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„Attitudes of Austrian English teachers regarding inclusive education in the EFL classroom“

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Edita Hasanovic

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Mitbetreut von / Co-Supervisor:	Ass.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Michelle Proyer

Abstract

In recent decades the rights of children and persons with disabilities have become increasingly important. Today more and more focus is given to inclusive education: the placement of children with disabilities and special educational needs in mainstream education instead of special schools. In relation to this, often the attitudes towards inclusion of all stakeholders involved (teachers, students, parents) play an important role. The aim of this study was to explore teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

For this purpose, a questionnaire study was conducted with 49 English language teachers who teach in lower secondary schools (AHS and NMS) in Vienna. The findings revealed that teachers generally have a positive attitude towards inclusive education. However, they perceive their self-efficacy as low in that regard. They seem to understand the importance, value and advantages of inclusive practice in mainstream education. Still for the majority of the teachers inclusive practice would be a challenge. Furthermore, they consider children with a physical disability and those with dyslexia to be the easiest to accommodate in their EFL classes, while participation of those with sensory disabilities, like blindness and deafness, is considered highly restricted in mainstream English classes. Moreover, the hypothesis that advanced training and the experience in teaching children with disabilities play a role in forming positive teacher attitudes was confirmed. Despite the teachers' awareness of the benefits of inclusion and their overall positive view, they believe that personnel, material and spatial resources are needed in order to respond to all students' needs and enable a successful inclusion process in mainstream schools.

In order to develop a full picture of attitudes, additional research into students’ and parents’ attitudes towards and perceptions of inclusive education would offer further insights into how best to implement inclusive practice.

Kurzfassung

In den letzten Jahrzehnten haben die Rechte von Kindern und Menschen mit Behinderungen zunehmend an Bedeutung gewonnen. Heutzutage wird der inklusiven Bildung mehr und mehr Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt: die Eingliederung von Kindern mit Behinderungen und sonderpädagogischen Bedürfnissen in die Regelschulbildung anstelle von Sonderschulen. In diesem Zusammenhang spielen oft die Einstellungen der Beteiligten (Lehrer, SchülerInnen, Eltern) zur Inklusion eine wichtige Rolle. Das Ziel dieser Studie war es, die Einstellungen der Lehrerinnen und Lehrer zur inklusiven Bildung zu untersuchen.

Zu diesem Zweck wurde ein Fragebogen mit 49 Englischlehrerinnen und Englischlehrer, die an Schulen der Sekundarstufe I (AHS und NMS) in Wien unterrichten, durchgeführt. Die Ergebnisse zeigten, dass die Lehrerinnen und Lehrer im Allgemeinen eine positive Einstellung gegenüber inklusiver Bildung haben. Allerdings empfinden sie ihre Selbstwirksamkeit in dieser Hinsicht als gering. Sie scheinen die Bedeutung, den Wert und die Vorteile einer inklusiven Praxis in der Regelschulbildung zu verstehen. Dennoch wäre für die Mehrheit der Lehrerinnen und Lehrer die inklusive Praxis eine Herausforderung. Darüber hinaus halten sie Kinder mit einer körperlichen Behinderung und solche mit Legasthenie für am einfachsten in ihren Englischunterricht unterzubringen, während die Teilnahme derer mit Sinnesbehinderungen, wie Blindheit und Taubheit, im allgemeinen Englischunterricht als stark eingeschränkt gilt. Zudem, wurde die Hypothese bestätigt, dass Fortbildung und die Erfahrung im Unterrichten von Kindern mit Behinderungen eine Rolle bei der Bildung positiver Lehrereinstellungen spielen. Trotz des Bewusstseins der Lehrerinnen und Lehrer für die Vorteile der Inklusion und ihrer insgesamt positiven Sichtweise sind sie der Ansicht, dass personelle, materielle und räumliche Ressourcen benötigt werden, um auf die Bedürfnisse aller Schülerinnen und Schüler einzugehen und einen erfolgreichen Inklusionsprozess in den Regelschulen zu ermöglichen.

Um ein vollständiges Bild der Einstellungen zu entwickeln, würden zusätzliche Forschungen über die Einstellungen und Wahrnehmungen von Eltern und Kindern zu inklusiver Bildung weitere Erkenntnisse darüber liefern, wie inklusive Praxis am besten umgesetzt werden kann.

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List of abbreviations

AHS	Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule
ATI	Attitudes towards inclusive education
BMBWF	Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ELT	English Language Teaching
NMS	Neue Mittelschule
SEN	Special Educational Needs

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context and rational for the study

As persons with disabilities often experience segregation, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) aims to protect the rights of disabled persons and enable them full equality under the law since the year 2006 (UN 2006). Since 2008, Austria has also been a party to the Convention and required to ensure equal access to all aspects of life without discrimination of any kind (BMSGPK 2020). In the course of this Convention, the education sector in particular has been discussed in recent years. Like many other countries, Austria's education system includes the segregated provision of education for pupils with disabilities who generally go to special schools or special institutions. These disabilities are often referred to as 'special educational needs' (SEN) and cover physical disabilities, sensory impairments, specific processing difficulties as well as emotional and behavioural problems. However, an increasing focus is placed on the inclusion of children with SEN within the mainstream school.

Inclusive education is defined by the UNESCO as "an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination" (2008: 3). Its fundamental principle is that all children should be given equal provision to education and not be excluded from mainstream education due to disability. In Austria, SEN are no longer a reason for excluding a child from mainstream education right from the outset. According to the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, all learners with SEN have the legal right to be either educated in a special school or in an integrated setting (BMBWF 2019).

Among other factors, often the importance of attitudes towards inclusive education, in particular those of teachers, parents and students, is emphasized in order to achieve a successful implementation of inclusion in schools. To date there has been no reported studies, investigating the views of English teachers in Austria on inclusive education. Thus, this thesis investigates the attitudes of Austrian English teachers towards inclusive education in the mainstream EFL classrooms. Furthermore, success factors for inclusion in the school setting from a teachers' perspective are examined.

1.2 Research questions of the study

The thesis at hand attempts to provide insights into Austrian EFL teachers' viewpoints on inclusive education within mainstream schools. In particular, the following research questions will be investigated:

1. What views do Austrian lower secondary education English teachers have on the class participation of students with disabilities in their English classes?

2. What attitudes do they have towards the inclusion of students with disabilities and / or special educational needs in the EFL classroom?

3. Do training and experience in teaching disabled students have a positive influence on teacher attitudes towards inclusion?

4. What resources for teaching English in an inclusive setting and what measures for a successful implementation of inclusive schooling do teachers consider necessary?

In order to answer these questions, a quantitative research approach, in the form of a survey, was employed. For this study, an online questionnaire with EFL teachers who teach the lower secondary level (AHS or NMS) in Vienna was conducted.

1.3 Layout of the study

This thesis is structured into two parts. The first is the theoretical part which contextualizes the present study, whereas the second part presents the empirical project. Chapter two is a general introduction to inclusive education within mainstream schools. Before presenting the concept of inclusive education, two terms that play a crucial role in it, namely disabilities and special educational needs (SEN), are defined. Moreover, the education and inclusion of children with disabilities in Austria are examined, focusing first on the policy on how to handle these children and then on Austria's pathway towards inclusive education. Next, the actual situation of inclusion is presented. The following chapter shifts the focus onto inclusive education in the EFL classroom. Thus, chapter three is concerned with inclusion in the EFL classroom. As attitudes are the ultimate topic of this thesis, the fourth chapter is devoted to teacher attitudes towards inclusive education. More precisely, chapter four begins with a presentation of different definitions of attitude and then continues on explaining the importance of attitudes towards inclusive education. This is followed

by a discussion of factors which are child-, teacher- and school-related and have an influence on teacher attitudes.

The second part of this thesis focuses on the empirical study. Chapter five includes a description of the methodology. It outlines the chosen research design, its structure and content, the data collection and the study's participants. In the sixth chapter, detailed survey findings which are set out under five broad themes are presented and followed by an analysis of the study's results and its correlation to the literature reviewed in the seventh chapter. Finally, chapter eight presents some concluding remarks, including a summary (of the complete research), implications of the research and recommendations for further research.

2. Inclusive education

In this chapter, the theoretical concept of inclusive education and related terms will be discussed with a particular view on Austria. In the first subsection, *disabilities* and *special educational needs* are defined. In the following subsection, the concept of inclusive education will be discussed. The last part of this chapter covers inclusive education in Austria.

2.1 Disabilities and special educational needs

The terminology of *disability* has been revised over the last decades as some expressions are outdated. The deficits of individuals were emphasized as a result of describing them as ‘dumb', 'crippled' or 'handicapped' and thus, stressing what they fail to do due to incapability in comparison to their peers (Smith 2006: 84). Furthermore, the term 'disability' as a medical term focused on an individual's ‘physical abnormality’ and on the developments in segregated education (Smith 2006: 84f). Even though more socio-cultural models have been set as an alternative, the medical principle has not been effaced especially since the implementation of the term ‘special educational needs’ (SEN) that is widely used in educational contexts.

The Austrian Ministry of Education states that “a disability is understood as the effect of a not merely temporal physical, mental or psychological impairment or impairment of sensory functions which is likely to make participation in class difficult” (BMBWF 2019, own translation). Generally, there are two groups of disabilities. The category ‘disabilities’ ('Behinderungen') involves children and adolescents with medically defined disorders or injuries. These are typically physical or mental disorders or disorders of the sensory organs. The second group are ‘learning difficulties/disabilities’ ('Lernschwierigkeiten') comprising children and young people who have behavioural, learning or language difficulties. They need support in order to understand social connections and to follow the lesson. Moreover, these learning disabilities describe students' low reading skills and low basic arithmetic, and characterize their IQ as average but low compared to students without LDs (Gebhardt et al. 2013).

Furthermore, the differentiation between learning disabilities and learning problems is essential. In the case of a learning impairment, it is important to distinguish between learning problems, such as performance problems, and a learning disability, which is based on a

physical or psychological disability (BMBWF 2019). Learning problems, such as learning weaknesses, dyslexia, behavioral problems or language disorders, must result from a developmental disorder diagnosed as a disability. In this case, children with learning problems get special educational needs.

Special needs education is concerned with the special educational dispositions taken for learners with disabilities and focuses on the promotion of children and adolescents with these disabilities in the acquisition of education. It is claimed that it is normal for every child to have special needs but these do not necessarily have to be related to education (Griffin & Shevlin 2007). If students require extra help in school compared to their peers they are referred to as students with special educational needs (Ferguson 2014: 15). This means that a causal connection between the presence of any form of disability and a learner's inability to follow lessons at a regular school must be in place, despite exploiting all pedagogical possibilities within the framework of the general school system (BMBWF 2019). If this is the case, learners with a disability are considered to have special educational needs. According to Article 8 of the Compulsory School Act in Austria, 'special educational needs' is used as a legal term to define whether special educational services are needed for specific students:

> *[S]onderpädagogische[r] Förderbedarf [ist] für ein Kind festzulegen, sofern dieses infolge einer Behinderung dem Unterricht in der Volksschule, Mittelschule oder Polytechnischen Schule ohne sonderpädagogische Förderung nicht zu folgen vermag. Unter Behinderung ist die Auswirkung einer nicht nur vorübergehenden körperlichen, geistigen oder psychischen Funktionsbeeinträchtigung oder Beeinträchtigung der Sinnesfunktionen zu verstehen, die geeignet ist, die Teilhabe am Unterricht zu erschweren*
>
> *[Special educational needs are ascribed to a child if, due to a disability, he or she is unable to follow instruction at a primary school, secondary school or pre-vocational school without special educational support.]* (BMBWF 2019).

The CiSonline (Community – Integration/Inklusion –Sonderpädagogik)[1] distinguishes between the following types of special educational needs: learning, language, emotional and

[1] www.cisonline.at/home

social development, hearing and communication, vision, mental development, physical and motoric development, autism and the teaching of sick pupils.

2.2 The concept of inclusive education

The phenomenon of the diversity of children and young people has been described repeatedly over the last two centuries. Towards the end of the 20th century, it came increasingly to the fore and received outstanding consideration as a current pedagogical guiding concept (Biewer et al. 2019: 12). The construct of 'inclusion' emerged initially in the area of special needs education intending to reduce or eliminate the segregation of students with special educational needs from mainstream education. There have been international debates that justified the concept in terms of human rights and its social, educational and moral aspects. As a result, the scope of the construct has expanded in recent years and emphasized the importance of providing equal access to educational environments to all students. This emphasis is reflected in the definition by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

> *Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.* (UNESCO 2009: 8–9).

According to Salend (2001) inclusion can be understood as an ideology that unites learners, families, teachers and community members with the aim to create educational and social institutions focusing on the values of acceptance, belonging, and community.

According to Travers et. al. (2010), the purpose of inclusion is the establishment of a collaborative and supportive school environment that offers all pupils the facilities which are needed to enable each individual to learn. Furthermore, inclusion welcomes all students with different characteristics by creating an educational space that focuses on each individual's qualities and strengths. Travers et al. (2010) state that "inclusion is being in an ordinary school with other

students, following the same curriculum at the same time, in the same classrooms, with the full acceptance of all, and in a way which makes the student feel no different from other students".

Moreover, inclusive education aims at abolishing discrimination of any kind and building a social unity. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) supports this argument by stating that inclusive education is the most effective method for "combating discriminatory attitudes, and [...] building solidarity between children" with SEN and their peers without SEN (Ferguson 2014). Furthermore, inclusion emphasizes the creation of "learning environments within the mainstream classroom that can cater for pupil diversity" (Griffin & Shevlin 2011; in Mahony 2016: 4). Inclusion practiced in schools, gives each individual child particular consideration. It aims at accommodating and responding to the needs of learners with SEN.

Furthermore, the concepts of heterogeneity ('*Heterogenität*'), diversity ('*Diversity'*), difference ('*Differenz*'), and variety ('*Vielfalt'*) have developed. Heterogeneity ('*Heterogenität*'), stems from the debate in school education and refers to the diversity of individuals, groups and educational organisations (Walgenbach 2017: 12f.). Concepts of heterogeneity were already seen as a central theme of school in the 19th century (Budde 2017: 15). Heterogeneity always requires comparative characteristics and is associated with the concept of homogeneity (cf. Sturm 2016). Heterogeneity is in the German-speaking area traditionally associated more with compulsory education, homogeneity, however, has traditionally been more of a guiding concept of secondary schools (ibid. 13ff.). Diversity *('Diversity')* refers to a subject discourse that was developed in economics and business studies and introduced into educational science (ibid. 92). The theoretical tradition of the USA and Canada provides the background here, and diversity was understood as an enrichment for education and upbringing, but also as an anti-discrimination strategy. The concept of difference *('Differenz'*) has arisen in educational contexts due to the perception of differences as deficits (ibid. 94ff.). Although difference semantically does not refer to valuations, the debates with which the term entered the discussion in educational science do indeed aim at differences that were associated with deficits compared to a norm (Biewer et al. 2019: 13). Variety ('*Vielfalt'*) is a concept that has its place both in educational and social science discussions, such as in a pedagogy of diversity, and in everyday language use (ibid. 13). Heterogeneity and difference in their present use, have a descriptive rather than a normative

character. As an educational science concept, variety, like diversity, tends to have positive values and often refers to people who are considered vulnerable or marginalized.

The literal German translation of vulnerability is '*Verwundbarkeit*' or '*Verletzlichkeit*'. In the social context, however, the term also refers to "people's sensitivity to stress and risky life situations" (Fingerle 2016: 422). The concept of vulnerability is often associated with the term resilience. Resilience refers to the ability to survive difficult life situations without sustained impairment (ibid. 425). Various forms of exclusion are also referred to as 'marginalisation'. Vulnerability is directly related to processes of marginalisation. (Biewer et al. 2019: 14).

An older approach from the late 1980s and early 1990s is that of 'diversity education' ('*Pädagogik der Vielfalt'*) (Prengel 1995). This involves three pedagogical movements: intercultural, feminist and integrative pedagogy. Prengel notes that each movement has its particular strength in different problem areas. The strength of integrative pedagogy is that people who learn differently can learn together and achieve great individual performance improvements. What these movements have in common is exclusion and the common desire to participate in education (ibid: 171). Exclusions from education are seen as a consequence of ideas of higher or lower value, i.e. ideas of hierarchy. Special pedagogies were conceived for women, disabled children and minority cultures, which went hand in hand with a bourgeois image of women, with the idea of the otherness of disabled people and the special educational needs of foreign children. Prengel criticizes the movements for their special images of humanity and special forms of schooling. She also criticises the educational models which focuses solely on the adaptation of immigrants to a receiving majority culture, of women to predetermined role models and of disabled children to the performance standards of the average student. Differences can lead to inferiority or devaluation (Biewer et al. 2019: 18). Therefore, it is assumed that 'diversity education' ('*Pädagogik der Vielfalt'*) is the adequate pedagogical answer as it stands for multifaceted currents in the educational sciences that accepts heterogeneous ways of living and learning as equal and strive for their inclusion. Basically, 'diversity education' and 'inclusive education' have the same meaning (Prengel 2015: 157). Prengel's idea pioneered educational science positions in the 1990s, which are currently being supplemented by the concept of intersectionality as a further social science approach and inclusion as a social mission statement (Biewer et al. 2019: 18).

