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Paper

Inclusive education in Croatia

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1. Introduction

The process of educational integration is supported in the Republic of Croatia for more than 20 years. Throughout the last decade, when describing Croatian educational system we have been using the term ‘inclusion’ which is gradually replacing the term ‘integration’. Furthermore, the expression ‘students with developmental difficulties’ is being replaced with the expression ‘students with special needs’.

In the context of Croatian educational system, educational integration should be perceived as one form of a broader social integration, whereas inclusion may be considered as a progress in the social integration process.

From 2004, the development of the Croatian National Educational Standard (CNES), guides and leads schools toward the realization of mandatory educational objectives and toward the desired learning outcomes. An integral part of CNES are improvements of teaching and learning practices, with an emphasis on the learning environments and methods of work that are adjusted to the needs of students with ‘special educational needs’.

The widely accepted term ‘students with special educational needs’ include students who are in some way different. The groups which belong to the mentioned category are: gifted and talented students; students with developmental disabilities, students with health impairments, behavior disorders, at risk behaviors, learning difficulties, cultural disadvantages; and socio-economic disadvantages.

When discussing the concept of inclusion through the current educational changes, it is apparent that educational policies address all school students who are in some way different and who require adjustment of learning environment, teaching methods and techniques, individualized programs, adjusted contents and communication techniques.

It is important to emphasize that inclusive practices are not solely focusing on the school environment, but facilitate social inclusion of the individual with special educational needs. There is an important role of a local community, where each individual is supposed to satisfy his/her needs, develop to the full potential and give his/her maximal contribution. The main goal is not to solely provide integration for people with special needs, but to assure inclusive living conditions in which all of their educational and everyday needs are satisfied.

1.1. Legal framework

Republic of Croatia is a signatory of the UNESCO “Convention on the Rights of the Child” and UN “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, which are addressing issues of inclusion. Hence, Croatian legislation tried to regulate inclusion as holistically as possible. The new curriculum is geared towards inclusive approaches in the classroom, such as new teaching methods, clearly defined goals, and reliable monitoring and evaluation practices.

In Croatia, there is no educational policy document that is elaborating on inclusion in a direct way. Nevertheless, ideas on inclusive practices are incorporated in educational policy documents, which results with a provision of inclusive education. In addition, all of the relevant Croatian education policy documents emphasize equal right to education and training for all. This approach includes all groups of students according to their own abilities, needs and individual development, regardless of their socio-economic status.
In Croatia, there are no official inclusive schools. Nevertheless, in order to provide equal conditions for horizontal and vertical mobility, all of the students with special educational needs’ are given equal chances and provided with an additional assistance. It is apparent, that the main goal of Croatian educational system is to provide an adequate support for students with special educational needs and not to focus on their difficulties.

Ministry of Science, Education and Sport does not have separate department that is responsible for implementation of inclusive practices in Croatian educational system. In that matter, it is important to emphasize that MoSES has individual counselors that are working on the issues that are directly linked to the students with special educational needs and inclusive practices. In addition, it is important to emphasize that Croatian educational system is passing through the changes and that special education experts are directly involved in the creation of a new inclusive Croatian curriculum. Furthermore, Agency for Education and Teacher Training and City Office of Education, Culture and Sport Education has counselors and other professionals that are assuring that inclusive practices are taking place in the schools.

In the Republic of Croatia, the education (pre-school, primary school and secondary school) of students with special educational needs has been regulated by the following acts:

- Act on Preschool Education (Official Gazette, No. 10/97)
- Act on Primary Education (Official Gazette, No. 69/03 - purified text)
- Act on Secondary Education (Official Gazette, No. 19/92 and 27/93)
- The Decision on the Element of Criteria: Specific Needs of Students with Developmental Handicaps (Official Gazette, No. 47/87)
- Regulations on Special Requirements and Criteria of Realization of Programs for Preschool Education, (Official Gazette, 1997)
- Regulations on Enrolment of Students in Primary School (Official Gazette, No. 13/1991)
- Regulations on Primary Education of Students with Developmental Handicaps (Official Gazette, no. 23/91)
- Regulations on Number of Schoolstudents in Classes (Official Gazette, No. 74/99);
- Regulations on Qualifications and Pedagogical-Psychological Education of Teachers and Expert Collaborators in Primary Educational System (Official Gazette, No. 47/96)
- The Regulations on Secondary Education of Schoolstudents with Difficulties and Major Developmental Handicaps (Official Gazette, No. 86/92)

