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**Attitudes of Student Teachers and Teachers towards Integration – A Short Survey in Bavaria/Germany**

Markus Scholz, Markus Gebhardt and Tretter Tobias

**Abstract**

The study focuses on attitudes of teachers and student teachers in the field of Special Education in Bavaria towards integration of children with disabilities in regular schools. The results show support for the idea of coeducation. The degree of agreement seems to be influenced by the subject in which people majored in during their studies. Fifty-eight point eight percent of the student teachers majoring in learning disabilities show general agreement, whereas only 37.2 % of the group majoring intellectual disabilities do. Most teachers in the field of Special Education (55.9 %) think integration has a positive impact on school development. 78.8 % (teachers) to 96.3 % (students majoring in intellectual disabilities) share the opinion that the coeducation of children would work well.

**Introduction**

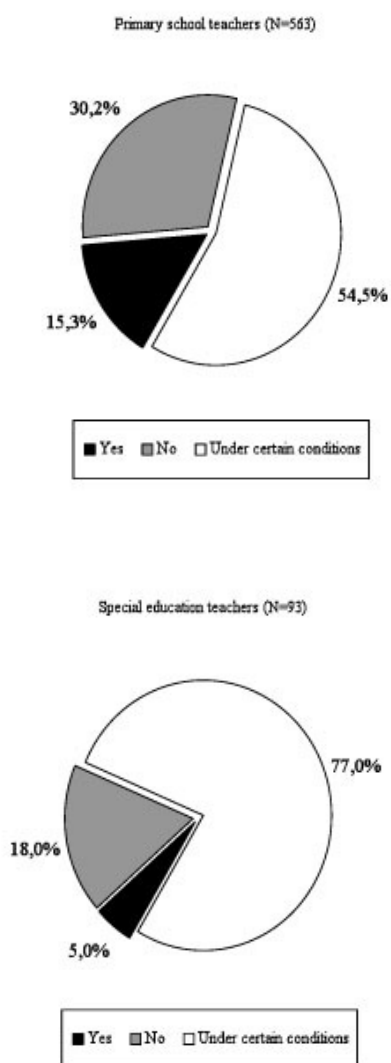
The ratification of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Germany reignited discussions about the integration and inclusion of students with disabilities in the federal German school system (Münch/Reith 2009, Drieschner 2008). Currently, the school system in most states is very selective. Exceptions on the secondary school level, however, can be found in Berlin or Rhineland-Palatinate. Until now, Students with disabilities are mostly educated in special schools. These special schools are divided into different "Förderschwerpunkte," which describe the needs of the children attending this school. In most parts of Germany, seven needs equalling different forms or groups of disability are distinguished: learning disability, intellectual disability, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disability, language disability, behavioural disorders. Each group has its own school, however pupils with behavioural disorders, language disabilities and learning disabilities are often combined in so called "Förderzentren" (furtherance centres).

Some people view this selective system as a contradiction to the ratified UN stipulations. According to recently published data of the "Kultusministerkonferenz" (governmental institution where all federal states try to develop a declaration of intent concerning schooling (short KMK)) the rate of integration of children with disabilities in German regular schools ranges from 2.8 % (intellectual disabilities), 17.4 % (physical disabilities) to 32.4 % for students with behavioural disorders (KMK 2008). These figures indicate, that the integration in regular schools seems to be strongly linked to the abilities they have. The statistics also reveal substantial differences between the states in Germany regarding the rates of integration. According to Heimlich and Behr, parts of the preschool system can be seen as more integrative due to the fact that there is less political interference (2003, 2009). The public and political interests are stronger focusing on elementary and secondary education, as well as elite furtherance. Concerned elementary school parents might also fear, that children with disability might handicap their own offspring from reaching their full potential.

The attitudes of student teachers and teachers working in the field of education is an important factor for future school development. Inclusion is a process which can originate within a system apart from governmental legal requirements (Hinz 2004). This article will discuss the attitudes of student teachers and teachers towards integration. The study will focus on schooling in the State of Bavaria, the largest federal state in Germany. The BayEUG (Bavarian Law for Education and Teaching) in its latest version, contains a legal basis for educating students with a disability in regular schools. However, there are certain criteria students must meet. A distinction is made between students who can participate in classes actively ("Aktive Teilnahme") and those who cannot. Only students who can participate actively may be educated in regular schools – but a discussion is still going on, what "actively" means in this case.