Another form of marginalization is the concurrence of several lines of difference, which can lead to over- and subordination, preference and disadvantage. These include gender, sexual orientation, skin colour, social status, religion, culture, disability, origin, etc. This phenomenon is called intersectionality and comes from the term 'intersection' and can be translated into German '*Durchdringung'*, '*Schnittfläche'*, '*Überschneidung'*, and '*Straßenkreuzung'* as a metaphor which symbolizes that paths meet there. Intersectionality does not only focus on one of the lines of difference that has meaning in concrete cases. A child with a disability, for example, could be viewed exclusively from this perspective. This has often been the case in special education in recent years. As the child may have a migration background, does not speak the language of the host country, is not familiar with the culture, the family has to fight for economic survival, and the residence status in the host country is not secured, the child is faced with a combination of marginalising life situations. Given the multitude of aggravating life situations, it is difficult to determine the most important one (ibid. 2019: 20f.).

Nowadays, 'inclusion' is used as a guiding term in international organisations as well as in descriptions of the educational systems of individual countries worldwide. Meanwhile it often replaces the term 'integration', which for a long time stood for the common ground of children with and without disabilities. However, both terms conceal different content-related ideas. The conceptual differences that accompany the change of concept from integration to inclusion are not always clear (ibid. 2019: 22.). Integration is solely based on the placement of learners with SEN into regular school. It is regarded as "a process of placing [children] with disabilities in existing mainstream educational institutions, as long as the former can adjust to the standardized requirements of such institutions" (CRPD 2016: 11). What this means is that children with SEN have to adapt to the system of the school. According to UNESCO's Salamanca Statement (1994), however, the adaptation of the school to the needs of each individual learner is the focus of inclusion.

Exclusion has been present in sociological discussions for decades as a concept that is contrary to inclusion. Inclusion is a more recent educational science term. While the term originated in the course of American discussions on the school education of children with disabilities at the end of the 1980s, international organisations and especially UNESCO played a decisive role in its rapid global distribution. With the Salamanca Declaration in 1994, the term first appeared in a prominent

global context (UNESCO 1994) and was aimed at children with special educational needs. While at that time the focus was primarily on children with disabilities, in the following years UNESCO expanded the target group of inclusion to include all groups at risk of exclusion and marginalization (UNESCO 2009), and at the same time declared inclusion as a central concept for the development of the entire school system.

Inclusive education refers both to pedagogical action and to "theories of education, upbringing and development that reject labels and classifications, take their starting point from the rights of vulnerable and marginalized people, plead for their participation in all areas of life and aim at a structural change of regular institutions in order to meet the diversity of preconditions and needs of all users" (own translation, Biewer 2010: 193).

In addition to the focus on the school sector, inclusive education is also understood as human rights-based education. The view of educational action on the basis of human rights however is not shared by all education researchers (Biewer et al. 2019: 23.).

When using the concept of inclusion in educational contexts, it is important to bear in mind two differently broad concepts that were developed in different phases. There is a narrow and a broad concept of inclusion (Biewer & Schütz 2016). The narrow concept of inclusion refers to the content of the 1990s and to children with special educational needs or disabilities. From the year 2000 onwards, an internationally broader concept of inclusion, which includes all other groups that can be excluded and marginalized in the field of education, such as religious minorities, migrant children, children in conflict zones, etc., arose (UNESCO 2009: 7).

2.3 Development towards an inclusive school system in Austria

2.3.1 Special school system

In 1962, the most significant school reform came with the School Organisation Act (‘Schulorganisationsgesetz’, SCHOG 1962) and formed "the basis for the organisation of the Austrian school system until today" (Buchner & Proyer 2020: 84). In terms of disability, the new act was very important. As a result, the special school was determined as the central place for best education for children and adolescents depending on their disabilities (Engelbrecht 1988). Thus, all students with disabilities were provided access to education. Hence, concerning the education system in Austria, a ‘two-track approach’ (European Agency for Development of Special Needs

Education 2003) has been adopted: the general school system and the special school system. Between the 1960s and 1970s, a massive expansion of special schools and a growing number of students with SEN attended these educational settings came about. The education of learners with disabilities was separate from the regular school system up until the 1980s (Schwab 2018: 23).

2.3.2 Integrative school system

From the 1980s, the mandatory segregation of students with disabilities was challenged by parents and several organisations. After a public debate on disability and education, pilot projects in mainstream primary schools started in some Austrian federal states. Gradually, the request to change the law and integrate students with disabilities was given. In 1986, students with physical or sensory disabilities were allowed to attend mainstream schools due to a decree by the Austrian Ministry of Education and two years later pilot projects in mainstream schools have the force of law. Furthermore, 'integrated schooling' was introduced in primary schools by law in 1993 and students with and without disabilities were offered the opportunity for a shared learning experience. Consequently, parents were given the legal right to choose a mainstream or a special school for their children. At the same time, in lower secondary education, integration pilot projects had started and in 1996 ‘integrated schooling’ at this level was legally valid as well (Buchner & Gebhardt 2011: 298). Thereupon, school boards allowed amendments to the curriculum for individual students (Buchner & Proyer 2020: 86). As the Austrian education system has a federal structure, though, the states showed varied policies to implement 'integrated schooling'.

Thus, a few years later a half of all students with SEN attended mainstream schools. Furthermore, after a stagnation of policies accompanied by no increase of students with disabilities placed in mainstream schools for over a decade, the concept of integration was reconsidered (Buchner & Gebhardt 2011). The aim was "to cater for students with disabilities in mainstream schools by providing specific settings with additional pedagogical resources, which were thought to allow teachers to create educational spaces that fit the needs of all students" (Buchner & Proyer 2020: 87). In order to achieve this, three models of integrative schooling were formed: (1) integration classes, (2) single integration and (3) cooperative classes (Feyerer 2009). The ‘integration class’ (‘Integrationsklasse’) is regarded as "the most common structure intended to foster integrative education" (Buchner & Proyer 2020: 87). Compared to a regular class, in an integration class the number of students is reduced. Usually in this educational setting, there are five to seven students

with officially diagnosed SEN and around two-thirds of all students without disabilities (Gerhardt et al. 2011: 279, Buchner & Proyer 2020: 87). Moreover, in integration classes additional personal resources are provided: a special education teacher teaches the class collaboratively with a primary or secondary education teacher in order to cater for every students' needs (Feyerer 2009). In the 'single integration setting' ('Einzelintegration' or 'Stützlehrerklasse'), one or two individuals with SEN become part of a regular class (Gerhardt et al. 2011: 279). Furthermore, they are supported by a special education teacher (4-8 hours a week) who is expected to "provide remedial teaching in relation to the diagnosed disability of the student and/or counsel class teachers and parents concerning the participation and remedial activities of the student" (Buchner & Proyer 2020: 87). The 'cooperative class' ('Kooperative Klasse'), describes a class of up to ten students with diagnosed SEN taught by a special education teacher. As such classes are located in the regular school setting, they "are supposed to be taught together with regular classes for some lessons in the week, usually in subjects with rather low expectations of academic performance such as arts or physical education" (Buchner & Proyer 2020: 87). Nevertheless, the two-track-approach of the Austrian school system persisted in spite of all the changes. Thus, special education continued to exist. In further consequence, centres for special education ('Sonderpädagogische Zentren') were concerned with the equipment of special education teachers in mainstream education settings. Also in the 1980s, no modifications in teacher education were made and learning disabilities were still the focus of numerous modules of the curricula.

In the late 1990s, however, changes in the structure of teacher education became apparent and modules concentrated on the preparation of students to teach in integrative or special education settings. Integrative schooling "laid the foundation for a re-orientation of teacher education" (Buchner & Proyer 2020: 84). Moreover, in some courses teacher students learned about "the individualisation of learning processes and adaptive learning, stemming from progressive education, such as open learning settings (e.g. 'station learning', project work)" (Buchner & Proyer 2020: 88). Even though some courses focused on the concept of inclusive education, most of them highlighted especially learning disabilities. Since the mid-1990s, though, teaching practice for students in integrative settings was permitted.

2.3.3 Inclusive school system

The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008 is considered as a trigger for a changed discourse around the integration of students with disabilities in school. This time was characterised "by efforts to make the Austrian education system more inclusive" (Buchner & Proyer 2020: 83). Intensive discussions were held in Austria on the quality of inclusive education and the continued existence of special schools. Based on the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, measures were agreed in 2012 to fulfil the obligations of the Convention and published in the National Action Plan ("National Action Plan", NAP 2012-2020). Two main objectives of the NAP came in useful for inclusive education: the implementation policy of 'inclusive model regions' ('*Inklusive Modellregionen'*) and the reform of the teacher education ('*Lehrer*innenbildung NEU'*). The aim of the policy on inclusive model regions (BMBF – Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen 2015) is "to encourage federal states to implement inclusive school settings and reduce special education in segregated settings". In the school year 2015/16, the federal states of Carinthia, Styria and Tyrol started with these inclusive model regions in order "to gather experience on the transformation processes, develop good practice, and transfer this knowledge to other federal states to encourage them to become a model region as well" (Buchner & Proyer 2020: 88). What the Ministry intended was to make all nine federal states become inclusive model regions. In practice, the inclusive educational quality and support facilities at regular schools are to be expanded in such a way that segregating facilities are preferably no longer needed (ibid.). In 2017, the federal state of Vorarlberg submitted a request to the Federal Ministry to also become an inclusive model region. As a result, these efforts around the ratification process of the CRPD brought about a national rise of children with disabilities in mainstream education. In the school year 2016/2017, 61% of all students with an official diagnosis of SEN were placed in regular schools (Mayrhofer et al. 2019). This implies that throughout Austria, over a third of all students labelled with SEN are educated in special schools. Considerably more students with disabilities attended mainstream schools in the inclusive model regions (Svecnik & Feyerer 2019). In the model regions as well as in other Austrian federal states, students with SEN are educated in integration classes, single integration settings or in cooperative classes. Although there has been criticism of cooperative classes as they hinder social participation (Feyerer 2009), these classes still continue to exist in the model region of Carinthia for learner with intellectual disabilities (Svecnik, Petrovic, & Sixt 2017). Nevertheless, the dual structure of

the Austrian education system remains the same. In 2015, the label of the former 'centres for special education' was changed to 'centres for inclusive and special education' (‘*Zentren für Inklusive und Sonderpädagogik’*). However, "their place and function in the system did not change, as a lot of them were still located in special schools and were meant to provide special schools and inclusive settings in mainstream schools with teachers" (Buchner & Proyer 2020: 89). With the new educational reform in 2018, a transformation of this structure by the creation of organisational units called FIDS (Unit for Inclusion, Diversity and Special Education) was aimed.

3. Inclusion in the EFL classroom

This chapter covers inclusion in the English language classroom. The first subsection gives an overview of the central aspects of research and practice that support inclusive didactics of foreign languages. Effective inclusive teaching in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT) is dealt with in the second subsection.

3.1 Inclusion and foreign language didactics

Besides the fact that inclusion presents new challenges to foreign language learning and teaching, first and foremost, it is important to ensure that learners with disabilities or learning difficulties are not excluded from learning a foreign language at school and have the same access as the rest of the learners. According to McColl (2005), “all young people in the European Union, whatever their disability, whether educated in mainstream or segregated schools/streams, have equal rights to foreign languages education”. Furthermore, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, states persuasive arguments that justify the inclusion of all learners into the foreign language classroom:

> Language learning is a powerful tool for building tolerant, peaceful and inclusive multicultural societies. The experience of learning a new language helps to develop openness to other cultures and acceptance of different ways of life and beliefs. It raises awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and promotes tolerance of people with a different lifestyle (McColl 2005: 104)

This quote is a clear justification of why the integration of all pupils, regardless of their abilities, into the foreign language classroom, is important. Moreover, it explains why the opportunity to learn a foreign language should be given to all students.

Furthermore, based on an investigation by the European Commission (2005), "considerable success in foreign language learning across all categories of special educational needs (SEN)" was demonstated (McColl 2005: 103). It has been shown that students with hearing and visual impairment, communication disorders, emotional or behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties are capable of learning a foreign language successfully at school. McColl argues that enabling students with SEN to learn a foreign language "has more to do with adult attitudes and expectations, or with resource availability, than with the ability of students to benefit" (2005: 104).

Second language acquisition is undoubtedly well researched and documented. The focus in second language acquisition, however, is given more to general and universal language acquisition processes. Furthermore, there are sufficient teaching materials for good foreign language teaching. Similarly, publications on the topics of heterogeneity and individual support offer additional approaches to inclusive foreign language teaching. What is missing, however, is a productive combination of science and practice, since inclusive foreign language teaching for learners with SEN has hardly been developed so far (Springob 2017: 42). Foreign language teachers are often competent in their subject but not acquainted with issues of teaching learners with disabilities (Lazda-Cazers & Thorson 2008: 107).

What is often discussed and researched, however, is the question of whether there is a point in a student's life when he or she can no longer learn the new language perfectly. From the perspective of foreign language acquisition research, there is nothing to suggest that individual children or young people cannot learn a new language (Chilla & Vogt 2017: 168f.). It is emphasized that learners with disabilities and learning difficulties can learn a foreign language even if they may be less successful in doing so than learners without support needs. It is pointed out that age plays a particularly important role and that learners should be exposed to language in early life (Lazda-Cazers & Thorson 2008: 113). However, for pupils with SEN or a learning disability, it is probably not a question of mastering the foreign language as perfectly as possible. Rather, it is a matter of acquiring a communicative competence that enables them to understand and express fundamental issues in the foreign language. This means having the ability to cope with realistic situations by acting in a language (Springob 2017: 44).

According to reports, the inability of learners to complete the requirements of the foreign language class frequently leads to a learning disability. Lazda-Cazers and Thorson (2008: 109) assert that "often learners with a learning disability have learned strategies to compensate for their disability in their native language but have trouble when faced with a language system that is new and abstract to them." Unsurprisingly, the need for support, whether diagnosed or not, may limit or impede the possibilities of individual students to learn a foreign language (Springob 2017: 42). Lazda-Cazers and Thorson (2008: 107) state that “[l]earning, speaking, reading, and writing are key modalities in a foreign language classroom. Since a learning disability may interfere with the

study of language, instructors must be aware of how various learning disabilities may affect students' classroom performance".

Furthermore, it must be clear that each learner is different. Even a group of students with one and the same SEN is a heterogeneous group. Some students might have problems with pronunciation and others with syntax. Yet other learners might have problems with the long or short term memory while others have issues with the reading comprehension. According to Springob (2017: 298ff.), all foreign language learners are very different: they differ from each other in terms of their language skills in their first language, their experience of multilingualism and language history, their level of motivation, their willingness to communicate, their experienced support at home and at school, and their previous experience of self-efficacy in school in general. The aim must be to provide support options that are individually tailored to each student (Springob 2017: 44). People learn a language in very different ways and bring different prerequisites with them. Thus, it is important for teachers to have an awareness of individual learning needs in order to provide effectively for large variety of abilities and disabilities (McColl 2005: 107).

Foreign language learning focuses on different modalities of a language, which are listening, reading, speaking, and writing, and building fluency in a new language. Hence, the subject matter of a foreign language fundamentally differs from other teaching subjects. The methodologies of language teaching are also distinguished from the methodologies of other disciplines as learners are given the opportunity to make use of the new language at various times and practice communication skills. Furthermore, not only the language functions and text genres are presented to learners in foreign language classes, but language teaching also aims at students' fluency and accuracy. Often a variety of approaches and formats are used by foreign language teachers to meet the requirements of the curriculum. According to professionals, learning a language goes beyond the linguistic system. Proficiency also implies gaining intercultural comprehension and acquiring critical thinking skills. Lazda-Cazers and Thorson (2008: 115) assert that the 'performance standards' - communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities - signify that learning a foreign language is not only important for the purpose of communication but also for understanding other cultures, connecting with other subject areas, comparing the language and culture, and taking part in multilingual communities.

In the view of the fact that the acquisition of the four language skills is significant, in what way can learners whose disabilities severely obstruct to speak, listen, read or write be assisted in the foreign language classroom? This raises the issue of how the teaching and assessment of learners with deafness, blindness or a speech disorder takes place in foreign language classes. Most commonly, these classes have clear curricular objectives that specify the learners' degree of proficiency. Lazda-Cazers and Thorson (2008: 115) argue that the "four distinct modalities become blurred" when teaching learners with disabilities. This assertion is justified by indicating that it is unclear whether, for example, it is a listening or reading activity if a deaf learner watches "a closed-captioned DVD or video". Equally, it is uncertain whether it is a speaking or writing activity, if a learner with a speech disorder types the replies in a conversation.

“Foreign language learning opens new doors and opportunities for all students. Students with learning disabilities can become successful language learners given the right learning atmosphere and conditions” (Lazda-Cazers & Thorson 2008: 126). As regards teaching foreign languages and cultures, the provision of a "reasonable accommodation" to disabled learners is significant. These accommodations are "using alternative assessment techniques, allowing the students extra time during a text, tolerating poor spelling and/or pronunciation, [...]" (Lazda-Cazers & Thorson 2008: 116f.).

Still, this is a challenge for schools in general and for language teachers in particular. But according to Springob (2017: 44), the idea of inclusion is the first step towards new impulses in the education system. As there are many practices in every school institution that have at least inclusive potential and try to better address the diversity of the student body, he believes that inclusion can also be an opportunity (Springob 2017: 44).