1.2. The right to education
The Croatian Constitution guarantees that all citizens are equal before the law and that citizens “enjoy all rights and freedoms regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth education, social status, or other characteristics.” The state has assured that all students have the right to be educated and trained. According to the Constitution of Republic of Croatia pre-school, secondary and higher education are not compulsory, but are available to all under equal conditions. Primary education is compulsory and free for all students. While, textbooks are free for all elementary schools students (1-8 grade) and students that are attending first grade of secondary school.
1.3. Structure and organization

Croatian legislation tried to regulate inclusive education in a high-quality way. In general, it may be concluded that these efforts were to a large degree successful. So that, not only that all students have the right to be educated and trained, but also students with special educational needs are receiving an increased state concern.

Inclusive education practices are incorporated in Croatian educational system structure from preschool education, through primary and secondary education to higher education. In this sense, various programs are implemented on different educational levels. For example, on a preschool level there are regular programs for students with special educational needs, programs for gifted students, programs for students’ members of ethnic communities or minorities, and special regular programs (e.g., ecological programs).

The structure of provision of inclusive practices is the same throughout the educational system. Education of students with special educational needs is performed in:

(a) regular institutions (kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools)

- inclusive settings (regular educational groups, regular classes)
  - according to the regular curriculum;
  - according to an adjusted curriculum

- mainstream classes (special educational groups)
  - according to adjusted curriculum
  - according to a special curriculum

(b) special educational institutions

- according to regular curriculum
- according to an adjusted curriculum
- according to some special curriculum

1.3.1. Preschool

Students with special educational needs may be attend programs that are working in accordance to adjusted curriculum for preschool education, special educational groups, or special educational institutions. Special educational needs are determined, based on the evaluation of the primary health care physician and by the professional committee that is organized in accordance to the law. This professional committee functions in accordance with the Regulations on the composition and method of the body of experts in the procedure of actualization of claims upon the social care (Official Gazette, No. 38/98). Therefore, an adjusted preschool curriculum is established on the basis of findings and opinions of the professional committee, which is organized in compliance with the law and which arranges relations within the social care area and determine types and the degrees of developmental special needs.

According to the Act on Preschool Education, students with special needs have a priority on enrolment in public preschools. Funding of preschool education in the Republic of Croatia is at the local management and self-management level (municipal or county authorities). However, since the state takes special care of the persons with special educational needs, the preschool programs for students in special educational groups or special educational institutions are being co-financed from the budget, through the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.
Also, various social and private initiatives for opening preschools with a variety of programs are encouraged. The provision of a variety of preschool programs has a positive impact on the inclusive practices on the level of preschool education.

1.3.2. Elementary/primary school

According to the Regulations on the Number of Schoolstudents in the Class (Official Gazette, No. 74/99), inclusive classes can have at the most three students with special educational needs. Furthermore, there are strict limitations on the number of students with special educational needs in inclusive classes: a class with one student with special educational needs can have maximum 28 students; the class with two students with SEN can have total of 26 students; while the class that has three students with SEN can have total of 24 students. Students with special educational needs that are attending inclusive classes follow either regular or adjusted curriculum.

Students with sensory and motor impairments (visual, hearing and physical), who are attending regular classes, receive needed professional treatment after the regular school hours. These treatments are individual or in groups of six to ten students.

Students with minor mental retardation and without major developmental handicaps are educated in mainstream classes of five to nine students. This placement is dependable on a type and degree of developmental difficulties. Students that are placed in mainstream classes are mastering Croatian language, mathematics and science according to the adjusted curriculum, while they are attending art, music, technical and physical education in regular classes.

