

From Segregation to Inclusion in Germany

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the development of education in Germany and presents an account of a school experiment in Hamburg, an area of the country that has taken the biggest steps towards inclusive education. This account throws light on deep contradictions within the overall system. Nevertheless, there is evidence of some progress towards a more inclusive education system.

The first part of the paper contains some basic information about the country. The second part gives an overview of its structures of education to enable an understanding of the difficulties of integrative and/or inclusive education. It also gives some impressions of the development of integrative education. The third part reflects the situation and the development of German education, using a model of phases of development produced by my colleague Alfred Sander. The fourth part of the paper describes the development of integrated education in Hamburg generally and a project called ‘integrative primary school’, which seems to be the most inclusive project in Germany. Finally, I draw some conclusions.

Germany

Germany has a population of about 80 millions people. It is quite densely populated. In 1989/1990 the two parts of Germany – the former German Democratic Republic and the former Federal Republic of Germany – were united. But this was not an integrative or inclusive process, but rather a ‘take over’.

Since that time, Germany consists of 16 Federal States, each with their Sovereignty of Culture and their own Legislation and Curriculum. So, it is not easy to speak about the situation in Germany in general, but in every one of the 16 Federal States separately. But there are two general lines identifiable in the field of inclusive education: Firstly there is an increase from South to North and from East to West. And, secondly, one can see a difference between those federal states whose governments are led by Social Democrats and those led by Christian Democrats; although they both are not consequently promoting this field, Social Democrats are much more open-minded than Christian Democrats, who argue for the continuity of the German school system and its segregated and segregating structures.

To ensure a common framework, there is the Conference of Ministries for Education and Cultural Affairs who gives recommendations for all Federal States; in the field of special education in 1972 the Conference passed the “Recommendations on the Organisation of Special Schools” and 22 years later the 1994 “Recommendations on

Special Education in Schools of the FRG". The Obligatory includes nine years full-time, afterwards two years part time – in different forms and structures.

Structures of Mainstream and Special Education

Germany has very segregated structures compared with most countries of the world. For example:

- Preschool Education is optional – one of the few phenomena in which the eastern, once socialistic part of the country, still is in front. Children are mostly between three and five years old, but they can start already from less than one year.
- Primary Education contains four years, from six to nine years. This is the only phase when almost all children have education together. Only two Federal States have six years Primary Education – the age from six to eleven.
- In grade 5, most of the Federal States start with Lower Secondary Education which lasts five or six years, in the age from ten to fourteen or fifteen. Lower Secondary Education is available in different types of schools which have different academic standards – with high overlapping - and give different certificates:
 - The 'Gymnasium' has the highest academic standard and is comparable to the English Grammar School. In 1996 31% of all students in secondary education in Germany attended this type which leads to higher education.
 - The 'Realschule' has the medium academic standard; in 1996 27% of all students in secondary education attended this type which primarily led to jobs of employees.
 - The 'Hauptschule' primarily accommodates those students which will be workers. In the western part of Germany this type seems to be the school for the poor, for the immigrants and for the disadvantaged people. In 1996 25% of all secondary students went to this type of school.
 - In some Federal States there is – complementing but not replacing the others as first planned – the 'Gesamtschule', the Comprehensive School, which in 1996 accommodate 9% of all secondary students. The Federal States with a long tradition of Social Democrats leaded governments have lots of them, in some areas of Hessen or Nordrhein-Westfalen there are almost no other secondary schools, in some federal states like Hamburg the choice of school type was given to the parents with the effect of growing comprehensive schools. On the other hand there is no Comprehensive School in Baden-Wuerttemberg (with long-time Christian Democrats leading government) and only one comprehensive school in Bavaria with its long-time Christian Social Party led government – the Willy-Brandt-Gesamtschule in Munich.

After ten years of schooling the Higher Secondary Education starts. The 'Gymnasium' lasts two or three years and leads to higher education – so students have school leaving examination after twelve or thirteen years. The students who don't have the qualification to the 'Gymnasium' change to Vocational Education, where there are lots of different forms of organisation which lead to the apprenticeship or some preparatives.