*State of research in Bavaria*

There is little research about attitudes of teachers towards integration or inclusion. Bundschuh, Klehmet and Reichardt (2006, 2005) published two studies which focussed on education of students with intellectual disabilities. The attitudes of primary school teachers as well as of teachers in the field of special education were analysed. The question "Do you think the education of students with and without intellectual disabilities is useful from a paedagogical point of view" was posed and the responses of these two groups were quite different (see chart 1).



**Chart 1: Questioning pedagogical necessity of coeducation (Bundschuh, Klehmet, Reichardt 206; Bundschuh**

In both groups, the majority of teachers believed there must be certain conditions fulfilled to coeducate students with and without intellectual disabilities. Not surprisingly the primary school teachers were more sceptical about integrating students with disabilities. Further answers in the questionnaire show that the group of primary school teachers neither seemed to be thinking that they are prepared (98.2 % "not prepared") for educating children with intellectual disabilities in their classrooms, nor did they have adequate knowledge about this group of children (79.2 % "no knowledge"). The Special Education teachers thought that children with intellectual disabilities could be integrated under certain prevailing circumstances (40 %) or with alternative schooling concepts (16 %). Some of them felt that not every child can be integrated (7 %) or that integration is only possible in certain subjects (5 %). Overall, the data indicates a very sceptical attitude towards integration and inclusion.

## Method

The presented study is based on parts of a questionnaire from Eckert and Schlebrowski (2007), which in generalise focuses on ethical areas of attitude conflicts in work with people with disability. Parts of the questionnaire that deal with integration have been used for this survey. All questions were self-involving to personalise the decision (see table 1). Two-hundred and fifty nine students of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich were questioned; 158 seniors at the end of the summer term 2007 and 101 students in their first semester at the beginning of the winter term 2007/08. Seniors were divided into two groups depending on their major (intellectual disabilities, 78 students; learning disabilities, 80 students), to identify differences linked to content of the subjects and teaching practice within the chosen special schools. The group consisted of 207 females and 52 males. In addition 34 teachers working at special schools around Munich were questioned.

**Table 1: Study Questions**

1.	If I had a disabled child, I would prefer integrative education at all events.	YES	NO	uncertain
2.	If I had a disabled child, I would prefer specific support instead of integrative education.	YES	NO	uncertain

3.	I would imagine that an integrative education of my child and disabled children would work well.	YES	NO	uncertain
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Every answer supporting integration was scored +1, a dissent to coeducation was scored -1 uncertainty was scored with 0 ("yes" in question one and three was rated with +1, question two was inverted so a "no" was scored with +1).

## Results

Cronbach's Alpha for supporting integration considering all questions was 0.556, which shows that the answers did not have a clear trend towards the hidden concept of "integration." A reason could be the wording of the questions. There seemed to be little or no conflict between the phrase "specific support" and "integrative education." Due to this fact every question was analysed separately (see table 2).

Concerning the first question a slight positive trend towards integration can be seen in the expressed attitudes (all arithmetic means >0.2), whereas teachers working in the field show the most sceptic opinion (AM=0.21). Within all groups agreement to the idea of integration dominates over disagreement. The rates here are ranging from 37.2 % (seniors majoring in education of people with intellectual disabilities) to 58.8 % (seniors majoring in education of people with learning disabilities).

**Table 2: Results of Questioning**

Question	Group	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	AM	Median	Modus
Q1 "If I had a disabled child I would prefer integrative education at all events."	Majoring LD (n=80)	5 (6.3%)	28 (35.0%)	47 (58.8%)	0.52	1	1
	Majoring ID (n=78)	4 (5.1%)	45 (57.7%)	29 (37.2%)	0.32	0	0
	First semester (n=101)	13 (12.9%)	40 (39.6%)	48 (47.5%)	0.35	0	1
	Teacher (n=34)	10 (29.4%)	7 (20.6%)	17 (50.0%)	0.21	0.5	1
Q2 "If I had a disabled child I would prefer specific support instead of integrative education."	Majoring LD (n=80)	37 (46.3%)	38 (47.5%)	5 (6.3%)	0.4	0	0
	Majoring ID (n=78)	22 (28.2%)	43 (55.1%)	13 (16.7%)	0.12	0	0
	First semester (n=101)	23 (22.8%)	43 (42.6%)	35 (34.7%)	-0.12	0	0
	Teacher (n=33)	9 (27.3%)	14 (42.4%)	10 (30.3%)	-0.03	0	0
Q3 "I would imagine that an integrative education of my child and disabled children would work well."	Majoring LD (n=80)	1 (1.3%)	2 (2.5%)	77 (96.3%)	0.95	1	1
	Majoring ID (n=78)	2 (2.6%)	4 (5.1%)	72 (92.3%)	0.9	1	1
	First semester (n=101)	4 (4.0%)	17 (16.8%)	80 (79.2%)	0.75	1	1
	Teacher (n=33)	3 (9.1%)	4 (12.1%)	26 (78.8%)	0.7	1	1