For those students who due to illness could not attend school for a longer period of time, the so-called "teaching at home" is organized. The teachers and members of expert services from the school that the child attends carry out the teaching. Hospitals organize classes for students who are hospitalized for a longer period of time. Teachers and members of expert services from the regular primary schools carry out teaching and tutoring in hospitals.

Education of students with special educational needs requires additional financial expenses, which are covered from the central level. The financial resources for additional expenses of the teaching materials and aids, transport, co-financing of food for students with special educational needs in regular schools and special education institutions are provided in the same way.

1.3.3. Secondary school

Secondary school enrollment is carried on the basis of the Decision on Elements and Criteria for Selection of Candidates for Enrolment in the First Grade of Secondary Schools for that particular school year, stated by the Minister of Science, Education and Sports and compliance with the Law on Secondary Education.

Inclusive education is achieved by grouping of students with special educational needs in a class within the secondary school, according to regular or an adjusted curriculum with implementation of individualized treatments and additional help from the special teacher - collaborator, or by an organized prolonged professional treatment. Up to three students with developmental difficulties can be included in a regular class, and a class should have no more than 30 students. Also, the students with SEN could be placed in special classes, or in training groups with 6 to 15 students, according to an adjusted or special plan or curriculum, with an additional special teacher's assistance, or by an organized prolonged professional treatment.

Students with motor impairments and/or chronic illnesses, who cannot attend school, receive an organized assistance at home or in a health institution. Regular schoolteachers and members of expert services conduct the tutoring and teaching at home and in hospitals.
1.3.4. Higher education
University/higher education is a part of lifelong education. By the acceptance of the Bologna
Declaration in May 2001 and by endorsement of a new Law on the Scientific Activity and Higher
Education (Official Gazette No. 123/03), university studies and specialist courses in the Republic
Croatia have been brought into line with the European.

In the educational programs, the Bologna Process provides the framework for modernization of the
curriculum and its harmonization with the EU standards. Priorities for initial education as well as
in-service training acquires quality subject knowledge, student-centered teaching methods,
familiarity with the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), and an awareness of
national identity, inter-cultural understanding and competency in foreign languages.

At various university and polytechnic programs, students can study full-time and part-time. The
costs of full-time studies are either partly or in complete subsidized from the state budget. On the
other hand, part-time students in most of the cases hold a job and pay for their own studies.

Within the higher education funds, the Republic of Croatia provides also stipends and resources for
student support. There is an established criterion for the financing of accommodation and nutrition
of students. Also, there is an established criterion for the allocation of state scholarships and
supporting of programs and student projects.

In Croatia, students with physical impairments had to face different types of barriers, some of them
being visible and material-architectonic. Non-profit student organizations “Korak” (The Step),
founded in 2002, together with “Šišmiš” (The Bat) - Organization of blind and partially sighted
students, started the fight for public recognition of the problem and for the actual changes that
would smooth the progress of studying at the University and the everyday life of physically
disabled students in general. These nongovernmental student initiatives resulted with the improved
accessibility of the Universities in Croatia.

1.4. Main recent developments in the system
There are four key development priorities in the Croatian education sector, namely:
• Improving the quality and effectiveness of education;
• Stimulating the continuing professional training of teachers and other education sector
  employees;
• Developing strategies for improving the management and efficiency of the education
  system; and
• Promoting education for social cohesion and economic growth and development.

Croatian educational system is currently passing through an ongoing reform.
Elementary school – The Croatian National Educational Standard (CNES) has been created as a
basis for the changes in the teaching program and work methods in the elementary school system
for the purpose of developing the "school tailored to students''.
Secondary school - National Centre for External Evaluation, as the central institution, in
cooperation with schools, prepares and carries out the State Matura and national exams for each
grade level (1-4). The basis for creating a National Qualification Framework is the definition of
State Matura competences.
Higher education – Implementation of Bologna Process in Croatian Higher Education is ensuring
that following issues are passing through ongoing changes: system of transparent and compatible
academic degree standards; system of higher education based on two cycles; European grading
scale, the ECTS; mobility; EU co-operation and quality assurance; EU higher education dimension;
lifelong learning; higher education and students, promotion of advantages of the European higher education area.