3.2 Inclusion in English language learning

In recent years, approaches in the area of differentiation and individualization have been established which offer a good basis for inclusive English lessons. However, issues involved in inclusive English language teaching (ELT) and, above all, of a combination of scientific, didactic and special education knowledge are not yet analysed sufficiently (Springob 2015: 104).

According to Springob (2015: 104), many studies on the inclusion of pupils with SEN show that, of course, learners with the same support needs are not a homogeneous group and that the

development of individual learners can vary. A diagnosed SEN does not mean that all students with the same diagnosis need the same support measures. At the same time, no official diagnosis does not mean that learners do not have difficulties in participating successfully in class (Springob 2015: 104).

Generally, there are different factors which enable the creation of a successful English classroom that not only supports the process of language learning but also of language teaching. The role of the teacher, the teaching materials and the classroom facilities and environment belong to these factors. Haver (2009, in Moreno & Rodriguez 2012: 80) emphasizes the fact that the teacher plays a fundamental role in the classroom. Mutual respect between the teacher and learners is crucial. In this way the students do not encounter fear when making mistakes in class. Furthermore, a good English classroom involves teaching materials that correspond to the learners' age. In terms of classroom environment, enough space should be provided in the classroom for different didactic activities that enables. It should be possible to display visual materials, such as posters or diagrams, throughout the space. Finally, a successful English language classroom is a place "where students are happily immersed in English while participating in activities and projects which will strengthen their language skills" (Haver 2009, in Moreno & Rodriguez 2012: 80).

As far as a successful classroom environment for inclusion is concerned, three basic principles need to be followed (Greenspan et al. 1998, in Moreno & Rodriguez 2012: 80). First, it is important to have an understanding of each individuals' developmental stage. Fostering this level and enabling the learner further development should be the following steps. Considering the complex processes involved when teaching EFL to learners with SEN, the preparation of English language teachers in dealing with the inclusion of these learners, is of great importance (Moreno & Rodriguez 2012: 78). For the teacher "it is fundamental to know every student's situations, abilities and disabilities in order to respect her/his learning process" (Moreno & Rodriguez 2012: 80). Second, creating an environment that accommodates all students' needs, both those with SEN and without, to become competent in the English language, contributes to effective ELT. The third principle states that an interaction with learners which enables them to think and solve problems aligned with each learner's level, is beneficial (Moreno & Rodriguez 2012: 80f). In the English classroom, learners should have the chance to learn at their own pace. Moreover, alternative strategies for assessment should be provided to them in accordance with their individual needs,

without isolating them. The goals have to be clear and achievable but still manifest a degree of challenge to the students (Moreno & Rodriguez 2012: 80).

Furthermore, von Hebel and Freye-Edwards (2012: 7f.) consider similar aspects in order to successfully implement inclusive English lessons and support all students to learn successfully:

1. creating a stimulating learning environment,
2. considering the learning load,
3. conception of challenging learning tasks,
4. instructions for independent work,
5. offer of differentiated tasks,
6. support for listening comprehension,
7. promotion of cooperation skills and
8. setting individual target levels.

Implementation

The extent to which inclusion can be implemented in English lessons seems to depend on the personal, material and spatial conditions. On the one hand, English teaching has principles and characteristics that are favourable for the inclusive school context, on the other hand, functional monolingualism can also be a barrier to learning. Methods of visualization and contextualization, as they are increasingly applied in primary school, also support understanding in secondary school. An important principle for learning tasks in an inclusive context is that everyone works on the same topic and at the same time there is the possibility to adapt learning tasks individually. The participation of all pupils in English lessons is advocated and the mastery of simple but meaningful communication situations is emphasized as a key objective (Doms 2018: 135).

Students with SEN require a higher level of attention and supervision in class than regular students. They need more time than the rest of the class to complete the tasks they are given, which slows down the overall pace of work and therefore reduces the amount of material taught. If differentiating methods and/or materials are used, more processes must be organised, instructed and then evaluated as in a comparatively homogeneous learning group. It is true that the heterogeneity in many learning groups can be partly compensated for by

the materials. In addition, teachers operate with changing learning arrangements and with different constellations with regard to which students work together on tasks. Some higher performing students also find it increasingly less fun to act as learning assistants for weak classmates or to have to work on new worksheets or other tasks until the others have finished their work (Kötter & Trautmann 2018: 150f.).

Use of learning tasks

In order to be able to meet the needs of all learners in English lessons, regardless of the range of individual abilities and learning requirements, meaningful task formats are needed that enable all learners to expand their foreign language skills and experience individual success (Windmüller-Jesse & Talarico 2018: 85). Especially for foreign language teaching, the use of good learning tasks, also in the sense of *Task-Supported Language Learning* (Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-von Ditfurth 2011), is of great importance in order to create real communication situations, individual approaches and diverse opportunities for intensive linguistic exploration. In order to enable learners to participate successfully in a task, intensive planning and provision of support materials is required in the preparation of lessons, which are made available to learners as a *scaffold*: this refers to measures that specifically support learning in the foreign language (Jäger 2012: 209).

Leaning tasks offer all learners support, suggestions and impulses in order to provide a reliable framework on the way to self-directed learning against the background of the individually different prerequisites. ‘Scaffolding’ as a support system, plays a special and important role, especially in inclusive teaching. A good learning task enriches English lessons in that necessary learning processes are initiated and activated, which in the following step make individual learning processes visible and form the starting point for conscious reflection (Windmüller-Jesse & Talarico 2018: 85).

Similarly, Springob (2018: 107) argues that students in a class have the right to get tasks that are individually challenging for them. At the same time, there is a risk of overtaxing, especially at grammar schools, because especially in this type of school, a lot has to be learned and tested in a short time, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in terms of content, subject matter and cognition.

Promotion and demand are absolutely desirable. Providing pupils individually with challenging tasks is connected with an increased workload for the teachers, but is easier to achieve by direct

orientation on the abilities and skills of individuals. English lessons in particular are characterised by communication and interaction. Learning a foreign language as a medium of communication is only possible if it is used explicitly and sufficiently often in this function (Butzkamm 2002: 79). Good English lessons highlights communicative teaching that promotes all five communicative skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, language mediation). The learning of a language is closely linked to its active use and can therefore not only take place in individual work or without exchange with fellow students. In inclusive English lessons, it is necessary to create as many common learning situations as possible, which allow students to develop their communicative skills in exchange with others, as well as to increase their individual learning. This implies that individual phases must be deliberately separated and/or in individual and small group work, in order to provide learners with individual exercises and repetition exercises when needed (Springob 2015: 107f.)

4. Attitudes

The empirical part of this thesis deals with a survey of attitudes. Therefore, in this chapter the concept of attitude will be defined first. Furthermore, the significance of attitudes towards inclusive education will be illustrated, followed by a presentation of factors that contribute to the formation of teacher attitudes towards inclusion.

4.1 Definition

For the pioneer in research on attitudes, Allport (1935: 798), the concept of attitude is considered as "the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary American social psychology". This topic gained significance as "understanding the predisposition to treat entities with favour or disfavour seemed even more basic to understanding social relations than the faculties of thought and knowledge" (Banaji & Heiphetz 2010: 348). Furthermore, Allport emphasizes that the concept "escapes the ancient controversy concerning the relative influence of heredity and environment" (1935: 798). However, defining 'attitude' is not straightforward due to "terminological ambiguity and the lack of adequate operationalisations" as terms like opinions, beliefs or preferences are considered as synonyms for attitudes (Schwab 2018: 30). Another definition of an attitude given by Allport states the following: "A mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (1935: 810). Another definition which can often be found in literature is that from Eagly and Chaiken (1993, 1998). They define the construct as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour" (Eagly & Chaiken 1993: 1). Similarly, Triandis (1971: 266) asserts that attitudes are "learned predispositions reflecting how favourable or unfavourable people are towards other people, objects or events". In addition, it is assumed that attitudes are strongly linked to behaviour (Allport 1935). Based on attitudes, the behaviour of individuals can be explained and predicted (Schwab 2018: 30). Thus, the theory of planned behaviour often addresses the concept of attitudes (Ajzen 1991). For this study, however, the evaluative definition of attitude will be adopted.

In this context, Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (1957) is frequently used for the explanation of changes in attitudes. This theory focuses on the "cognitive consistency and refers to an inner drive to avoid disharmony or dissonance in our attitudes" (Festinger 1957, in Schwab

2018: 30). For this reason, attitudes and beliefs are kept in harmony. In addition to the different definitions of attitudes, there are also various models about attitudes. One example are the expectancy-value models which describe attitude as the appraisal of an attitude object and establish two components of the cognitive structures connected to attitude. These are the 'value importance' and the 'perceived instrumentality' (Rosenberg 1956). According to Chaiken et al. (1995: 389), this implies that attitudes are determined by "the evaluative context of people's beliefs" (1995: 389).

A different model, which is most frequently mentioned in literature, is the ABC-model (Eagly & Chaiken 1998, Triandis 1971). The ABC-model suggests that there are three components of attitude, each standing for one letter: affect, behaviour and cognition. The affective element indicates the feelings of a person about an object. While the behavioral component denotes a person's intentions, the cognitive component is related to the individual's beliefs about an ‘attitudes object’. Some definitions of attitude have a direct reference to these elements. An attitude defined by Hogg and Vaughan (2005: 150) is a "relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols". In relation to this study this means that attitudes on inclusive education are relevant as inclusion is important in society.

Moreover, attitudes can be also distinguished in terms of explicit and implicit attitudes. Explicit attitudes focus on "the explicit, deliberative, and volitional aspects of decision making" (Perugini 2005: 30), while implicit attitudes determine behaviour and "influence spontaneous or implicit responses" (Perugini 2005: 31). These responses cannot be controlled. Explicit responses, however, "are under conscious control or (...) perceived as expressive of the relevant explicit attitude" (ibid).

As the assessment measures of implicit attitudes differ from those of explicit attitudes, the present study will have a focus on explicit attitudes. Furthermore, the objects of attitudes in research studies are wide-ranging. In the present study, the object of the attitudes will be inclusive education.

4.2 Attitudes toward inclusive education

In educational research, attitudes towards inclusive education are a highly discussed topic (Lüke & Grosche 2018: 38). Researchers often highlight the importance of attitudes (Avramidis &

Norwich 2002, Ruberg & Porsch 2017). In fact in the literature on inclusion in secondary schools, attitudes are regarded as one of the main themes in research (de Vroey et al. 2016). However, literature does not only address one particular group's attitudes. Importance is rather given to "the attitudes and beliefs of everyone involved in the context of inclusion" (Schwab 2018: 27). These are teachers, students, parents, heads or principals but also researchers and politicians. As inclusion is a complex system, it is important to keep in mind that therein all participants influence each other. In the following, the focus will be set on students' and parents' attitudes.

The attitudes of students became increasingly interesting for research due to the risk of social exclusion of children with SEN in inclusive classrooms. This is based on the fact that in inclusive education, children with and without SEN have regular contact in the classroom. Students' attitudes towards their peers with SEN "seem to be a major factor for the social acceptance of students with SEN and consequently for building up friendships with students with SEN" (Schwab 2018: 28). It is presumed "that intergroup contact typically reduces intergroup prejudice" (Schwab 2018: 31). The results of a study by Lindemann (2016) approved the intergroup contact hypothesis as children who had a friend with SEN were more positive towards their peers with SEN than those without friends with SEN. De Boer et al. (2012) analysed the attitudes of students towards peers with SEN in 20 studies from seven countries. They concluded "that the majority of studies showed that students held neutral beliefs, feelings and behavioural intentions towards peers with disabilities" (de Boer et al. 2012: 388). Furthermore, the attitude of parents towards inclusive schooling is of importance for the inclusion quota. Especially in Austria, parents decide on the school choices for their children and aim for the best educational opportunities for their children While some parents choose a school based on convenience factors (e.g. distance to school from home), other parents consider a school's image in regard to educational quality. De Boer et al. (2010) summarized in their literature review ten studies on parents' attitudes. A positive attitude could be seen in five out of ten studies. The other five studies indicated neutral parental attitudes. Negative attitudes towards inclusion have not been found. What needs to been noted is that "parents of children with special needs reported various concerns, including the availability of services in regular schools and individualised instruction" (de Boer et. al 2010: 165). Comparing the attitudes of parents of children with and of those without SEN, their findings show that "both groups of parents agreed that inclusive education has benefits for typically developing children as

well as for children with special needs. Nevertheless, parents also indicated that inclusive education has risks for both groups of children" (de Boer et. al 2010: 174).

As the focus of this paper is on the attitudes of teachers, the following subchapter provides an overview of previous studies concerned with teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

4.3 Teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education

Besides the importance of students' and parents' attitudes, the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education are also of high relevance. They have to show and carry great responsibility for all learners and their needs. Furthermore, the openness of teachers is especially important as they must change and adapt their teaching styles according to the individual needs of all learners (Schwab 2018: 28). Empirical studies (Abegglen, Stresse, Feyerer & Schwab 2017, Miesera & Gebhardt 2018, Pace 2017) have shown that the attitude towards inclusive schooling of teachers with a high self-efficacy is more positive. Furthermore, the use of inclusive teaching strategies is often related to a positive teacher attitude (Schwab 2018: 34). Sharma and Sokal (2016) found that there is a connection of positive attitudes and inclusive practices. This result corresponds with the idea of Vaz et al. who suggested that "teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are often based on the practical implementation of inclusive education rather than a specific ideology and understanding of inclusiveness" (2015: 1). Moreover, the results of a literature review on teachers' attitudes, indicated by Avramidis and Norwich (2002), indicate that the disability of children influences the attitudes of teachers more than other personal variables (e.g. age or training). De Boer et al. (2011) are in agreement with Avramidis and Norwich's (2002) finding that the type of disability of the included child is influential. In addition, it has been shown that inclusive teaching experience has a positive impact on teachers' attitudes. A study by Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) supports the positive connection of prior experience in teaching children with SEN and teachers' attitudes.

The attitude of teachers in Austria towards inclusive schooling has been studied in multiple projects. Similar to international studies, Gebhardt et. al. (2011) found that teachers in Austria in general tend to have a more positive attitude towards the inclusion of learners with physical or learning disabilities. They also found that teachers in Austria have a rather negative attitude towards the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities. Moreover, Schwab et. al. (2012) studied the effects of inclusive schooling on learners without SEN. The study revealed that teachers see the inclusion of learners with physical disabilities or learning difficulties on children without

SEN as less challenging compared to children with intellectual disabilities. Moreover, in their study, the inclusive teaching background of the teachers had no influence on their attitudes. Schwab & Seifert (2015) found out that the attitudes of teachers with further training (inclusion) are rather positive.

In the next subchapter the respective factors that influence the teachers' attitudes will be presented in more detail.

4.4 Factors influencing teachers' attitudes

According to research, there is a variety of different factors that influence the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education which often interrelate with each other (Avramidis & Norwich 2002). In this context, Salvia and Munson (1986) distinguish between 'child-related variables', 'teacher-related variables' and 'educational environment-related variables'. Regardless of what is the nature of learners' disabilities and/or educational difficulties, factors relating to the teacher's personality or factors relating to the school environment, all seem to have an influence on teachers' attitudes. The variables are explained in more detail below.

4.4.1 Child-related variables

The attitudes of teachers are often influenced by the nature and the severity of disabilities. Teachers' beliefs on children with SEN are usually depend on types of disabilities, their frequency and the educational needs these children have (Clough & Lindsay, 1991). In general, "teachers' perceptions could be differentiated on the basis of three dimensions: physical and sensory, cognitive and behavioural- emotional" (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 135).

Ward et al. (1994) gathered attitudinal data on the inclusion of children with SEN into regular classrooms from six groups of Australian educators (principals, regular teachers, resource teachers, school psychologists/counsellors, and two groups of preschool directors). They found that teachers most highly agreed on the inclusion of children with mild difficulties as with them teachers did not need additional teaching competencies. These included children with mild physical and visual disabilities and mild hearing impairments. However, teachers were uncertain about the inclusion of children with disabling conditions considered more problematic that require extra instructional or management skills from teachers. These were children with a visual disability and moderate hearing loss, mild intellectual disability and hyperactivity. Moreover, the inclusion of children

with severe disabilities was rejected by the teachers as this group is considered challenging to accommodate in class. Children with a profound visual and hearing impairment and moderate intellectual disability belonged to this group. The inclusion of children with profound sensory disabilities and a low cognitive ability was regarded as the least successful. Bundschuh, Klehmet and Reichardt (2005, 2006) investigated the attitudes towards the inclusion of children with mental disabilities in Germany. Their findings have shown that only 15% of the participating primary school teachers and 5% of the special education teachers who took part in the study advocate the inclusion of these children. The same results can be found in a study by Gebhardt et al. (2011) in which the attitudes of 578 primary school teachers in Austria towards the inclusion of students with SEN were investigated. The teachers believed that children with an intellectual disability would learn better in special schools (Gebhardt et al. 2011: 281). The attitudes towards the inclusion of children with physical disabilities were most positive, followed by children with learning disabilities (Gebhardt et al. 2011: 285).

Clough and Lindsay (1991) also investigated the attitudes of 584 secondary education teachers from the UK towards inclusion and a variety of strategies and support offered to disabled students. Their findings revealed that for many teachers it is most difficult to cater for the needs of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Children with learning difficulties were ranked second, followed by those with visual impairments and those with a hearing impairment.