Being a country with a very long history of special education, children with disabilities have the chance, or are forced, to live their whole school-life apart from the other children. For example:

- For a long time even the preschool education took place in Special Kindergartens which changed to a more common way of organizing in the 1980s and 1990s. Today most of the children with disabilities in preschool age have the chance to be integrated in regular kindergartens – and some of them also to be included.
- In Primary and Secondary Education there is a whole system of ten different types of special schools – according to different disabilities, still after the medical model: There are schools for
 - blind students
 - visually impaired students
 - deaf students
 - hearing impaired students
 - intellectual disabled students
 - physically disabled students
 - students with learning difficulties; the majority of special school students are accommodated in this type – a school which doesn't exist in the most countries of the world and a logical effect of the segregation in an early categorising school system.
 - students with behavioural problems
 - students with impaired speech
 - sick students (in hospitals, at home)

Most of the school types had some changes of their names and differ in the federal states.

After finishing Secondary Education in special schools, students with disabilities change to the Special Vocational Education, which serves a wide range of different possibilities of apprenticeship, vocational preparation or training for jobs. Viewing this in a positive way one could say that this system is a much differentiated one, in a problematic view it is highly selective.

From Special Education to Special Needs Education

After a silence of 22 years and an increasing deviation in education policy of the federal states, the “Recommendations on Special Education in the Schools of the FRG” in 1994 tried to create a common and – not surprising – a compromising way. Under the influence of international developments, particularly the Warnock Report in England, some changes took place and a lot of integrating practice was authorized.

The two main changes were the following:

- The concept of “need for education in special schools” was replaced by the concept of “special educational needs”.
- Special educational support became available in different forms of organisation:
 - through preventive measures
 - in joint education (in ordinary schools)
 - in special schools

- in co-operative forms (a special class in an ordinary school)
- in frame of special pedagogical support centres (mostly existing special schools)
- in the vocational training sector

The reactions of the German ‘movement for integration’ (see below) were quite varied – in federal states with a few integrated classes, they were positive because this practice was authorized now; whereas, in federal states with a higher quantity of integrated classes some reactions were dissatisfied because there was no push forward; this was not more than an authorization of existing practice.

Practice

The following is a summary of the development of integration over the last 35 years. It is a shortened representation and one with a certain perspective: the perspective of the integration movement.

- In the 19seventies: There were hard ideological discussions about integration – at a conference the president of the Association of Special Schools called integration the “Italian plague” (Prandl 1981). Some years later a leading professor for special education expounded the problems of “total integration as Endziel” - a formulation taken from the Nazi-propaganda. On the other hand, another professor for special education called for the closing of all special schools immediately, because they are “total institutions of violence”. At that time there was no practice of integration at all; maybe some similar or ‘embryonic’ forms in the sense of non-segregation and didactical differentiation.
- In the 19eighties: A parents movement started in all federal states of the western part. Lots of school experiments in most of the federal states began and these led to the production of lots of research reports. So, in 1987 there were about three monographs about the practice of integrative classes; ten years later they could be measured in meters.
- In the 19nineties: After the unification only one of the new federal states adopted the concept of integrated learning. All others constructed their school system within two years in the way western federal states had done before – according to the one which had acted as a ‘counsellor’. Generally, integrated education was becoming a universal phenomenon, combined with the problem of a wide diversification of forms of organisation and concepts. Almost everyone who tried to present a project in a positive way used the word ‘integrative’ – no matter what this specifically meant.
- After 2000: Germany – as did many other countries – experienced increasing financial problems. The development of integrated classes became stagnated. The contradictory fact is, therefore, that Germany runs two parallel systems: the segregation system with highly differentiated special schools, and some integration – the most costly way a country can go.

The latest statistics of the Conference of Ministries for Education and Cultural Affairs from the year 2000 show the current state in the field of special needs education, as follows:

Federal State	Special Schools		Mainstreaming	
Baden-Württemberg	52,000	4.3 %	16,400	24.0 %
Bayern	63,000	4.7 %	8,700	12.1 %
Berlin	14,000	4.1 %	5,600	28.8 %
Brandenburg	16,000	5.3 %	3,500	18.1 %
Bremen	3,000	4.1 %	1,700	38.3 %
Hamburg	7,000	4.9 %	1,400	16.0 %
Hessen	23,000	3.7 %	2,600	9.9 %
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	14,000	6.7 %	900	5.6 %
Niedersachsen	37,000	4.1 %	1,200	3.1 %
Nordrhein-Westfalen	94,000	4.5 %	8,200	8.0 %
Rheinland-Pfalz	16,000	3.6 %	11,200	40.3 %
Saarland	4,000	3.3 %	1,000	20.9 %
Sachsen	25,000	5.4 %	1,000	4.0 %
Sachsen-Anhalt	20,000	7.0 %	200	1.0 %
Schleswig-Holstein	13,000	4.1 %	4,000	24.4 %
Thüringen	18,000	7.0 %	1,000	5.1 %
Germany total	420,000	4.6 %	68,400	14.0 %