1.5. Some statistics
During the last census, some sections for disabled persons were included in the census document. As per this data gathered by the State Bureau of Statistics for Croatia (Table 1), there were 429,421 disabled persons (9.6% of the entire population). In the last years considerable progress concerning the establishment of a database about persons with disabilities has been made.

Table 1. Population in the Republic of Croatia according to sex and age and number of disabled persons as per sex and age, census 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population/disability</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>30 and more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of inhabitants</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,437,460</td>
<td>486,050</td>
<td>567,190</td>
<td>600,128</td>
<td>2,764,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2,135,900</td>
<td>248,992</td>
<td>289,851</td>
<td>304,405</td>
<td>1,283,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2,301,560</td>
<td>237,058</td>
<td>277,339</td>
<td>295,723</td>
<td>1,480,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled persons</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>429,421</td>
<td>3,553</td>
<td>7,467</td>
<td>15,594</td>
<td>401,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>245,897</td>
<td>1,976</td>
<td>4,451</td>
<td>11,884</td>
<td>227,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>183,524</td>
<td>1,577</td>
<td>3,016</td>
<td>3,750</td>
<td>174,539</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the year 2006, Ministry of Science, Education and Sport started an electronic data collection on the students with special educational needs. This data gathering is following the cross-national categorization (UNESCO-OECD-EUROSTAT) of special educational needs and focuses on the support services for students with SEN. In a systematic data collection on the students with special educational needs (e.g. Table 2), the MoSES had intention to move from the focus on disability to the approach that focuses on the support services for students with SEN.

Table 2. MoSES data for school year 2004/2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS</th>
<th>INCLUSIVE SETTINGS (students in regular educational groups, students in regular classes)</th>
<th>Students in MAINSTREAM CLASSES OR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>392,963</td>
<td>9,133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>191,735</td>
<td>1,227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Educational Policy

2.1. The EU and Government educational policy
Accession to the European Union creates new challenges for the Croatian educational system, such as attaining greater levels of quality, flexibility, mobility and responsiveness to changes in Croatian society and the European Community.

As part of the process of application for EU candidacy, Republic of Croatia developed several strategies with action plans, which initiated reforms of education system and made links between different sectors (e.g. National Strategy of Unique Policy towards Disabled Persons 2007 to 2015).

Through the exchange of good educational practices in fields such as teacher training, basic foreign language skills, information and communication technology, finance, management and counseling, and informal learning and teaching, a coherent education and research sector is emerging in Europe.

Accession to the European Union includes the assumption that Croatia has its own educational system, and its quality is approaching the level of those in the member states. Globalization and the
resulting inter-dependence of the countries of the world have been accepted as a process in which national identity and national interests are not lost. Therefore, a strategic document was prepared as the starting point for changes to the education system. This document was the “Declaration on Knowledge – Croatia Based on Knowledge and the Application of Knowledge” by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts of 2004.

2.2. Development of education policy
In responding to the aforementioned issues and initiatives, a national document on education entitled "Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010" (ESDP) was adopted in 2005. Priorities in educational development are: improving the quality and efficiency of education, supporting the continuing professional development of teachers and other education personnel, development of management strategies for an efficient educational system and education for social cohesion and economic growth and development.

The Development Plan is founded on the principles and goals of the Lisbon Declaration \(^1\) “Education and Training until 2010” of 2000. This declaration calls on member countries to modernize their education systems to allow the EU to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.

In the same way, the Development Plan also relies on the Copenhagen Declaration \(^2\) (2002) by the European ministers responsible for vocational education. The plan is also influenced by the Bologna Declaration \(^3\) which relates to the establishment of Europe as a unified area of higher education by 2010, which is of crucial importance for promoting the territorial and professional mobility of citizens and their search for employment. The Republic of Croatia signed the Bologna Declaration in 2001.

3. Inclusive Education in Practice

3.1. Resources and support
The additional resources (personnel, equipment, additional financial resources) are provided for students with special education needs according to the law regulations. An integral part of the Croatian National Educational Standard (CNES) are guidelines for curricular accommodations and support for students with special educational needs.