4.4.2 Teacher-related variables

Researchers have tried to ascertain whether teachers' attitudes towards children with SEN correlate with teachers' personal characteristics. Their findings revealed there is a variety of teacher variables including gender, age, years of teaching experience and other characteristics, "which might impact upon teacher acceptance of the inclusion principle" (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 136). A presentation of these personality factors is given below.

Age and teaching experience

One factor that has an influence on the attitudes of teachers is teaching experience. Some studies found that younger teachers with fewer years of teaching experience are more positive towards integration. Forlin's (1995) study revealed that students with a physical disability were the most accepted by teachers who have up to six years of experience and declined by those who have been teaching for six to ten years. The acceptance among educators with experience above that was the

lowest. The results for the integration of a child with an intellectual disability were similar. This study implies that teachers seem to become less supportive of integration as they gained teaching experience (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 137).

Leyser et al. (1994) compared teacher attitudes on integration in six nations - the United States, Germany, Israel, Ghana, Taiwan, and the Philippines - and investigated teacher background variables that are related to attitudes toward integration. Their findings were that teachers who have less than 14 years of experience in teaching were more positive towards integration than those having more than 14 years of experience. Leyser et al. did not identify any differences in acceptance to integration among educators with one and four years, five and nine years and ten and 14 years of teaching experience. In Harvey's (1985) study the readiness of teacher trainees and primary education teachers to accept disabled learners in their classes was compared. It revealed that in comparison to newly qualified teachers, primary educators with more teaching experience were rather reluctant to integrate such students. Concerning this matter, the assumption, that newly qualified teachers have a more favorable attitude towards integration when they start their teaching profession, can be justified (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 137).

Yet, despite the fact that researchers have reported that more support of integration is given by younger teachers and those with less teaching experience, other investigations showed that the experience in teaching does not affect teachers' attitudes (Avramidis et al. 2011; Leyser, Volkan & Ilan 1989; Rogers 1987).

School type and grade level

Many studies focused on the school type and the grade level taught by teachers and their influence on their attitudes concerning integration. The study by Leyser et al. (1994) showed the greatest tolerance level towards integration in senior high school teachers in comparison to those teaching lower grades (junior high school and elementary school teachers). In addition, the study revealed that junior high school teachers held more positive attitudes than elementary school teachers. According to American studies (Rogers 1987), however, elementary and secondary teachers viewed integration and accommodations for children with SEN differently. The results indicated that elementary teachers stated more positive views and means for integration (Savage & Wienke 1989). Similarly, Salvia and Munson (1986) came to the conclusion that teachers tend to have more negative attitudes towards integration as students with SEN get older. They

consider this as a result of the fact that teachers teaching students of higher grades are more considerate of the teaching subject and content. Clough and Lindsay (1991) advocate this insight by indicating that teachers focusing on the subject-matter, when having children with SEN in class, face problems in managing classroom activities. In this regard, the notion that primary school is more inclusive and secondary school is subject-based, and that this has a negative effect on teachers' attitudes, can be made. Generally, there is a disposition to believe "that an emphasis on subject-matter affiliation is less compatible with inclusion than is a focus on student development" (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 137f.).

Prior experience of teaching children with SEN

Some studies revealed that the experience of having contact with students with SEN is a significant variable in shaping the attitudes of teachers. It has been stated that teachers get more positive attitudes once they teach inclusively and are in social contact with learners with significant disabilities (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 138).

Also according to Leyser et al. (1994), teachers who have experience in teaching children with disabilities in general have more favorable attitudes towards inclusion. The hypothesis that the significance of experience and social contact with learners with SEN combined "with the attainment of knowledge and specific skills in instructional and class management" contribute to the formation of positive attitudes, has been corroborated by other studies (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 138). These findings imply that the experience of teaching learners with disabilities leads to positive attitudes of the teachers. LeRoy and Simpson (1996) likewise assert that an increase of this kind of experience of mainstream educators alters their attitudes in a positive direction.

However, some studies also revealed that there is no significant connection between the reported experience with these students and the attitudes of teachers and that this experience has no effect on the formation of more positive attitudes (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 138). What is surprising though is that literature shows that this social contact could in fact lead to unfavourable attitudes. Forlin (1995) found that the attitudes of teachers involved with the programme of inclusion and those not, differ. Teachers who were not concerned with inclusion assumed that there is no difference in teaching a students with SEN and a student without SEN and considered both equally stressful. For teachers with inclusive teaching experience, by contrast, the stress level for working with a child with SEN was perceived greater than with a child without SEN. As a consequence,

the study's implication was that because of the stress factor, contact with a student with SEN might aggravate the acceptance for inclusion.

Training and professional development

Pre- and in-service training is considered to be another influencing factor and a crucial element for the professional development. The knowledge about children with SEN, teachers attain through this training, was regarded as significant for the improvement of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Often teachers experienced challenges at the attempt to implement inclusive practice in class (Shevlin, Winter & Flynn, 2013). These challenges can be ascribed to the "teachers' lack of confidence, skills, [...] inadequate professional development and the ability to deal with a variety of disabilities and special educational needs" (Avissar 2007, in Mahony 2016: 8). In order to avoid teachers facing these challenges when including these children in mainstream classes, teacher training in SEN is of great importance (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 139).

Some studies from the early 1990s have shown that training plays a decisive role in forming positive attitudes towards integration for college teachers. These studies aimed to investigate these teachers' attitudes towards the integration of students with SEN into standard college courses. The results of these were that trained teachers held more favourable attitudes and emotional reactions to integrated students than those without training. Other studies from the late 1990s support the idea that there is a connection between the acquisition of special education qualifications from pre- and in-service training and a less resistant view to inclusion (Avramidis et al. 2000).

In a study by Dickens-Smith (1995), the attitudes of both special education and regular teachers towards inclusion were examined. The investigation of attitudes was undertaken before and after training. Both groups of teachers showed more positive attitudes after their in-service training though the change of attitude of regular education teachers was significantly stronger. Dickens-Smiths conclusion was that "staff development is the key to the success of inclusion" (1995, in Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 139).

Teachers’ beliefs on self-efficacy

Another factor that additionally to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion has an influence on their teaching styles and adjustments in diverse classrooms are "their views about their responsibilities in dealing with the needs of students who are exceptional or at risk" (Avramidis & Norwich 2002:

139). Similarly, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007: 612) use the term self-efficacy to describe “individual teachers’ beliefs in their own abilities to plan, organize, and carry out activities required to attain given educational goals”. Self-efficacy is a common term in social cognitive theory and is thought to have an influence on human behaviour (Bandura 2007). According to Bandura (1997), teachers with low efficacy beliefs are considered to have lower levels of planning and organizing, a lack in confidence and motivation and struggle with stress factors, while those with a high self-efficacy accept new challenges and are willing to adopt new methods to caters for the needs of children with SEN. Sharma et al. (2012) found that self-efficacy has a great influence on teachers' practices in inclusive classrooms. The assumption is made that the behaviour of teachers' in the classroom affects their self-efficacy.

Jordan, Lindsay and Stanovich (1997) observed that teachers either have a 'pathognomonic' or a 'interventionist' perspective and identified differences. Those with a 'pathognomonic' view believing that a disability is inherent in the child used other ways of teaching than teachers with an 'interventionist' view ascribing issues of students to the interaction between the individual and the environment. While teachers holding rather pathognomonic perspectives showed the most ineffective interactions, teachers holding interventionist perspectives demonstrated more intellectual interactions and focused on the creation of students' understanding. Stanovich and Jordan (1998) confirmed this finding with a further study which aimed at finding a connection between the teacher behaviours and effective teaching of a wide diversity of students. This examination did not only include self-reports and interviews but was also based on observation of teaching behaviours. The study resulted in that "the subjective school norm as operationalized by the principal’s attitudes and beliefs about heterogeneous classrooms and his or her pathognomonic/interventionist orientation". Also, the interview responses of the teachers were predictors of operative teaching behaviour (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 140).

According to these studies, it is evident that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are formed based on the school's ethos and the beliefs of teachers and that these are noticeable in class. Therefore, it is claimed that the implementation of inclusive practices can be successful when teachers take over responsibility for teaching heterogeneous classrooms, are aware of their contribution to the students' learning progress and due to training are conscious of their teaching instructions and

management. Thus, it can be said that a teacher's acceptance of inclusion is connected to a higher self-efficacy (Soodak, Podell and Lehman 1998).

4.4.3 Educational environment and learning-related variables

Several studies found that factors related to the educational environmental influence teachers' attitudes towards integration/inclusion. Often the availability of means to support was considered to be connected to positive attitudes. On the one hand, this support can be physical, such as teaching materials and technical equipment, and on the other hand, it can be human, like special teachers and support assistants.

A study by Janney et al. (1995) showed that teachers' receptivity towards children with SEN became higher after the provision of required support. The transformation of the school environment, for example, in order to provide access to the school buildings to physically disabled children, and the allocation of appropriate teaching materials and equipment were also crucial for creating favourable attitudes. Furthermore, the provision of adjusted materials (LeRoy & Simpson 1996, Center & Ward 1987) and smaller classrooms (Center & Ward 1987, Clough and Lindsay 1991, Harvey 1985) are said to foster positive attitudes towards inclusion.

Some studies showed that being continuously supported and encouraged by the headmaster also results in positive attitudes to inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 141). Janney et al. (1995), for example, reported that the success of integration is determined by the support from headmasters. Similarly, Center and Ward (1987) found that mainstream teachers who received support from headmasters were more tolerant of the integration programme than others.

The support from special education teachers contributed to the formation of positive teacher attitudes as well (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 141). The participants of the study of Janney et al. (1995) considered the interpersonal as well as the task-oriented support by special educators an important factor which contributes to the successful implementation of integration. The cooperative work with special teachers is important for specialist subject teachers as they know how access to a particular subject can be given to students with SEN (Clough & Lindsay 1991). Center and Ward (1987) reported that regular teachers felt less anxious and more confident teaching children with mild sensory disabilities with the presence of itinerant teachers in the classroom and that their cooperation positively affected the attitudes of mainstream teachers.

The relevance of support from special teachers was identified in a US study as well (Minke et al. 1996). In this study, the views on inclusion of regular teachers teaching together with special teachers in inclusive classes were compared to those in traditional classes. The findings indicated that mainstream teachers in inclusive classrooms were positively inclined towards inclusion and perceived high self-efficacy and satisfaction. Mainstream teachers in traditional classrooms, however, had more negative views and considered teaching adaptations unfeasible.

Moreover, there are factors in the mainstream school environment which are considered impeding for the successful implementation of inclusive practice. These include "overcrowded classrooms, insufficient pre-prepared materials, insufficient time to plan with learning support team, lack of a modified/flexible timetable [and] inadequately available support from external specialists" (Avramidis et al. 2000, in Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 142). The importance of providing teachers with more time for planning lessons in inclusive classes together with special educators has been highlighted in several studies (Diebold & von Eschenbach 1991, Semmel et al. 1991). This can be justified with the argument that regular teachers believe that the implementation of an inclusive programme would mean a considerable workload for them due to more planning in order to cater the needs of a heterogeneous groups of learners. In that regard, both physical and human support are considered as significant factors "in generating positive attitudes among mainstream teachers towards the inclusion of children with SEN" (Avramidis & Norwich 2002: 142).

5. Methodology

This chapter explains in detail the methodology of this study. The strengths and weaknesses of the chosen research design are discussed, as well as its structure and content. Furthermore, the participants and the procedure of the study will be presented.

5.1 Research design

For this study a quantitative method for data collection was chosen and a questionnaire survey with Austrian EFL teachers was conducted. Although most of us know the term 'questionnaire', there is no precise definition of it (Dörnyei 2007: 102). According to Dörnyei (2007: 102), this instrument can also be referred to as "'inventories', 'forms', 'opinionnaires', 'tests', 'batteries', 'checklists', 'scales', 'surveys', 'schedules' […]." Moreover, the general term 'questionnaire' is used as a collective term for "(a) interview schedules/guides […] and (b) self-administered pencil-and-paper questionnaires" (ibid.).

For the purposes of this study only the second type of questionnaire is of relevance. These self-administered pencil-and-paper questionnaires are defined as "any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers" (Brown 2001: 6, in Dörnyei 2007: 102).

Through questionnaires, data of different kinds can be obtained, namely factual, behavioural and attitudinal. Factual questions give demographic data about the participants, such as "age, gender, […], level of education, occupation, language learning history" (Dörnyei 2007: 102). Behavioural questions "are used to find out what the respondents are doing or have done in the past, focusing on actions, life-styles, habits and personal history" (ibid.). With the third category, attitudinal questions, we can elicit data on participants' "attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests, and values" (Dörnyei 2007: 102). As the aim of this study is to investigate Austrian EFL teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education, this questionnaire consists largely of attitudinal questions. However, it begins with factual questions about the respondents. Not only are these necessary in order to connect the results of teachers' stated attitudes with their demographic characteristics, they also increase the participant's motivation. Generally these questions are straightforward and encourage participation.

The main reason for choosing a questionnaire for this study is its "efficiency in terms of researcher time and effort and financial resources" (Dörnyei 2007: 115). As questionnaires "are relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processable" (Dörnyei 2007: 101f), they are increasingly popular as a research method. Using computer software especially facilitates fast and straightforward statistical evaluation (Dörnyei 2007: 115) Furthermore, the process of filling in a questionnaire does not require much time and allows the participants to retain their anonymity.

However, the instrument certainly has some limitations as well. In questionnaires, the researcher is often unable to conduct in-depth research due to the "[s]implicity and superficiality of answers" (Dörnyei 2003: 10). Furthermore, the items in a questionnaire have "to be sufficiently simple and straightforward to be understood by everybody". Moreover, the respondents' motivation may not always be high to ensure participation in a questionnaire (idib). Another issue is the "social desirability bias" (Dörnyei 2007: 115), which refers to the respondents' desire to meet expectations. In other words, participants tend to give answers and change their views to what they consider accepted or desired by society. Consequently, quantitative research methods are useful instruments when aiming for a general impression of a certain issue. However, because of some weaknesses, these research instruments tend to be complemented with qualitative methods for research.

Ethical considerations have also been considered when designing this questionnaire, as this research instrument is regarded as "an intrusion into the life of the respondent" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011: 377). Therefore, at the beginning of the questionnaire it has been emphasized that all information given form the participants will remain anonymous. Furthermore, as the questionnaire has been administered online, the respondents could not be obliged to complete the questionnaire. They were merely invited to participate, however, it was their decision to withdraw from the survey whenever they wanted.

5.2 Structure and content of the questionnaire

Before the actual questionnaire started, a short description of the survey questionnaire was given to the participants of the study. In this description, the aim of the study is described and participants are assured that all data will be treated confidentially. Furthermore, the introductory paragraph indicates the duration of the survey. The questionnaire (see Appendix) starts with demographic

questions and continues with questions concerned with the teachers' opinions and views about inclusive education. What follows are items on a three-point Likert type scale. Respondents were given a list of categories of disabilities and learning difficulties and had to indicate in how far they believe that pupils with these disabilities could participate in their English lessons (pupils can participate, pupils can partly participate and pupils cannot participate). Furthermore, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with 8 statements from 1 (I totally agree) to 4 (I do not agree at all). These statements cover teachers' views on four areas (two items for each):

(1) Inclusive English Language Learning and Teaching:

Items in this category focus on the learning and teaching of the English language in an inclusive setting. The respondents are asked to judge if they believe that acquiring the English language in this context is restricted and difficult for individual students. The other item in this area addresses the idea that the wide range of learners' needs make English language teaching particularly interesting and varied and thus rewarding.

(2) Teaching students with SEN:

This category includes one item related to teachers' views on whether learners with disabilities should only be taught in special schools or not. The other item is concerned with their views on whether these learners get enough support in regular English classes.

(3) Teaching students without SEN:

Items in this category mainly deal with teachers' views on teaching students without disabilities in an inclusive setting. While one of these refers to the idea of whether learners without SEN are at a disadvantage in general, the other is concerned with the perception that inclusive English lessons benefit them.

(4) Teachers' self-efficacy:

The main focus of the items in this category is the teachers' self-efficacy; "individual teachers' beliefs in their own abilities to plan, organize, and carry out activities required to attain given educational goals" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2007: 612). Teachers are asked whether inclusive education would be a new challenge for them and whether they can imagine teaching English to some learners with different disabilities.

At the end of the questionnaire, there are three open-ended questions. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison, usually open-ended questions can be found towards the end of a questionnaire. Those are questions "that seek responses on opinion, attitudes, perceptions and views, together with reasons for the responses given. These responses and reasons might include sensitive or more personal data" (2011: 398). Usually the findings of a questionnaire survey are quantitative, however, due to these open-ended questions a qualitative analysis will be needed (Dörnyei 2007: 101). This qualitative analysis will be found in the results section. The questionnaire is in German and can be found in the appendix of this paper.

5.3 Data collection

After finalizing the questionnaire, it was piloted with four friends of mine. Through this pilot study it was possible to identify faulty or ambiguous items of the questionnaire and to determine the duration of the study. The study was conducted via the Google Forms platform. In this platform, the data of each individual participant is presented in an Excel sheet and, thus, makes the data easily accessible. The questionnaire started in the third week of January 2020 and lasted for 14 days. In order to reach as many English teachers as possible, the attempt was to get in touch with the two school types of lower secondary education, namely the NMS and the AHS, in Vienna. For this purpose, the online record of schools by the Austrian Ministry of Education and Science[2] was used. From this record, the e-mail addresses of schools of these two types in Vienna have been researched. In total 223 schools, 126 of which are NMS and 97 AHS, were contacted. After collection of the contact data, the schools were contacted via e-mail asking them to forward the digital questionnaire to their English teachers.