Table 1: Special schools and Mainstreaming in Germany (own calculation, Source: KMK 2000)

This table firstly shows that there still is a sizable number of students in special schools (column 2 and 3), with a range of between 3.3% and 7%, increasing from the west to the east - not of students with special educational needs but only in special schools! Secondly, it shows a very heterogeneous picture in respect to how many students of all with SEN belong to the mainstream, in ordinary schools (column 4 and 5). This percentage ranges from 1% up to 40% - but one has to be suspicious here, because this table only shows the amount of labeling, not of mainstreaming, and one has to look in detail to which persons, with which disabilities, these numbers belong. For example, it is surprising that Baden-Württemberg has a much higher percentage of children with SEN in mainstream than Hamburg – but if one recognizes that Baden-Württemberg counts every case of counselling as ‘integration’, and that Hamburg has not one single student with learning difficulties, behavioural problems or impaired speech in primary schools because they are not labelled, this becomes understandable.

Phase of development

A German colleague, Alfred Sander (2003), pointed out that there can be differentiated between different phases in the development of education for persons with disabilities. These phases can be generalized for education overall (see Hinz 2004). Sander defines five phases: exclusion, segregation, integration, inclusion and general education, which now are illustrated for a better understanding of the development in Germany:

During the phase of **exclusion** many persons have access to education, they are the green (= the normal, maybe ‘severely normal’) ones. In contrast to the majority some persons don not have access to education, these are the ‘others’, the ‘blacks’. Between

them and education is a strong line – this could symbolize a big wall around education, or it could represent the ground the ‘others’ are lying in, as in the German history not long ago.

In the phase of **segregation** this wall has fallen. Everyone has access to education – but there is a big ‘But’. Because learning groups are put together by the biggest homogeneity students have to be as equal as they can be. So there is a learning group of the ‘greens’, the ‘normal’, the group how students have to be; if a person is too different, he or she has to change into the group of the ‘yellow’ – where all other ‘yellows’ are together, to his or her and to all others best. But it can be the problem that there again is a person which is too different to the others; now he or she has to change to the group of the ‘red’. And again it might happen that there is a ‘too different’ person, which has to go to the group of the ‘violet last drops’. This symbolizing can be used for general education – the ‘Gymnasium’ is the ‘green’, the ‘Realschule’ the ‘yellow’, the ‘Hauptschule’ the ‘red’ school – and the ‘violet last drops’ are the different special schools. And again and again it is discussed whether there should be some special schools for the ‘blue stars’ – for profound, severe and multiple gifted students. Or – as Sander intended – it can be used for the system of special schools: The ‘greens’ are the schools for blind, visually impaired, deaf and hearing impaired students, the ‘yellows’ are for the students with learning disabilities, the ‘reds’ are for students with intellectual disabilities and ‘violet last drops’ are the students with severe and multiple disabilities. And the ‘blue stars’ could be students with some special abilities like people with autistic behaviour have... Conclusion: People are well-assorted, the system has its order, looking good, everything is okay.

In the phase of **integration** still there are the ‘green’ ‘normal’ being in the majority, but within this ‘green’ learning group there also are some ‘yellows’ – a bit at margin – and some ‘blue stars’. And if there are some ‘reds’ who would like to be integrated, they have to be taken from outside to inside by the others. And this also can happen with one or the other ‘violet last drop’, if circumstances and conditions are beneficial and there is political intention and plenty of luck – maybe...

With the next step to **inclusion** there is no longer the dominating ‘green’ learning group, with its normality. The group is mixed up with all kinds of colours and there is no one who has to be integrated from outside in because all are already inside – as people living in the neighbourhood they belong to and are welcomed in the school of the environment. And there is no possibility to exclude someone from this group, if the school is an inclusive and diversity celebrating one. Nevertheless this is not the end of the development.

In the phase of **general education** – in the remote future - differences are normality. Heterogeneity with all the different dimensions (ability, gender, ethnicity, race, first language, social ambience, sexual orientation, religion etc.) is a starting point for learning in every school and every class, so no one has to think and to discuss about a special topic called integration or inclusion.