In general, teachers seem to have a stronger opinion about integration (only 20.6% uncertain). Students majoring in "education of people with intellectual disabilities", are particularly uncertain about their point of view (57.7% uncertain). The content of the university curriculum also seems to influence the attitude about integration of students. There is more agreement within the group of students majoring in learning disabilities, where the concept of integration is a main focus in university studies. So the difference both between all groups (Chi2 28,663, df=6, p=0,000) and between the group of students majoring in learning disabilities and students majoring in intellectual disabilities (Chi2 8,308, df=2, p=0,016) is significant.

Question 2 reveals that most groups are undecided as to whether specific support or integrative schooling is preferable (see table 2). Only student teachers majoring in learning disabilities seem to prefer integrative schooling over specific support (Chi2 28,911, df=6, p=0,000).

A reason for this outcome might be that the questioned groups do not really recognize the items "specific support" and "integrative education" as something mutually exclusive. Apart from the theoretical point of view, both terms are practically used within certain schooling concepts without any difference. Integrated pupils in regular classes get regular support by Special Education teachers on certain days of the week.

The final question shows a rate towards the idea within all groups of this survey. Approval is within the groups of the senior students, regardless of the subject majored (see table 2). This opinion seems to become less during a longer period of practical work (AM=0.7 within the group of the

teachers). In general, all groups (whether studying or working in the field), indicate a positive response in regard to inclusion. There is no significant difference between the group of students majoring in learning disabilities and students majoring in intellectual disabilities ( $\chi^2(1,143, df=2, p=0,565)$ ). In an additional question most teachers indicated a positive feeling towards the influence of integrative concepts in school development (55.9 % agreement, 14.7 % disagreement, 29.4 % uncertain).

## Conclusion

In general, results show a positive response towards the integration of students with a disability. There seems to be an agreement towards integration within all groups, although there are some differences depending on the majored subject in question one. Students with a major in Education for persons with intellectually disability show the most sceptical opinion. According to Bundschuh, Klehmet and Reichardt (2006) this seems to firm during the practical work as teachers. Those working in the field of learning disabilities generally have a more positive view towards integration. The attitude seems to be influenced by the clientele in their daily work. The more severe a disability is, the more concerns, there might towards integration. Current statistics about the number of pupils with disabilities educated outside special schools emphasise this point of view. The general opinion that "pupils must have a certain school readiness to get the chance for integrative education" indicates that Bavaria is far away from principles of inclusive education. Children with intellectual disabilities are affected the most, as they are generally seen to be hard to integrate in the educational sector (Avramidis, Norwich 2002). Between 2000 and 2006 the integration rate of these children did not reach over 2.8 % in Germany (KMK 2008). The above mentioned statistics indicate a substantial gap between the attitudes of students or teachers in the field of special education and the reality of school system. There could be several reasons for this: First there are only a few true integrative concepts for teachers to work with on a daily basis, especially focussing children with intellectual disabilities in Germany (Feuser 1989, Lamers 2000, Seitz 2003, 2005). And second, the Bavarian university curriculum for primary school teachers in Bavaria does not imply compulsory information about disability and integrative school concepts. Empirical studies underline that there is a large gap of knowledge in this subject (Bundschuh 2005). This can be linked primarily to the missing content within the university curriculum. Although special education teachers and students have a positive opinion about integration, the situation will not change unless student teachers in regular schools get at least basic information about disability and special needs education. Current curriculum changes in Bavaria to meet the "Bologna requirements" no evidence can be found that this demand will be fulfilled. At least for Bavaria, the conclusion can be drawn, that the segregating school system will not change in the near future.

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