5.4 Participants

English language teachers teaching the lower level of the AHS and NMS in Vienna were invited to participate in this study. A total of 49 English teachers volunteered to take part in the online survey questionnaire. In terms of the school type the participants were teaching at the time of the inquiry, there is a balance among the respondents. Both school types were fairly equally represented, as the below figure shows:

[2] https://www.schulen-online.at/sol/oeff_suche_schulen.jsf

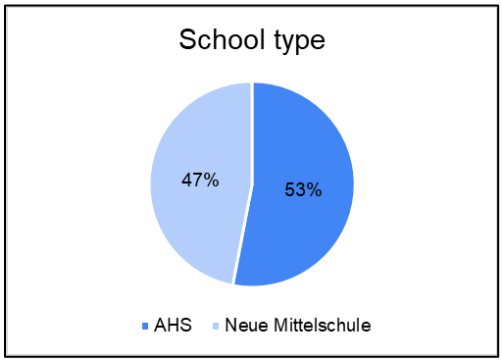

Figure 1. School types at which the respondents teach

As illustrated in Figure 1, 53% (26) of the participants teach at an AHS and 47% (23) at a NMS. Concerning gender, there was a considerable imbalance among the participants. Of all the respondents, 69% (34) were female and 31% (15) were male. The age of the study participants covered a broad range. For illustration, the figure below shows the age groups of the survey respondents:

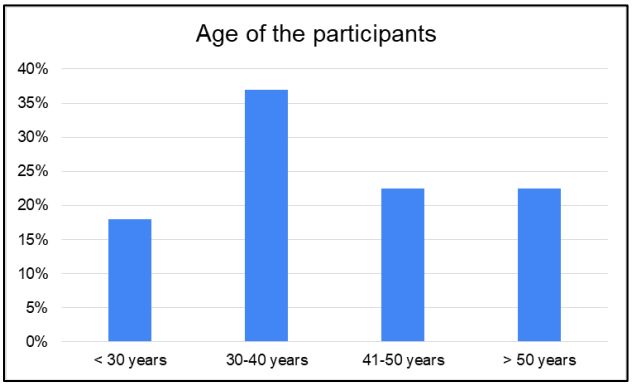

Figure 2. Age groups of the participants

As Figure 2 illustrates, the group of those aged between 30 and 40 was the largest, with 37% (18) of all participants. 22% (11) of the participants belonged to the group of 41- to 50-year-olds. The same proportion, namely 22.5% (11) of the participants, were over 50 years. The smallest, with 18% (nine) of the participants, was the group of under 30-year-olds.

As regards professional experience as English teachers in school, great differences can be seen in the following figure:

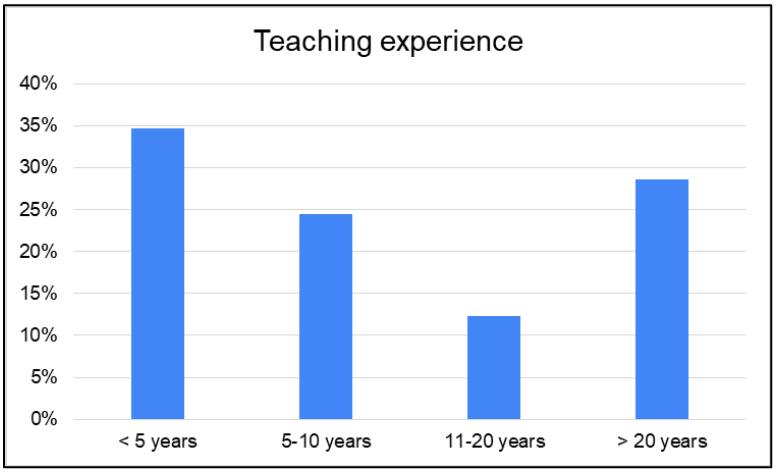

Figure 3. Years of teaching experience of the respondents

From the Figure 3 we can see that with 35% (17) of the participants, the group of those with less than 5 years of teaching experience is the largest. This is followed by 29% (14) of those participants with over 20 years of experience. 24% (12) of all teachers have 5 to 10 years teaching experience. Those between 11 and 20 years of teaching experience, with 12% (6) of the participants, were the smallest group.

6. Results

This chapter is structured in accordance with the questions from the survey and gives a full account of the results of the questionnaires. A discussion of the results will be presented at the end of this chapter.

6.1 Awareness and knowledge of the topic inclusive education

This section presents a summary of the respondents' answers on what insights they have into the topic of inclusive education. The teachers were asked whether they are familiar with the term and whether they know it from their teacher training / studies. Furthermore, the teachers' awareness about the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was examined. Moreover, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they have had training in the field of inclusive education and whether they have practical experience in teaching students with disabilities. This knowledge (theoretical / practical) might have an influence on other questions of the questionnaire.

Knowledge of the term 'inclusive education'

In order to have valid responses to the questions later in the questionnaire, it is important to ascertain whether the respondents know the term 'inclusive education'. 98% of the teachers indicated that they are familiar with the concept.

While 25 (51%) of all teachers heard of the term at different occasions, 24 (49%) of them were acquainted with the concept of inclusive education during their teacher training / studies. In the following, we see the results based on the teachers' age groups.

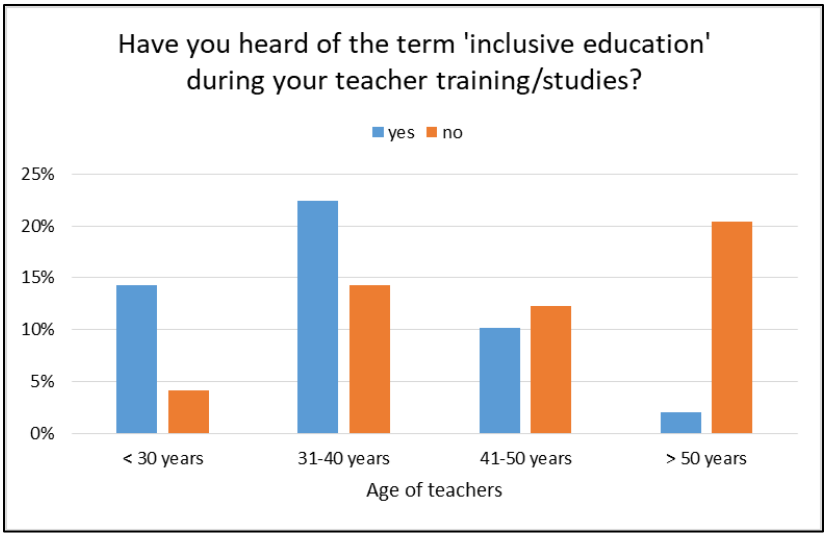

Figure 4. Knowledge of the term inclusive education

As shown in Figure 4, more teachers of the younger groups (under 30 years and 31-40 years = in total 18 teachers, 36%) reported that they heard about the term during their teacher training / studies. However, we do not find out where the participants received their teacher education (university or college of teacher education). In comparison, the number of teachers from the older groups (41-50 years and over 50 years) who know the concept from their teacher training / studies is fairly small (in total six teachers, 12%). The highest number of teachers who were not acquainted with the term during their teacher training / studies is the group of teachers over 50 years.

Awareness of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

As mentioned above, Austria ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008. Its entry into force has raised public awareness of the fact that people with disabilities have the right to live in the midst of society and receive adequate support. It ensures that people with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of their disability and that children with disabilities have equal access with others in the community to inclusive, high-quality and free primary and secondary education.

Figure 5 below illustrates how many teachers did know and how many did not know that Austria committed itself to implementing inclusive education in accordance with the CRPD and classifies the results in terms of the teachers' age groups.

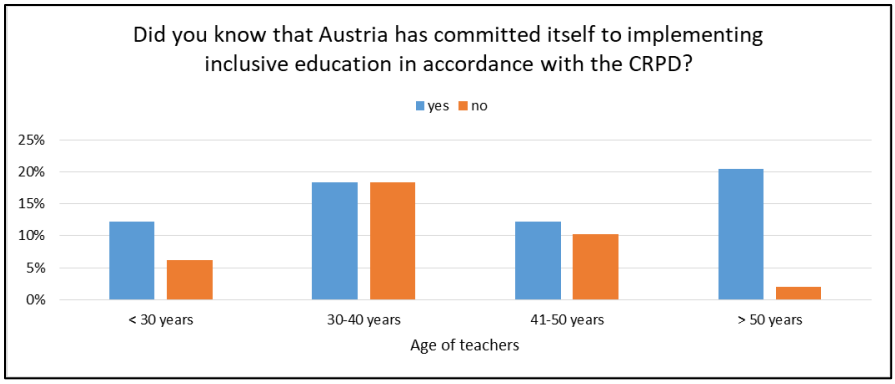

Figure 5. Knowledge of CRPD

Overall, 31 teachers (63%) knew about Austria's commitment to the convention and 18 teachers (37%) did not know. The highest number of those who knew this are teacher over 50 years (ten teacher, 20%). The teachers between 30-40 years was the group with the least awareness of Austria´s commitment (18%).

Advanced training in inclusive education

In order to increase awareness about inclusive education and to present general inclusive education techniques, the organization and attendance of training workshops for teachers is of great importance. For this reason, a question about advanced training in the field of inclusive education was included in the questionnaire. The teachers had to indicate whether they had any advanced training in this field. Of all the teachers (49), seven (14%) have already taken part in at least one advanced training course or are currently doing so. 42 teachers (86%) do not have any further training in the field of inclusive education. The seven teachers with further training are all female. The following figure shows the age of the teachers with advanced or further training.

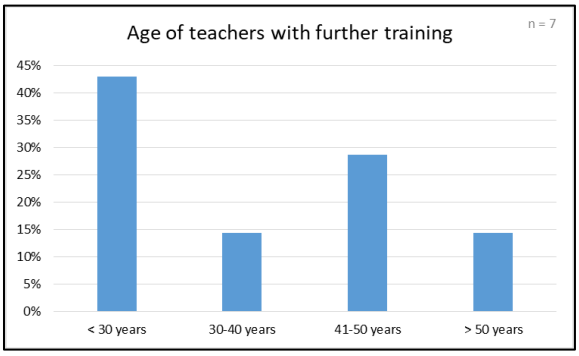

Figure 6. Age of teachers with advanced training

It can be seen from Figure 6 that three out of seven teachers (43%) with further training belong to the group of under 30-year-olds. Furthermore, two teachers (29%) between 41 and 50 took an advanced training. There is one teacher (14%) between 30 and 40 and one (14%) over 50 who did advanced training.

The figure below shows the teaching experience of the teachers with training.

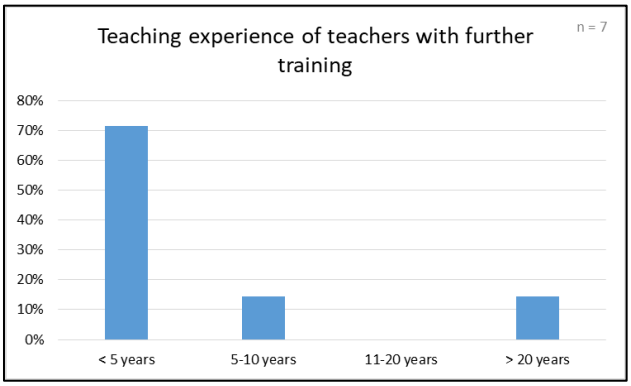

Figure 7. Teaching experience of teachers with further training

Figure 7 illustrates that the highest number of teachers with further training has under five years of teaching experience (71%). One teacher (14%) has five to ten years and one (14%) over 20 years of teaching experience.

Furthermore, teachers with further training had to indicate what kind of training they had or have and for how long. The following are the teachers' indications[3] (own translation):

(1) English for Lower Achievers & Disabled Pupils, two afternoons (~8h)
(2) Different courses of the teacher training program at the University of Vienna, summer courses
(3) Inclusion in the Classroom, one afternoon (~4h)
(4) Training offerings at the University College of Teacher Education Vienna
(5) Program „Pädagogische didaktische Ergänzung" at the University College of Teacher Education Lower Austria (several seminars on inclusive education)
(6) Lecture in the course of general pedagogical training, one term
(7) Specialization in Inclusive Education (University of Vienna)

[3] Original responses (in German) available in the appendix

As we can see teachers participate in diverse further training programs. Some of these take a few hours while others are in-depth courses at the University College of Teacher Education or University of Vienna which last at least one semester.

Prior experience in teaching students with disabilities

Furthermore, the teachers have also been asked whether they have prior experience in teaching disabled children. Out of all teachers, 28 (57%) indicated to have experience in teaching children with disabilities and 21 (43%) not. What we find out is that 50% of them (14 teachers) teach at an NMS and the other 50% (14 teachers) at an AHS.

The following figure shows the age of teachers with inclusive teaching experience.

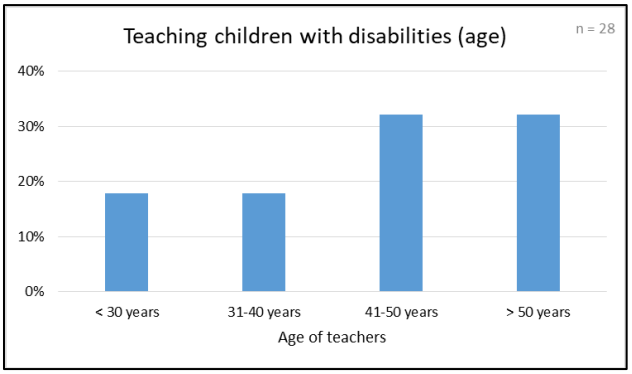

Figure 8. Teaching children with disabilities (teachers' age)

In Figure 8 it is visible that five teachers under 30 (18%) and five teachers between 31 and 40 (18%) have experience in working with learners with disabilities. Nine teachers of the group of 41 to 50 year olds (32%) and nine teachers of the group of over 50 year olds (32%) have had this experience.

In addition to the teachers' age, their teaching experience was examined as well. In the below figure the respondents' teaching experience is demonstrated.

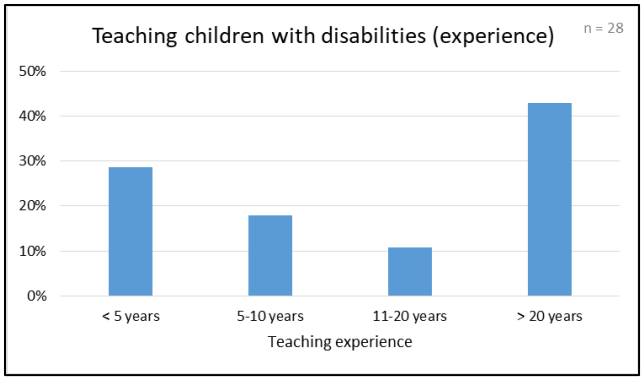

Figure 9. Teaching children with disabilities (teaching experience)

What is striking about Figure 9 is that the highest number of teachers, who taught students with disabilities, are those with over 20 years of teaching experience. These are twelve out of 28 teachers (43%). Furthermore, there are eight teachers (29%) with under five years of teaching experience and five teachers (18%) between five to ten years of teaching experience who experienced working with children with disabilities / impairments. The smallest number of teachers with inclusive teaching experience have teaching experience between eleven to 20 years. These are three (11%) out of 28 teachers.

From the following figure we find out how many teachers who have prior experience have adequate training / further education.

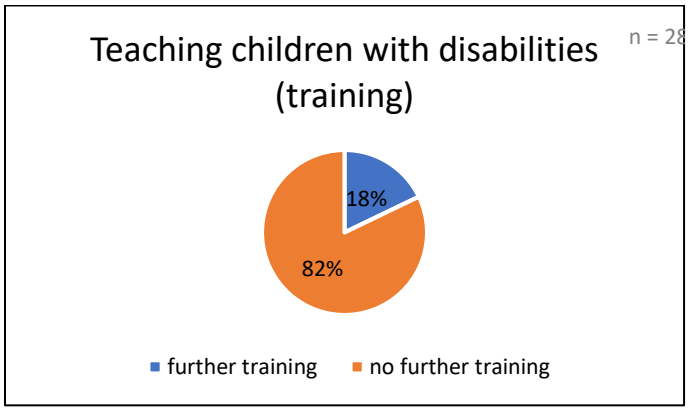

Figure 10. Teaching children with disabilities (further training)

Figure 10 illustrates that a minority of all teachers who teach/taught learners with disabilities have training (five teachers; 18%). 23 teachers with this experience do not have any advanced training or any training at all (82%).

6.2 Potential participation of learners with SEN in the EFL classroom

The teachers were asked to estimate the potential participation of a student with each of the given difficulties in their EFL class. The purpose of this part is to gain an impression of which difficulties were perceived as being 'practicable', and which as 'problematic' in class for the teachers. In Figure 11 the percentages of the teachers' answers are given.