The CNES represents an open approach that allows the constant improvement of educational system, and is in line with the demands and needs of the economy and society. In order to improve the quality of education, which plays an important role in the economic and social development in the 21st century, it is important to move from factual knowledge and focus on the learning to learn competence, creativity and problem-solving skills. These educational objectives set in Croatia correspond to the educational objectives in the developed countries of the European Union, the United States and Japan. They are directed towards building a knowledge-based society in which the school system is primarily intended to prepare a student for higher and specialized education, and for life-long learning.

The CNES improves the Croatian educational system by promoting the principle of schools for everyone and by taking into consideration special educational needs and the special needs of groups and individuals. Teachers are required to enable each student to be successful. Along with the content-related and organizational adjustments made through a differentiated teaching approach, necessary structural adjustments are also required. An individual focus and an adjusted curriculum are planned for students whose achievements fall significantly below the expected level. This primarily refers to the senior final classes and teaching matter based primarily on abstract thought.

\(^1\) [http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/index_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/index_en.htm).  
\(^3\) [http://www.muros.hr/Download/2005/05/03/3_BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.pdf](http://www.muros.hr/Download/2005/05/03/3_BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.pdf).
In cooperation with the students and their families, certain activities are planned to lead students into the world of work according to their interests and needs. Also, it is important to stress an important role of the local government and institutions that are under jurisdiction of other Ministries in employment of people with special needs.

3.2. Curriculum and support
It is important to emphasize that Croatia still does not have curriculum but national teaching plan and program. Council for National Curriculum was established and is working on curriculum creation and implementation. One of the curricular goals is single-shift schooling with a full-day teaching schedule and a better selection of elective and optional classes.

Curriculum defines objectives and tasks, school subjects and teaching matters, duration and basic forms of program execution, annual and weekly number of classes for each particular school subject, as well as methodical, didactic and other conditions for their realization.

There is no unique adjusted program that could apply to all students with special educational needs. Planning and programming and immediate work with each student should be individualized, reflect students educational needs, personal characteristics and specific requirements. When making adjusted programs, and especially during their implementation there are a number of prerequisite conditions to be met, i.e. as follows:

- to determine the level of student's abilities and knowledge for each particular subject;
- to set short-term goals, as well as annual educational objectives;
- to determine student's special educational needs and the ways of meeting them;
- to determine the amount of student's participation in the regular program activities;
- to establish the beginning and duration of individual support;
- to determine the objective criteria, means and methods for the evaluation of educational aims;
- to indicate the expert profiles in charge of setting-up, realization, evaluation and possible modification of such programs;
- to accept the fact that some students with special educational needs can make a same progress as their peers (in all or in some school subjects), while others will make a progress just to a certain degree. Also, to recognize that that there is no single student that cannot be educated, taught or trained according to his/her individual developmental abilities and individual educational needs.

Selection of information sources, teaching aids and didactic material implies the material basis of educational process, as it represents sources for gaining knowledge and developing skills. The application of general and specific teaching didactic materials, aids and equipment (e.g., audio-visual, visual, auditive) is of exceptional importance, as well as use of one's direct experience. Unfortunately, provision of adjusted didactic materials and assistive technology is one of the main obstacles for quicker and higher quality development of inclusive education.

3.3. Teacher training and support
In the Republic of Croatia the term 'teachers' includes: pre-school teachers, primary school teachers (both class and subject teachers), secondary school teachers (general education subject teachers, vocational teachers, practical tuition teachers, practical tuition assistants, handicraftsmen in trade workshops and instructors in firms) and expert collaborators (education specialists: pedagogues, psychologists, special teachers, social workers and health staff, school librarians).

Teachers are trained for working with students with special educational needs. Teacher training focuses on the terminology, definition, ethiology, phenomenology and classification of special educational needs; characteristics of special educational needs; forms of work with students with
special educational needs - adjustment of curriculum, teaching methods and principles, observation, evaluation and teaching technology, and participants in education of students with special educational needs (parents, experts, peers, humanitarian organizations).

Teachers express a very strong need for education-rehabilitation support and additional education in work with students with special educational needs. Some of them become senior consultants and collaborate with other school experts (special teachers, speech pathologists, psychologists, pedagogues), in implementation of individualized regular or adjusted programs for students with special educational needs. Within the framework of inclusive education assistance and support the special education-rehabilitation experts are working in "resource room" as individualized approach.