In this view, it has to be said that Germany has to be assigned to the phase of segregation. Nevertheless the movement for integration shows some development to the phase of integration – not in the sense that the whole system would change in that direction but in the sense that increasingly there are different views and practices side by side. Although inclusion widely is discussed now for only two years (Sander, 2002;

Hinz, 2002), there are some initiatives that can be assigned to the phase of inclusion. One of them is described in the next section of the paper.

An example of practice from Hamburg

This example is chosen because Hamburg is the federal state which has taken some steps towards inclusive education. These have been as follows:

- In 1983 the three first 'integration classes' in three primary schools started after hard fights by 'parents for integration'. The conditions were: A class with 20 children in total accommodates up to four children with SEN - irrespective the kind and degree of disability. Additional to the teacher, there is an educator in all lessons and a special education teacher in five to ten lessons per week. Further principals of these classes are the voluntariness of all persons, the possibility to learn with different aims and the proximity of residence. The school board at that time thought that this would be the end of this bothering theme in Hamburg, because these loud and powerful parents were satisfied now. But the following classes were installed every year so there was a development of one class per grade provided as 'integration class' - an important moment to avoid the existence of 'integration islands' within a school.
- As a result, in 1987 groups of these 'integration classes' started in secondary schools, mostly in comprehensive schools. Here the conditions and principals were the same for the learning group with a general assignment of a halftime special education teacher and a three-quarters-time social worker per class. This was also hard-earned, this time with the background of the competing types of secondary schools, especially between the Comprehensive School and the 'Gymnasium'. But the parents had been well prepared and some of them worked as teachers in these schools. In the following years, 'integration classes' in secondary education were increasing continuously, enabling all parents of children in 'integration classes' in primary schools to continue (see Schley, Boban, & Hinz 1989/1992; Schley & Kobberling, 1994; Kobberling & Schley, 2000).
- In 1988, when the German 'primary school award' had been given to 'parents for integration' for the initiative of the 'integration classes', they handed over the money to the school board of Hamburg, asking for something that would support the development of integration. So the money was doubled by government and a common 'counselling and teacher training centre for integration' was introduced. This centre proved to be very useful, especially for the exchange of views between persons involved in the field of integration. This tended to focus on two main themes: teaching heterogeneous learning groups and the building up team-structures for problem-solving. The second subject was of enormous importance at that time because during the first five years 20 colleagues left for various reasons and rumours were afloat about the terrible conditions of working in these classes. After a study (Boban, Hinz, & Wocken, 1988) and a lot of work about this problem, it disappeared.
- One year later the government of Hamburg created a commission for the development of a second concept of integration, although the idea of 'integration classes' had been seen to be successful (see Wocken & Antor, 1987; Wocken, Antor, & Hinz, 1988). This social democratic government sees an imbalance between different parts of the city and of the representation of the population under diverse social conditions. So there was to be a second approach to integration and additional to the initiative of parents there should be the possibility of initiatives of schools.

- In 1991 a second model was introduced, called the ‘integrative regular class’ – a curious term; this form of integration should be integrating and it would not be an experiment but as soon as possible a general organisational form for the school. Both forms came together in the school experiment ‘integrative primary school’ – the implementation as regular form was not realizable – and the school were challenged to develop their own concepts with the resources they were given.
- The approach begins with the idea that primary schools which include all pupils of the neighbourhood will get additional resources (i.e. a half-time special education teacher per class). The aim is very clear: the inclusive primary school for all based on the following principles:
 - At school entry and during the primary school period there is no labelling. If any primary school accommodates all children of the neighbourhood no labelling is needed, since it is assumed that about 10 % of all children during this time, in some moments, need some form of additional support. Additional resources, primarily special education teachers and educators, are therefore given to all of these schools.
 - The whole school is concerned with integration, not only some classes. The background for this is the impossibility of understanding why some children with SEN are in integration classes and yet excluded from the neighbouring ‘normal’ classes, something that had previously been the practice.
 - This approach is primarily available for schools in disadvantaged areas of the city because of the social imbalance that exist in these districts. In these environments there had not been any parents fighting for integration.
 - The approach is focused on children with developmental problems. During the ‘integration classes’ sometimes the problem turned up that more children developed special educational needs than expected and there only were three or four places given for children with SEN a class at school entry. So the teams could only act in two, not beneficial ways: Not label the child and not getting the additional support (called ‘black integration’) or label the child with the risk of exclusion to a special school.
- Despite these gains, some contradictions remained. For example:
 - There is no continuity in secondary education, so at the end of primary school children who do not reach the goals of the curriculum have to be labelled, have no free choice for different types of secondary schools, and are at risk of being excluded from general education to special schools.
 - It is a contradiction in itself if there are two different forms of integration in the concept – which causes selective processes and corresponding diagnostics between these forms. The challenge of building their own school-concepts by the school board has tremendous positive outcomes; see for example HINZ 1998, where the development of a primary school over 15 years is described and analysed with a focus on different dimensions of diversity: ability, gender, culture, age, and social background.
 - From the beginning, two opposing criteria of success were established – one asking for the realising of including all children and the other asking for a reduction of special educational needs. This conflict existed within the school board, within the research group – but not in the group of practitioners, who always saw the expectation of a SEN reduction as an illusion.