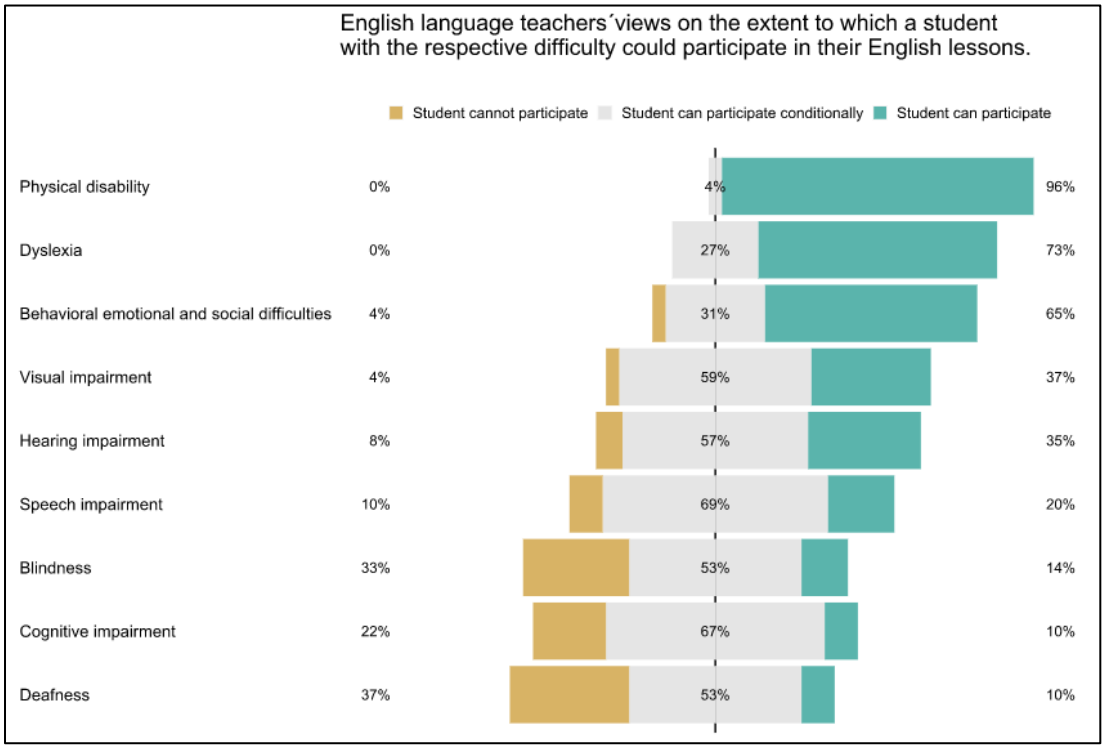

Figure 11. Overview of English teachers' views on classroom participation of students with each of the respective difficulty in the EFL class (general)

It is clear that 96% of all respondents most confidently believe that students with a physical disability, be it either slight restrictions in mobility or severe mobility impairments, such as wheelchair users, would be able to participate in an English language classroom. Students with the reading disorder, also known as dyslexia, are also believed to be able to participate in class by 73% of the respondents. None of the teachers felt that no participation would be possible. This group was closely followed by students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, such as Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), with 65% of all teachers considering them as being able to participate. Students with a cognitive impairment or profound hearing loss were rated lowest; a minority of all respondents (10%) deemed intellectually disabled and deaf students to be able to participate in class.

In the following, a closer look will be taken on the teachers' views about the potential participation of a student with a given disability or difficulty in terms of further training and experience in teaching them.

Figure 12 compares the responses of teachers who have undergone some advanced training in the field of inclusive education with those who have not. As already known, a relatively small number of teachers (seven out of 49) has training.

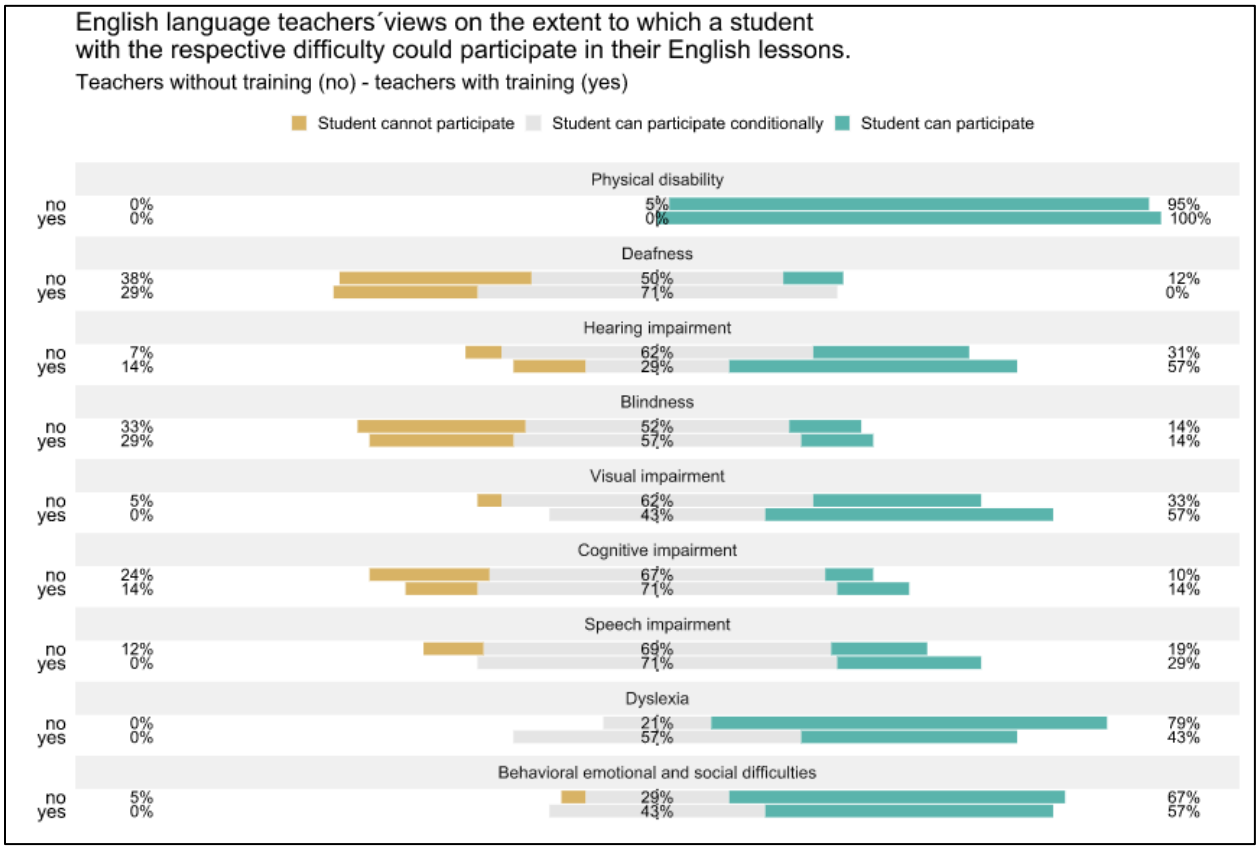

Figure 12. Overview of English teachers' views on classroom participation of students with each of the respective difficulty in the EFL class (based on further training)

The single most striking observation to emerge from the data comparison is that both groups of teachers, with 95% of those without training and 100% of those with training in inclusive education, believe that learners with a physical disability can most easily participate in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, over half of all teachers with advanced training (57%) consider students with a hearing impairment and those with a visual impairment being able to participate, while 62% of teachers without any training believe these students can participate only conditionally. In terms of cognitive and speech impairments, both groups of teachers basically share the same

view. Classroom participation of learners with a cognitive impairment and those with a speech impairment is only conditionally possible according to the majority of English teachers without advanced training (67% and 69%, respectively) and those with training (71% for both types of impairment).

Furthermore, higher percentages of teachers without further training believe that learners with dyslexia and behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, with 79% and 67%, respectively, can participate in the classroom. In comparison to that, the majority of the other group of teachers (57%) consider classroom participation to be only conditionally possible for dyslexic students but possible for those with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Both groups are of the opinion that learners with sensory disabilities are most difficult to accommodate in class. One third of the respondents (33%) without further training and 29% of the other group of respondents think that for blind students it is impossible to attend class. The ability to participate in different classroom activities is only partially possible according to the majority of both groups of respondents (52% and 57%). The figure shows similar results with regard to the participation of deaf students in class. 38% of teacher without training and 29% of those with training consider that these learners cannot participate in their English class. While a minority of the former group of teachers (12%) deem the participation of deaf learners possible, none of the latter group believes so.

Furthermore, we know that over half of the respondents (57%) have experienced teaching students with disabilities at some time in their teaching profession. In the following, we see how these teachers and their colleagues without experience with teaching disabled children view the participation of students with disabilities or learning difficulties.

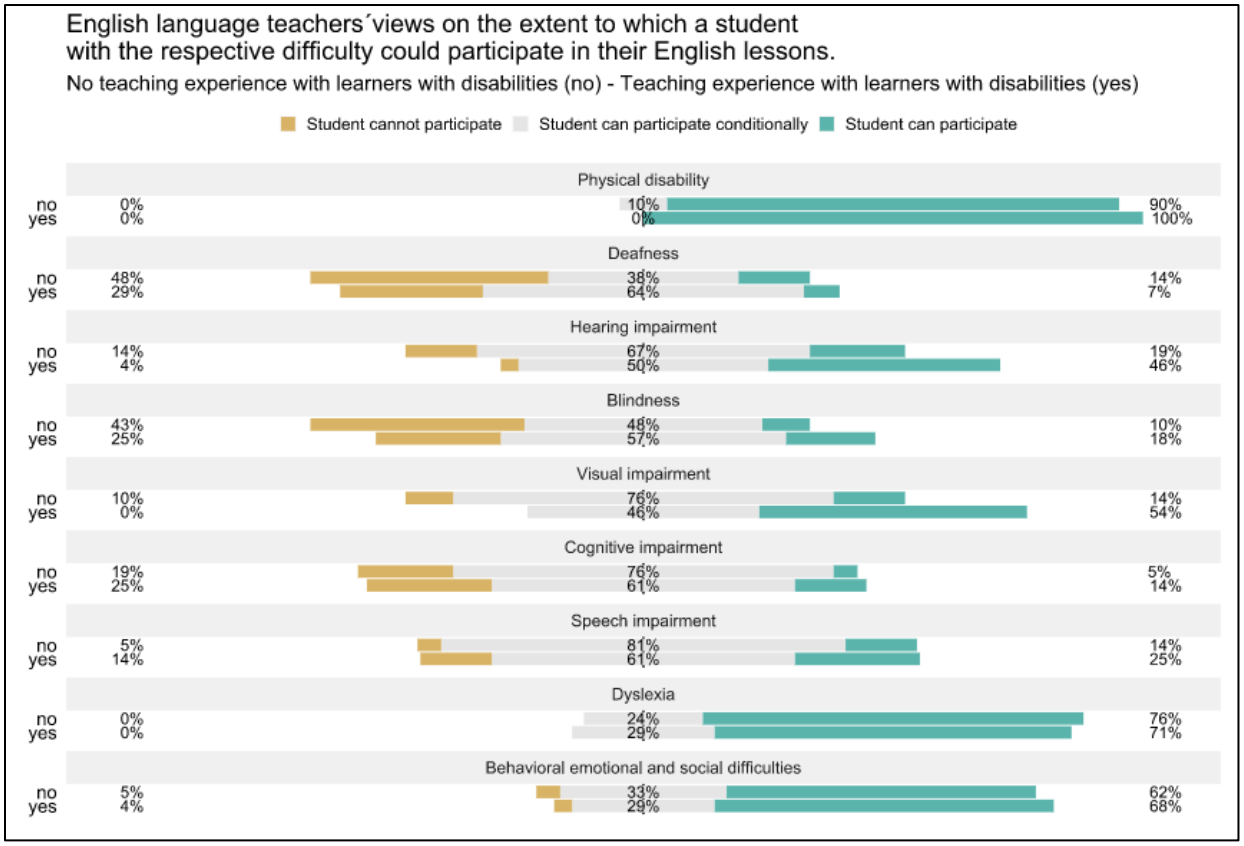

Figure 13. Overview of English teachers' views on classroom participation of students with each of the respective difficulty in the EFL class (based on teaching experience with learners with disabilities)

From Figure 13 it becomes apparent that nearly all teachers (from both groups) see a physically disabled learner as fully able to participate in the EFL classroom, 90% and 100%, respectively. Only a minority of teachers without experience in teaching such students, believe that they can participate only conditionally. Furthermore, dyslexic students and those with behavioral, emotional and social difficulties are considered being able to follow what is being taught in class by the majority of both groups of teachers (76% and 71% for dyslexia, 62% and 68% for BESD).

What is striking about this figure are the different views of the groups in terms of participation of students with a visual impairment and those with a hearing impairment. 54% of all teachers with experience believe that visually impaired learners can easily participate in classroom activities, whereas the majority of the other group of teachers (76%) sees this only conditionally possible. Similarly, 46% of the experienced teachers and 19% of those without experience are of the opinion that the participation of hearing impaired students is unrestricted.

What is interesting is that a slightly higher number of teachers with experience (14%) compared to the others (5%) believes that learners with a speech impairment cannot participate.

Among all the disabilities and learning difficulties reported, according to both groups, participation of deaf students is the most restricted (48% of teachers without experience and 29% of teachers with experience). Immediately after this, the participation of blind pupils in class follows. 43% of the experienced group of teachers and 25% of the other group are the opinion that these students cannot participate in classroom activities.

6.3 Views on inclusive education

In the questionnaire, teachers were presented with 8 statements (1 – 8 in the figure below) and had to indicate how far they agreed with each one. The illustration shows the results for the whole sample in the form of a 4-point Likert scale. In the following however, the negative responses of 'I do not agree at all' and 'I would rather not agree', as well as the positive responses of 'I rather agree' and 'I totally agree', are conflated and the percentages are rounded to the closest whole number.

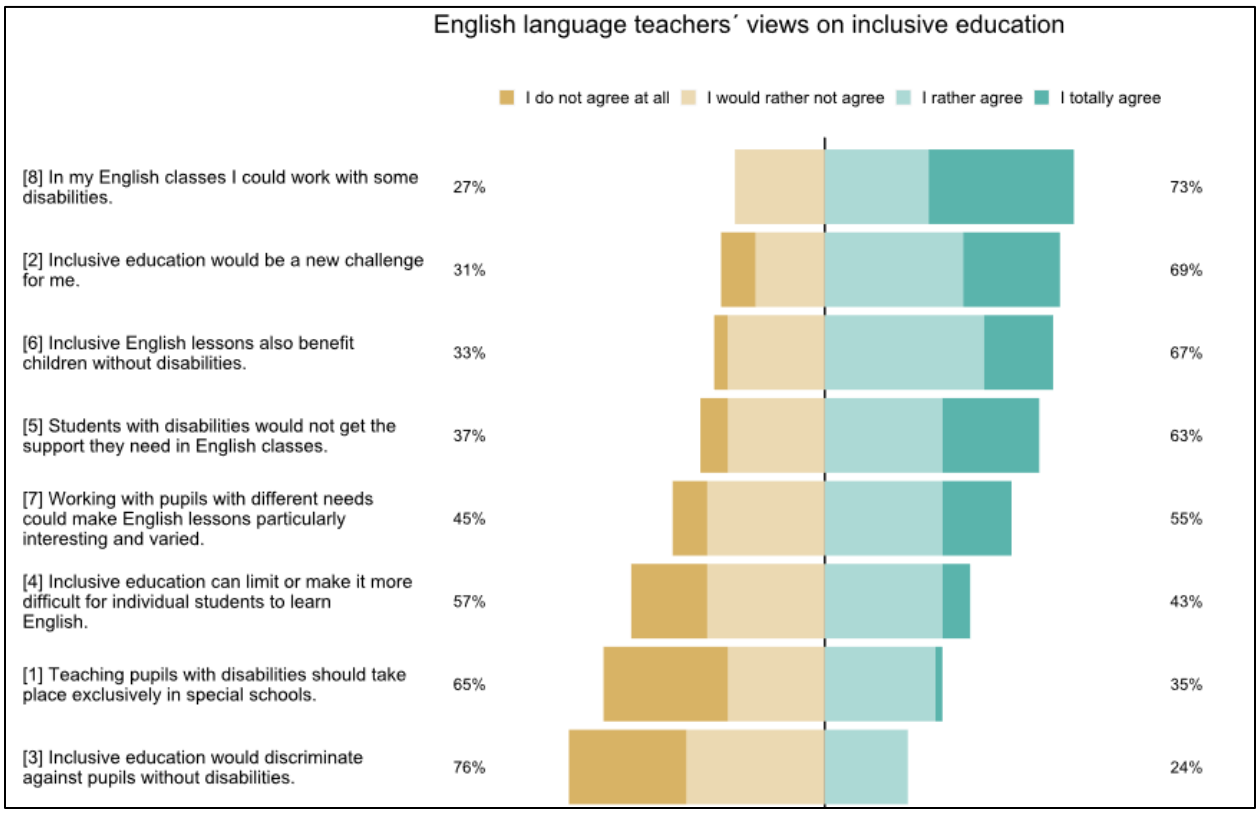

Figure 14. English language teachers' views on inclusive education (general)

From Figure 14 we can tell, that in general statements 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 met with approval from the respondents, while statements 1, 3, and 4 were generally disagreed with. The statement with the highest level of agreement was statement 8: 'In my English classes I could work with some disabilities' (73% agreed or strongly agreed). Statement 2: 'Inclusion would be a new challenge for me' was approved by 69%. The approval rating for statement 6 was similarly high: 'Inclusive English lessons also benefit children without disabilities' with 67%. At the other side of the approval scale was statement 3: 'Inclusive education would discriminate against pupils without disabilities' (76% disagreed or strongly disagreed).