It is apparent that the success of educational inclusion does not depend only on teachers, but it is based on the teamwork of members of expert services. In this respect, we should point out to the role of the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, the first and the only one Croatian institution of higher education engaged in scientific, educational and professional work concerning persons with special educational needs. The Faculty is organized in 7 departments: Department of Vision Impairments, Department of Hearing Impairments, Department of Motor Disorders, Chronic Diseases and Art Therapy, Department of Mental Retardation, Department of Logopedics, Department of Behavioural Disorders and General Department of Education and Rehabilitation.

Furthermore, the School Learning Communities are taking leading position in a development of the new school, where teachers can learn in a partnership with their students. In this environment, the school principals have a key role in supporting and carrying out inclusive education. To perform these tasks successfully, principals must understand the characteristics of special educational needs and support for students with SEN, possess knowledge of the curriculum, contemporary teaching methods, and forms of learning. They need to be agents of change, leaders, providers of resources and material improvement, innovators, and they need to develop good communication skills. Hence, it is necessary to establish training programs for principals to prepare them for more intense cooperation between schools and local communities, and parents. Also, there is a need for establishing a new program for training principals, due to the non-existence of the institutional education of principals and because of the insufficient management and leadership capacities at educational institutions.

Due to teachers’ lifelong learning, there are ongoing changes in continuous teacher training. Education and Teacher Training Agency and Agency for Vocational Education are establishing Teacher Learning Communities a county level throughout Croatia. Teacher Learning Communities serve as a support and training source for teachers who are making bases of didactic and working materials, exchange of ideas and organize supervision of the ongoing projects. These specialists become educators’ experts for the teaching training.

New forms of teaching and learning will be developed in the classroom and outside of school. This process will be achieved by improving the initial training of teachers, extending probation periods for young teachers, providing intensive continuous professional in-service training for teachers and professional training for principals and staff associates.

4. Transition

4.1. Through educational system

There is strictly structured transition support frame for students, which is characterized with a low flow. After they have finished primary school, all students are entitled to continue their education in some secondary school. Final admission of students is based on their school results during primary schooling, as well as on their abilities and interests.
The processes of learning and teaching will aim to promote lifelong learning, while respecting social and individual needs in order to facilitate employment. Through appropriate and effective support, students are encouraged to remain in the education process. A supportive atmosphere will be developed, partner relationships encouraged, and the educational content will be linked with practical applications.

It is necessary to develop measures for improving the monitoring of education such as educational supervision (professional and pedagogic, management and inspection) to guarantee respect for education legislation and standards. The existing supervision needs to be gradually guided toward evaluation (internal and external) of educational establishments and the system as a whole.

4.2. From Education to Employment

In all regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Employment, departments for professional orientation have been established, which are responsible for informing and counseling students on choosing the appropriate secondary school education and provide career guidance. The Institute for Employment has taken steps towards a more individualized approach in offering its services to people with special educational needs. There is a high unemployment rate in Croatia, but for those who cannot be employed there are provisions for long-term social, financial and training support.

It is necessary to establish unified data gathering methodology on the labor market needs and the educational system at all levels. This methodology will provide the foundation for the further development of educational system, professional information, guidance and counseling.

5. Conclusion

There has been a great progress in the area of education, training and youth. Croatia is continuing the education reform process under the Education System Development Plan 2005-2010, which establishes a framework of national indicators and benchmarks. In this process, many elements of reform in Croatia have been outlined and legally endorsed. Education inclusion in Croatia has been well established in law and policy. However, there have been certain problems in practical implementation, which will hopefully be resolved without delay.

There is currently no method of monitoring and evaluating the results of the educational process. A series of strategic decisions will be needed to achieve any permanent improvements in the quality of inclusive education. These decisions will be aimed at improving quality rather than implementing general systemic reforms. The future development of inclusive education will be directed toward teaching processes whose goals are to provide basic knowledge, problem-solving skills, preparation for future challenges and development of students’ general abilities.