- The 'integrative primary school' started in 1991 with 27 classes (first grade) in 13 schools, and increased to 378 classes in 36 schools in the year 1997 when the research group finished its report.
- The results of this experiment are documented in four monographs (Hinz et al., 1998a, 1998b; Katzenbach & Hinz, 1999; Rauer & Schuck, 1998). Generally the following can be said:
 - The 'integrative primary school' was able to include all children - also in areas of social disadvantages, mostly without engaging parents.
 - The attitudes of the participation colleagues and schools changed slowly but surely and with different speeds - the need for exclusion decreased in favour of problem-solving within the school; and the atmosphere in staff rooms changed from moaning about some students to reconstructing of the situations of them. The large majority of the educators of all professional groups supported this concept strongly.
 - In the oldest grade, special education teachers reported an increase from grade one to grade four of nearness and common planning in the teams, not a increasing functional distinction.
 - Lots of the schools developed their own concepts, with a merging of the two different forms of organisation towards a whole 'inclusive school', with an integrative, intercultural, coeducational, age- and social-mixed approach (see an example in Hinz, 1998).
 - In terms of academic standards (especially reading, writing, maths), compared to other primary schools in similar areas of the city there were more similarities than differences. However, the integrative classes included more heterogeneity and the means of academic standards were lower in keeping with this trend. But differences between classes and schools were more explicit than between the two systems.
 - In terms of the emotional and social situation, there were no important differences between the different types of primary schools.
 - In some schools there was a tremendous fluctuation of pupils; in some classes within the four years of primary school over 40 pupils had been members of a class with about 25 children.
 - At the end of the 'integrative primary school' there was no reduction of special educational needs; therefore, lots of these children had to go to special schools at grade 5.
- With this background, the perceptions of the results of the 'integrative primary school' are quite diverse: one side sees the experiment as ineffective and unsuccessful; the other sees the opposite. The research group recommended a continuation of the policy, to improve the practices in the sense of the concept and to enlarge the project to all primary schools that want it. At that time, additional to the 35 schools in practice, there were over 60 applications from primary schools that wanted to enter the project, from about 230 primary schools in Hamburg. The government of Hamburg introduced a moratorium - the participating schools were allowed to go on with their work (and with their resources), but new schools were not allowed to start, so the project has not been enlarged.
- By the end of the 1990s, in Hamburg every fifth primary and every tenth secondary school practices one or two forms of integrated education - almost all comprehensive schools but not one 'Gymnasium' - the biggest 'special school' in Germany one could say.

- In 2002, after 30 years, the Social Democratic led government was replaced by a new, right-wing government which wanted to stop the model of the 'integrated primary school'. After hard protests from parents, practitioners, teacher unions and other associations, a commission was created to develop an ongoing concept of the difficult 'integrative primary school'. But in December 2003 the right-wing government fell and in February 2004 there will be premature elections - so the fight for inclusion continues.

Conclusion

The example of the Hamburg 'integrative primary school' shows that there can be progress towards inclusive education in Germany. Ideas such as the whole school approach, the renunciation of labelling for children with learning, speech and behavioural problems, a (for Germany) high level of school autonomy with the challenge of school-based concept-building, and the individualisation of the curriculum, are all steps on the journey from integration to inclusion, in the sense that was defined by Alfred Sander. This progress has occurred in spite of the extremely segregation-minded structures of the German school system, although these existing contradictions have not been resolved. So there are very different situations at the same time: a system with dominating segregation, lots of integrative projects and practices in almost every federal state and a few projects with an inclusive approach, with Hamburg as the most advanced example.

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