In the figure below the teachers' responses to the statements will be differentiated based on having training or not. As it has been ascertained earlier, seven out of 49 respondents have advanced training in inclusive education.

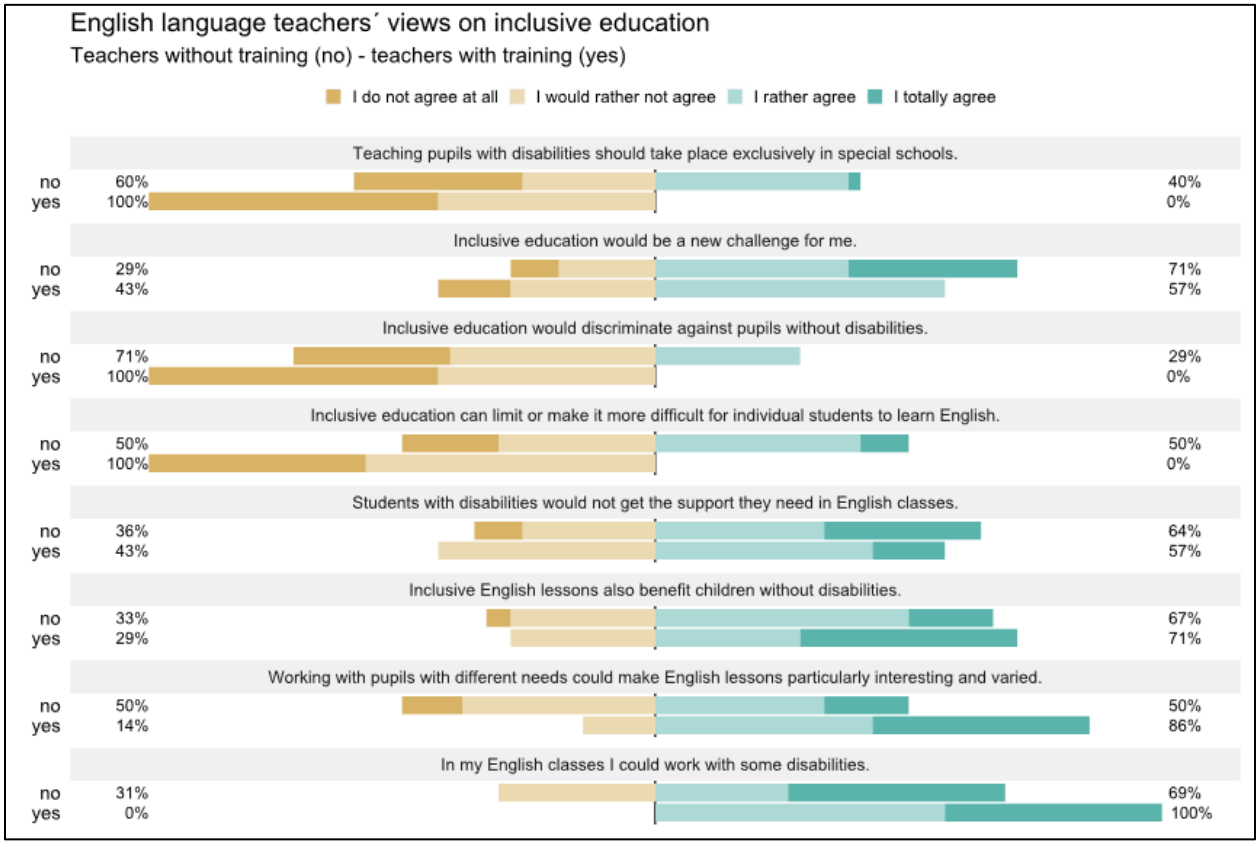

Figure 15. English language teachers' views on inclusive education (based on further training)

Taking a closer look at Figure 15, some interesting observations can be made. It can be said that both groups most highly agree to statement 8. While 100% of all teachers with training agreed to

the fact that they ‘could work with some disabilities’ in their English classes, 69% of those with no training did. The idea that ‘working with pupils with different needs could make English lessons particularly interesting and varied’ (statement 7) was agreed by 86% of the group of teachers with further training. In the other group, one half agreed and the other half disagreed with this statement.

It is apparent that the group of teachers with training show general disapproval to statements 1, 3 and 4 with 100% disagreement each. The results of the group of teachers without training, however, look different. While 60% disagrees to statement 1: ‘Teaching pupils with disabilities should take place exclusively in special schools’, 40% agrees. Statement 3: ‘Inclusive education would discriminate against pupils without disabilities’ has the highest level of disagreement within this group of respondents (71%). Nevertheless, 29% believe that inclusive education would have disadvantages to learners without disabilities. Moreover, 50% of the teachers without training disagreed with statement 4 which says that ‘inclusive education can limit or make it more difficult for individual students to learn English’.

When it comes to statement 5: ‘Students with disabilities would not get the support they need in English classes’, and statement 6: ‘Inclusive English lessons also benefit children without disabilities’, both groups of teachers show fairly similar results. Almost two-thirds of the English teachers without further training (64%) believe that learners with disabilities would be insufficiently supported in their classes. Over a half of English teachers with training believes so too. Moreover, both groups most highly agree to the idea that inclusion is also beneficial for learners without disabilities.

As over half of all teachers (28) have experienced teaching learners with disabilities, it is also interesting to compare the responses to the statements of those teachers and those who do not have any experience in teaching learners with disabilities.

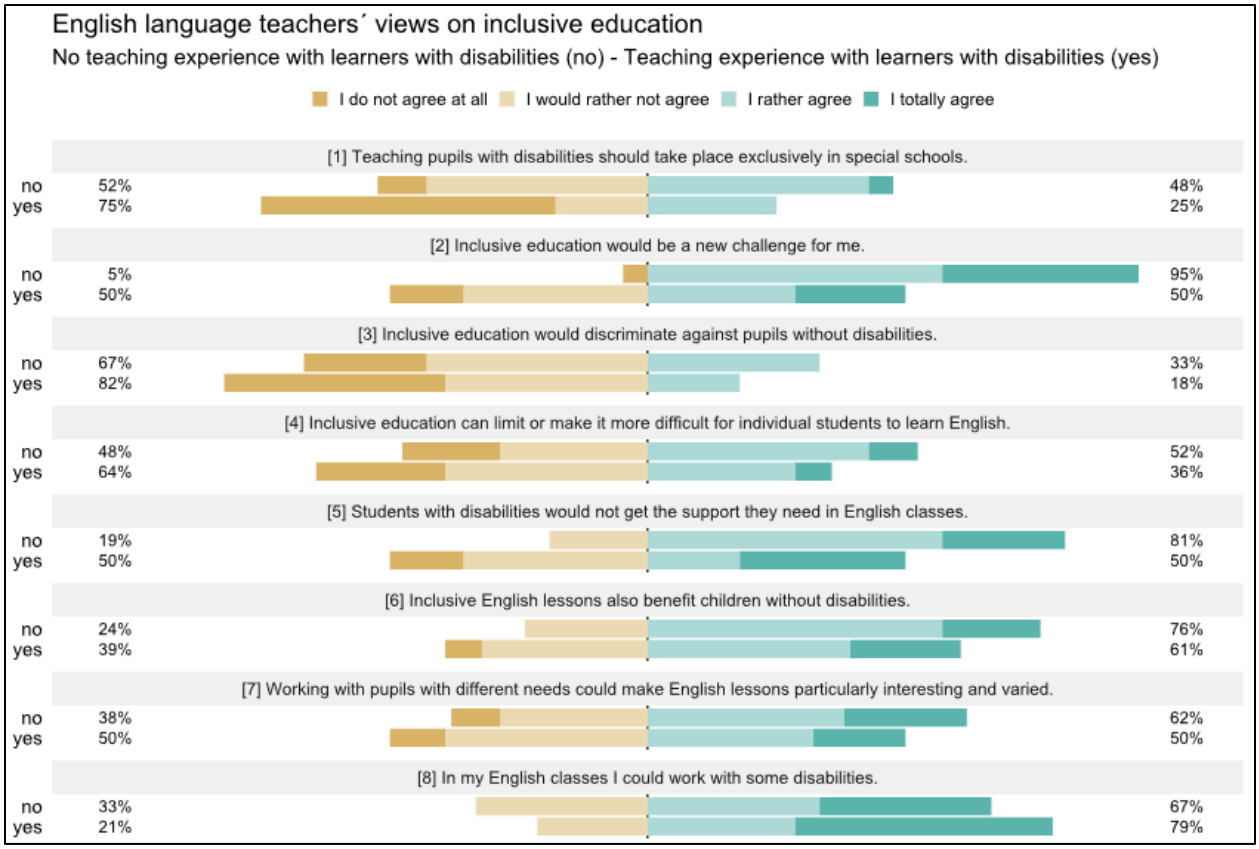

Figure 16. English language teachers' view on inclusive education (based on teaching experience with learners with disabilities

In Figure 16 it can be seen that the most striking result to emerge from the data is that a particularly high percentage of the group of teachers without experience (95%) agrees to statement 2. By contrast, only 50% of all English teachers having experience in teaching learners with disabilities agree to the same statement. For the other half, inclusive education would not be perceived as challenging. Furthermore, the reactions of both groups to statement 5 also differ from each other. While a half of all teachers with experience (50%) agreed to the idea that ‘students with disabilities would not get the support they need in English classes’, 81% of those without experience did. Moreover, experienced teachers disapproved of statement 1 (75%), whereas just over half of the other group of teachers (52%) did. The other half is the opinion that learners with disabilities should be taught in special schools. Both groups of English teachers believe that they ‘could work with some disabilities’ (statement 8). Interestingly, a higher percentage of teachers without experience agreed to statements 6 and 7.

6.4 Resources for ELT

As we have seen, in order to provide support and accommodation to learners with SEN, certain resources need to be considered. Based on this, the teachers were asked what resources they considered important and they would personally need in an inclusive ELT setting. Each teacher was asked to state max. 3 resources. The responses were categorized into the three most commonly mentioned resources. Figure 17 shows which resources were mentioned most frequently by the respondents.

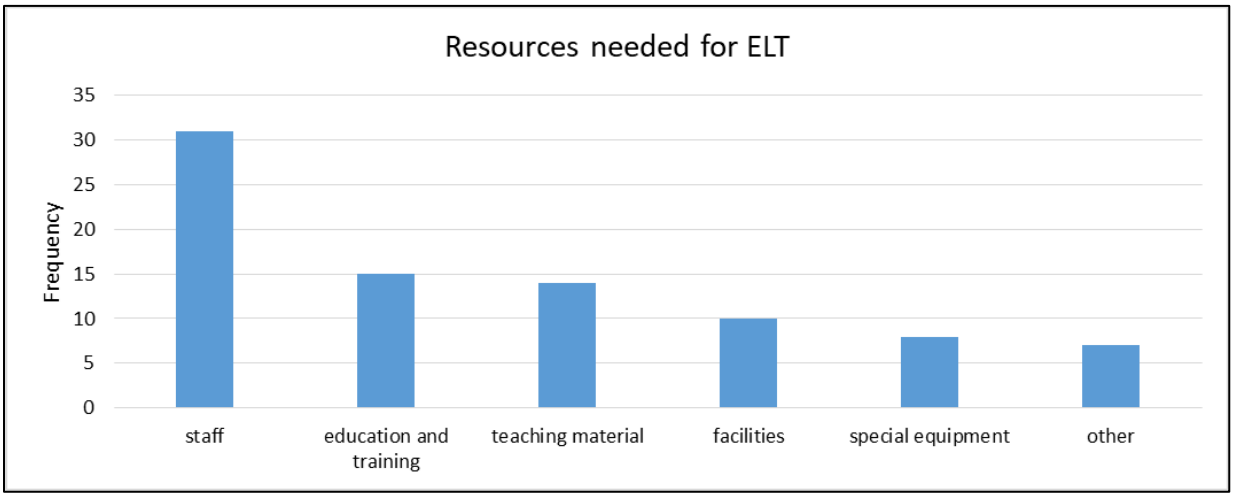

Figure 17. Resources needed for ELT

It can be seen that the most frequently mentioned resource is staff. According to 63% (31) of all respondents, additional staff would be of greatest importance. Besides the need for teachers, they also indicated the importance of qualified 'Begleitlehrer*innen' and learning support assistants especially for learners with disabilities or impairments of the sensory functions, such as sign language interpreters or supporters for learners with autism. Seven out of 49 teachers consider continuous co-teaching, with at least one additional teacher, to be particularly important for their English lessons.

The second most frequently mentioned resource for ELT is education and training, stated by 31% (15) of the teachers. There was no additional information given on what specifically they would need.

The third most frequently mentioned resource is teaching material which was mentioned by 29% (14) of the teachers. They consider adapted materials for learners with SEN essential and believe

that these should be adjusted in a way to be suitable for each disability or learning difficulty. To visually impaired learners, large print learning materials should be provided and fewer tasks per page should be given to learners with autism or with sensory problems. Moreover, the different levels of students should be considered.

In addition, facilities were mentioned by 20% (10). It was stated that the infrastructure of the school needs to be restructured, e.g. providing access to the school building to physically disabled children, more and bigger classrooms in order to enable learners to have more individual work space.

Furthermore, special equipment (e.g. technical aids) for each disability, such as visual aids for visually impaired learners, were stated by 16% (8) of the English teachers.

In addition to these, 14% (7) of the teachers stated other resources they would need for ELT. Some teachers named time resources as essential and argued for more time for lesson planning. In addition, remedial lessons for learners who need it should be made possible. Furthermore, a more flexible timetable (no strict lesson period of 50 minutes) was mentioned.

6.5 Measures for a successful implementation of inclusion

The teachers were asked what measures they believe need to be taken in order make inclusive education successful. The responses were categorized into the most commonly mentioned measures. Each teacher was asked to state maximum three measures. The following figure illustrates what measures were mentioned by the respondents and how often.

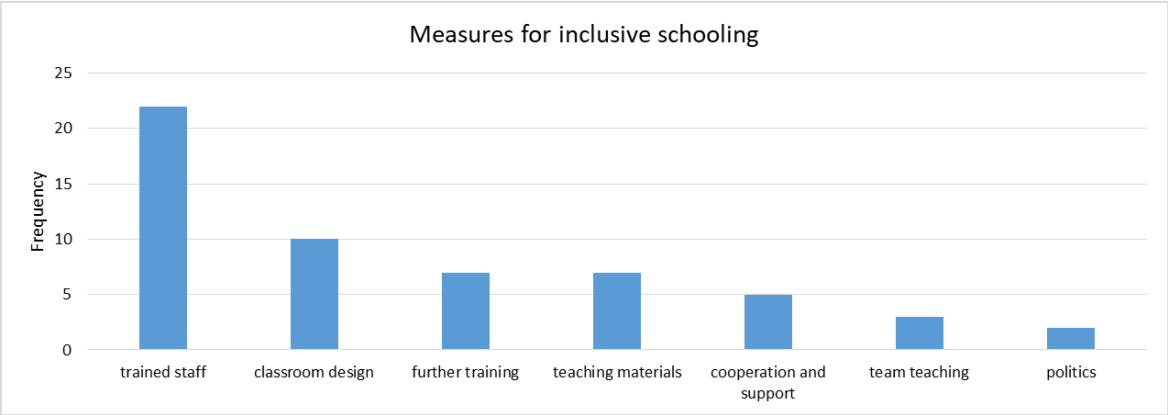

Figure 18. Measures for successful inclusive schooling

As can be seen from the Figure 18, a trained staff was mentioned most frequently. 22 (45%) out of 49 teachers considered teachers and pedagogues, respectively, who are educated in the field of inclusive education as an essential factor in making inclusive schooling successful.

Furthermore, ten teachers (20%) stated that the classroom design has to be adapted and that the classroom has to be equipped with special facilities, e.g. technical support, barrier-free access.

The third most frequently mentioned measure (14%) is further training for teachers. Courses or workshops (SCHILFS – schulinterne Fortbildungen) for better information and understanding of methodological approaches are deemed significant for successful inclusion in schools.

Moreover, according to seven teachers (14%) adequate classroom materials are essential. In order to make inclusive education function successfully, for the respondents it is important to provide appropriate materials for learners of each disability to work in class.

Besides the measures mentioned above the cooperation with parents and ‘Bildungsdirektion’ were stated. Furthermore, the current legal conditions have to be adjusted to enable the required circumstances. In addition, the respondents mentioned ongoing team-teaching as another factor.

7. Discussion

In the previous chapter, the findings of the study were presented. In order to draw a final conclusion, it is now important to discuss and comment on the outlined results. An insightful interpretation of findings might offer further insights into Austrian English teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

Awareness and knowledge of inclusive education

The vast majority of the participating English teachers showed great awareness and knowledge of inclusive education. Basically, a significantly large number (98%) of respondents was familiar with the concept. Approximately 50% have heard about it during their teacher training / studies. The findings have shown that younger teachers up to 40 years know the term from their studies. Teachers over 50 years are more likely not to have been acquainted with it during their years of study. Moreover, 63% of the teachers knew about Austria's commitment to implement inclusive education in accordance with the CRPD. The results of this study showed that teachers between 30 and 40 years are least aware and those over 50 years are most aware of this commitment. There might be different reasons for this. One of these could be that teachers over 50 years are more interested in fundamental and human rights and therefore knew about Austria's commitment. It could also be that based on this age group's teaching experience of over 20 years teachers gained knowledge of this at some point in their teaching profession in comparison to their colleagues between 30 and 40 years who have significantly less teaching experience.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the vast majority (86%) of all respondents has no advanced training. Only a minority (14%) of respondents with training took part in this study. It has been shown that 43% of them are younger female teachers (under 30 years) with less than five years of teaching experience. Overall, the results indicate that rather younger teachers (under 30 and 30-40) and those with up to ten years of teaching experience have further training. One possible explanation for this might be that younger teachers do trainings due to personal motivation or interest in the field and intend to gain more knowledge of this topical subject. Furthermore, further training enables them to acquire a higher qualification and offer more and better opportunities for teaching in inclusive school environments.

