during this research study will be presented here. Firstly, teachers were not asked whether they work in a state school or in a private school. This distinction should be taken into consideration in future research on this topic to establish whether there is a difference between the two. Moreover, a question about the number of pupils in a certain school should also be asked to be able to conclude whether the teachers can receive the necessary support in their schools. Secondly, teachers were only asked whether they have attended professional development programmes, but they were not asked what they do on their own (for example read books, articles, etc.). This should also be of interest in the future. Thirdly, questions that were concerned with the adjustments were too broad. A lot of data has been collected with this research because of the nature of open-ended questions but not everything could be presented here. In the future a certain category of disabilities or a specific disability should be chosen. Moreover, it would be of benefit to focus on students with disadvantages arising from educational, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic factors and investigate whether teachers recognize those in their classrooms. Lastly, this research laid the groundwork for future research about inclusion in Croatian EFL classrooms. To get more data that truly show what the practice of teachers looks like, observation, interviews or focus groups should be used. By using observation, data about how Croatian EFL

teachers shape an inclusive practice would be obtained, and by using interviews teachers could more elaborately express their thoughts about what is missing in the current education of Croatian EFL teachers and how they would improve it. A researcher would also be able to ask additional questions based on participants' answers which was not possible in this questionnaire. Despite many advantages, the answers the participants provided in this questionnaire may not reflect what their teaching with children with disabilities looks like. It is possible that they gave answers they thought were expected. Furthermore, it seems that some participants did not carefully read the questions. For example, teachers were asked for what type of disability they believed was the hardest to provide inclusive EFL teaching, and one teacher wrote speech and language impairments, but she did not mark having experience in working with students with those disabilities when asked what disabilities students she worked with had. With methods such as interviews and focus groups this could be avoided.

4. CONCLUSION

In inclusive schools all children have the right to succeed. Children with disabilities have a right to be educated just like children without disabilities. However, their education can present a challenge for teachers due to many factors. Even though Croatia's legislation system supports inclusion, children's rights are often violated. Schools do not employ enough experts, and classes are too big. Therefore, it is difficult to ensure inclusive education when teachers are not getting the help and support they need. This means that teachers' rights are also violated. Without enough experts in the schools teachers do not receive the necessary support. The schools they work in do not follow the law because some of them work with more than 3 students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Ninety-eight Croatian EFL teachers took part in this research study, however, only a small number, 22 of them, attended a course about inclusion or a course about children with disabilities during their higher education. For that reason, it is encouraging that 66 of them attended professional development programmes on these topics. However, 17 of them answered that they did not attend a course about the previously mentioned topics, and that they did not attend a professional development programme on these topics. Considering the importance of lifelong learning, teachers need to have opportunities to continuously expand their knowledge. Professional development programmes are especially important if teachers' initial education did not lay a foundation for their work with children with disabilities. Unfortunately, teachers believed that they needed to have knowledge of other experts, such as pedagogues and psychologists (e.g., "*you have to be a defectologist, a psychologist...*", "*the knowledge of a speech rehabilitator and an educational rehabilitator are needed..*"), to ensure that the inclusive principle was implemented in an EFL classroom.

From the answers of 8 teachers, it can be concluded that schools did not follow the law when it comes to the number of experts and experts they should employ in their schools. One school only employed a psychologist, two schools employed a psychologist and a librarian, and five schools only employed a pedagogue. Even though cooperation between teachers and members of the school expert team is important, there were teachers who did not consult with anyone. For instance, one teacher had a pedagogue, a psychologist, an educational rehabilitator and a librarian in her school, but she did not ask for advice from anyone. The lack of support that affects teachers' work is visible in an answer of one teacher whose school only employed a pedagogue who worked part-time so when she needed advice she talked with her "*friends and colleagues who work with students with similar disabilities and with a friend who is an educational rehabilitator*". On the other hand, a teacher who had 4 members of the expert team in her school, a pedagogue, a psychologist, an educational rehabilitator and a librarian, did not ask them for advice because she believed they did not understand her subject. This lack of cooperation was also identified by teachers as one of the factors that presented a problem in including students with disabilities in an EFL classroom. However, there were answers which show how teachers cooperated with their colleagues, e.g. "*We are all like a team and we help each other.*", "*The pedagogue in the school is the only one who can help me with the methods and techniques of working with those students.*" Although teachers sought advice, 53 answered that the information they received was not enough. This could be of interest in future research because teachers should be asked what kind of support they need. Teachers also need to be aware of mechanisms that exist that could help them.

A small number of teachers, 10 of them, believed that their teaching was not inclusive while 48 believed that their teaching was inclusive. Forty Croatian EFL teachers could not decide whether their teaching was inclusive. Consequently, adequate support, help and obeying the law

could change this. According to this sample of teachers, three biggest problems with the inclusion of pupils with disabilities in an EFL classroom were time, giving attention to students and parents.

Doing more research with teachers who work with children with disabilities is necessary if we want our education system to change. The conditions teachers work in together with their education need to be improved. If children with disabilities are just included in schools, but they do not have the same rights as other children, that is not inclusion. The number of children with disabilities in schools is not a real indicator of whether the inclusive principle is implemented in our schools. The disability a child has does not define him/her. They can succeed if the system changes.

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