As far as teaching children with disabilities is concerned, the results revealed that over a half (57%) of all teachers are experienced in this respect. Older teachers (from 41 years onwards) are more likely to have experience in teaching children with SEN (64%). The results showed that almost a half (43%) of all teachers who taught students with disabilities has over 20 years of teaching experience. However, almost a third (29%) of the teachers having experience with disabled learners have under five years of teaching experience. It could be argued that the results were due to the fact that teachers who have been teaching for over 20 years are more likely to have experienced children with SEN in class at some point.

Class participation and learners' disabilities

The study also demonstrated the English teachers' interesting views on the disability types and their manifestations. In terms of classroom participation of learners with disabilities and learning difficulties, generally teachers deemed learners with physical disabilities and dyslexia to be the easiest to accommodate in class. This also accords with earlier studies (Clough & Lindsay 1991), which showed that children with learning difficulties, a visual impairment or a hearing impairment would have the most difficulties in an inclusive classroom. The participation of children with learning difficulties and deaf learners in class is considered the most challenging. These results are in agreement with the findings of Ward et al. (1994) which showed that teachers view the participation of learners with a low cognitive ability and those with profound sensory disabilities as the least successful.

Gebhardt et al. (2011: 285) found that teachers have positive attitudes towards the inclusion of children with physical disabilities and learning disabilities. In their study, however, they did not investigate teachers attitudes on the specific disabilities based on having further training. Nevertheless, Avramidis et al. (2000) found that there is a connection between pre- and in-service training and a positive attitude towards inclusion. However, in this study they did not focus on the individual disability types. The present study considered both factors (individual disabilities and training). The results showed that teachers with advanced or further training are more positive towards the participation of students with physical disabilities, a hearing impairment, visual impairment, cognitive and speech impairment in an inclusive classroom.

Moreover, the study by Clough and Lindsay (1991) showed that teachers consider children with visual impairments and those with a hearing impairment easiest to manage in the classroom. From

this study we do not find out whether these teachers have experience in teaching children with SEN or not. In association with the experience of teaching children with SEN, teachers' attitudes of the present study are in line with the findings Clough and Lindsay (1991). The teachers are more favourable to the participation of visually impaired and hearing impaired students than their unexperienced colleagues and believe that these learners could follow mainstream education in regular schools as long as extra supportive teaching and equipment were provided.

Teachers' self-efficacy

The statement 'In my English classes I could work with some disabilities' was the one that in general received most support by the majority (73%) of English teachers. Remarkably, not a single participant strongly disagreed with this statement. The results have shown that all teachers with advanced training feel confident in working with children having specific disabilities or difficulties. The same applies to two-thirds (69%) of teachers without training. The majority of both groups of teachers, those with the experience of teaching children with disabilities and those without, have confidence and motivation in teaching learners with some disabilities, still the percentage of teachers with this experience (79%) is slightly higher.

The general result to the statement 'Inclusive education would be a new challenge for me' was that approximately two-thirds (69%) of the teachers agreed with it. Only a very small number of teachers does not consider inclusion to be challenging at all for them. Regarding the view of trained teachers, results revealed that almost half of them (43%) believes teaching in heterogeneous classrooms not to be a challenging task while the vast majority (71%) of their untrained colleagues are convinced of the opposite. Moreover, almost all teachers (95%) who have never experienced teaching disabled children, deem dealing with a variety of disabilities and SEN extremely difficult. According to Forlin (1995), teachers without inclusive teaching experience assumed that there is no difference in teaching students with SEN and those without SEN. The present study shows that exactly half (50%) of the experienced teachers thinks that teaching children with SEN is stressful. This result corresponds to Forlin's (1995) finding that for teachers with inclusive teaching experience, the stress level for teaching children with SEN was considered higher than working with children without SEN.

Following these findings, it can be said that generally the respondents' self-efficacy on teaching in an inclusive EFL classroom cannot be precisely determined. However, it can be argued that

based on the results of these two statements, teachers with advanced training and those with inclusive teaching experience have a higher self-efficacy and thus a more positive attitude towards inclusion. Prior studies have noted that teachers express significantly more positive attitudes towards inclusion when they consider themselves self-effective (Leyser & Last 2010, Hellmich & Görel 2014). Brady and Woolfson (2008) showed that teachers who are confident in dealing with learners with SEN are generally more positive about inclusive schooling and have a high opinion of their self-efficacy. This means that they have relatively high "beliefs in their own abilities to plan, organize, and carry out activities required to attain given educational goals" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2007: 612). Furthermore, they might be more confident, open and accept new methods. As an overwhelming majority of teachers who have never taught children with SEN consider inclusion a challenge, this may indicate that they have a low self-efficacy. In other words, these teachers are being realistic about their own capabilities regarding teaching strategies and classroom management in inclusive classes due to lack of experience in this respect. Moreover, they may consider themselves struggling to cater for the different needs of children with SEN.

Inclusive English language learning and teaching

In general, over half (55%) of the teachers approved of the statement 'Working with pupils with different needs could make English lessons particularly interesting and varied'. We have seen that six out of seven teachers (86%) with advanced training agreed to this notion. It was denied by half (50%) of those without training. Furthermore, of the teachers with practical experience with disabled children, exactly half (50%) agreed with the statement. However, a higher percentage of those (62%) without this experience agreed to the idea that inclusion could make English lessons worthwhile and versatile as well.

Moreover, the majority (57%) of all teachers indicated disagreement to the statement 'Inclusive education can limit or make it more difficult for individual students to learn English'. Interestingly, all respondents with training showed a negative response to this idea. However, exactly half (50%) of all respondents without training agreed with it. In terms of experience with children with SEN in class, the results demonstrated that two-thirds (64%) of the respondents having this experience, agreed to the assertion that learning the English language could be difficult for some children. It seems possible that these results are due to the fact that they speak from experience and that they observed some learners having difficulties to learn English in an inclusive class. From the point of

view of the unexperienced respondents, nearly half (48%) considers the statement true. The reason for this is not clear but they might have the assumption that language acquisition is difficult for individual learners in an inclusive setting.

An implication of these findings is that overall the majority of the English teachers have positive beliefs about inclusive English language teaching and learning. However, there are surprising findings related to training and the experience of teaching children with disabilities or difficulties. The results of these two questionnaire items suggest that especially English teachers with training have more positive views on language learning and teaching in inclusive EFL classroom. An implication of this is that teachers with experience with children with SEN believe that the acquisition of the English language is not restricted for individual students in an inclusive classroom. Contrary to expectations, however, we have seen that rather teachers who have never taught children with SEN, are convinced of the idea that inclusive EFL classes facilitate eventful teaching and methodological diversity. It seems possible that the result of the other group of teachers is based on their experiences in EFL classes.

Teaching students with disabilities

Concerning the statement 'Students with disabilities would not get the support they need in English classes', approximately two-thirds (63%) of all respondents expressed their agreement to it. When examining the reactions of teachers with and those without training to this statement, it can be said that a higher percentage (64%) of the latter supported the idea. What this means is that trained teachers are more positive towards inclusion. In previous studies it has already been found out that there is a connection between attitudes and the visit of further education and training measures to inclusive education. Here, too, a significantly positive correlation between advanced training and the level of attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEN can be demonstrated (Avramidis & Kalyva 2007, de Boer et al. 2011, MacFarlane & Woolfson 2013). Furthermore, the vast majority (81%) of respondents without inclusive teaching experience though that students with SEN would be inadequately supported in inclusive school settings. However, half (50%) of the experienced respondents is convinced that these students would receive sufficient and needed support in the inclusive classroom.

In general, two-thirds (65%) of the respondents did not approve of the statement 'Teaching pupils with disabilities should take place exclusively in special schools'. All seven teachers with

advanced training believed that learners with SEN should be given the opportunity for education in mainstream schools as well. Over a third (40%) of the untrained group of respondents believes the opposite. Remarkably, over half (57%) of the respondents with inclusive teaching experience with children with SEN strongly disagreed with this idea. Nevertheless, almost half (48%) of the unexperienced respondents take the view that these students should only be taught in special schools.

On the basis of the results of these two questionnaire items, it can be deduced that the respondents have uncertain views on teaching students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. On the one hand, the majority thinks that it would not be possible to cater for the disabled students' needs and support them sufficiently in the inclusive classroom. On the other hand, they believe that these students do not necessarily have to be educated in special schools but can attend mainstream schools instead. However, in relation to advanced training and experience in inclusion, interesting results of these two ideas have been shown. Overall, teachers with training and those with the experience of working with children with SEN have more positive beliefs about teaching them in the inclusive EFL classroom. It was also reported by Gebhardt et al. (2011) that especially teachers with experience in teaching learners with SEN showed a stronger approval of inclusion than teachers without this experience.

Teaching students without disabilities

In general, two-thirds (67%) of the teachers support the statement 'Inclusive English lessons also benefit children without disabilities'. Based on the responses of teachers with training and those without, it can be said that the majority of both groups agreed to this statement and that there are no crucial differences. With 71% of the former and 67% of the latter group, the percentage of teachers with training who agree with the idea that inclusive education is also advantageous to learners without disabilities is only slightly higher. Although both the group of teachers with and the group of teachers without experience in teaching children with SEN support this idea, surprisingly a higher percentage (76%) of the latter group shows agreement. The results need to be interpreted with caution as the reasons for these were not investigated in the study. A possible explanation for this, however, might be that these teachers are convinced of the theory that inclusion proves advantageous for non-disabled children. Another implication of this is that the other group of teachers had negative experience in this respect.

The highest disagreement generally teachers indicated to the statement ‘Inclusive education would discriminate against pupils without disabilities’. A significantly large number (76%) of respondents disagreed with this idea. Regarding teachers with advanced training, we have seen that none of them support this idea. The majority (71%) of untrained teachers disagreed as well, however a minority (29%) endorsed the notion that children without disabilities have disadvantages in inclusive classrooms. Similarly, the majority of both groups of teachers, those with and those without experience in teaching children with SEN, disagree with the statement. Still, a larger number (82%) of those with experience indicated disagreement. It can therefore be assumed that based on their prior practical knowledge, teachers are convinced that non-disabled children are not discriminated with the presence of children with SEN in the classroom.

Generally speaking, together the results of these two statements provide important insights about the teachers’ views on teaching students without disabilities in inclusive contexts. The findings show that two-thirds of the English teachers are optimistic in this regard. They believe that non-disabled students would not be put at a disadvantage and that inclusion has also benefits to them. It could be argued that the positive results were due to the English teachers’ belief that students develop a positive understanding and acquire empathetic skills towards their disabled peers and that inclusion enables them to accept and appreciate individual differences. Previous studies observed consistent results and found that "friendships and awareness of diversity are also benefits of an inclusive classroom for individuals without disabilities" (Casale-Giannola & Schwartz Green 2012: 3). It has also been stated that inclusion is conductive to these students' personal development (self-perception, self-esteem and loyalty). In addition, "inclusive environments enable students without disabilities to cultivate a sense of acceptance of varying interest, backgrounds, abilities, and learning needs, as well as to develop social skills such as cooperative work, responsibility and maturity" (Morin et al. 2017: 93). Furthermore, the result implies that students without disabilities receive sufficient support. Moreover, trained teachers and those with experience in teaching children with SEN showed more positive views in that respect.

In general, it can be said that most teachers in this study were positive about the accommodation of students who experience barriers to learning and participation. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that the attitude is influenced by several factors. Firstly, teachers with further training seem to view inclusive education more positively. Secondly, teachers who reported that they had taught

at least one student with a disability were more confident about their ability to include other learners and more positive generally about the concept of inclusion. The difficulty experienced by the learners has also an effect on the teachers' views. Teachers are more acceptable of learners with less "severe" difficulties compared to learners with profound difficulties (Smith 2006: 236f.).

Successful implementation of inclusive education

The English teachers of this study indicated some necessary resources which have to be provided for ELT at their schools to make inclusion work. The most important of these are the human resources. Teachers stressed the need for more staff and personnel support for their English lessons. Especially trained teachers with special knowledge on how to provide support to individual students were mentioned. This may be explained by the fact that teachers would feel less overwhelmed and more confident when teaching a class with at least another teacher. The study also revealed that for some teachers co-teaching is important. In order to enable teaching of at least two teachers per class, more teaching staff is required.

Another essential factor which can promote inclusion in the EFL classroom are other resources. This may be explained by the fact that learners who experience difficulties, need special technical and learning facilities for English classes. Thus, without the provision of special equipment and the appropriate adjustment of learning materials for each disability and more time for preparation, inclusion in the EFL classroom would not be possible according to the respondents. Furthermore, teachers need more time resources for lesson planning. These results are in line with those of previous studies. Avramidis et al. (2000) found that prepared materials and special equipment are important for inclusion. Moreover, the provision of more time for lesson planning in inclusive classes is highlighted (Diebold & von Eschenbach 1991, Semmel et al. 1991).

In addition, education and training in the field of inclusive education is considered to be fundamental for their English lessons. They emphasized the importance of initial training. An explanation for this may be the lack of adequate preparation and education of teachers who but yet have to teach learners with disabilities. An implication of this is the possibility to improve teacher preparation for effective work with students with disabilities. On the one hand they may learn on how to deal with these learners effectively and on the other hand what teaching methods to apply in their English classes. Within the framework of the new teacher training (PädagogInnenbildung NEU) of the University of Vienna, the opportunity for specialisation in inclusive education is

given. This also raises the possibility to equip teacher and educators with necessary skills and knowledge in order to implement inclusive teaching and learning effectively.

Moreover, the study has shown that certain measures need to be taken in order to facilitate effective inclusive schooling in general. Some factors that teachers require for their English lessons have also been stated here in order to make inclusion work successfully. First and foremost, it is assumed that specially trained staff and co-teaching play a key role in the success of inclusive education. Thus, according to the respondents, it is essential to take on additional staff at schools. As a result, co-teaching with a special education teacher in all classes would be possible. In this way, cooperative lesson planning and effective teaching are promoted. Teachers modify teaching materials, methods and the learning environment and solve problems together. With the presence of a special education teacher, support services for learners who need them would be provided.

Another important measure for the participants of this study is to change the classroom design. Hence, in order to create a warm and inclusive classroom environment that enhances successful learning for all students, it is indispensable to redesign the conventional classroom.

Moreover, it is unsurprising that the adaptation of teaching materials is seen as another step towards the successful implementation of inclusion education. In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that accommodations need to be made for affected students based on their disability (LeRoy & Simpson 1996, Center & Ward 1987). Providing adjusted materials for children with SEN is very important. Thus, teachers consider the incorporation of multiple means of representation and ways to learn content essential.

Furthermore, the lack of cooperation and support of all those involved is considered to be a barrier to successful inclusion. This may be explained by the fact that parents as well as teachers play an important part in the education process and thus have to cooperate to assure best results of the students. Moreover, in collaboration with parents, teachers have to be supported in identifying obstacles and strategies connected to teaching and learning.

8. Conclusion

This paper attempted to explore Austrian English teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in the EFL classroom. The aim of this study was to identify their views on the inclusion of children with disabilities in their EFL classroom and on learners' class participation based on the categories of disability. Furthermore, the study determined the contribution of training and the inclusive teaching experience with disabled students, as influencing factors, to positive attitudes and what resources and measures EFL teachers deem necessary to cater for the needs of all students. For this purpose, a survey with 49 teachers of English at lower secondary level in Vienna was conducted.

The first part of this thesis provided the theoretical background for the empirical study. At first, disabilities and special educational needs were defined, then the concept of inclusive education was explained and lastly the Austrian policy on inclusion were presented. Moreover, inclusive education was discussed with regard to ELT. The last theoretical part, reviewed definitions of attitude and factors that influence the teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.

In general, EFL teachers showed a rather positive attitude towards inclusive education, however a low self-efficacy in that regard. They seem to understand the importance, value and advantages of inclusive practice in mainstream classes. Still for the majority of the teachers inclusive practice would be a challenge as they possibly feel they are inadequately prepared for teaching children with SEN. Furthermore, they consider children with a physical disability and those with dyslexia to be the easiest to accommodate in their EFL class, while they believe that those with sensory disabilities, like blindness and deafness, are unable to participate in mainstream English classes. Moreover, this study highlighted the effect of training and practical experience with disabled children on teachers' attitudes. As it turned out, both have a positive influence on the attitude of teachers.

Despite the teachers' awareness of the benefits of inclusion and their overall positive view, the study also reported considerable resources needed for a successful inclusion. The teachers' greatest concerns are the lack of qualified staff, the preservation of the school infrastructure and inadequate training. According to the EFL teachers, with the provision of these, the needs of students with SEN can be better met. Accordingly, a qualified teaching staff, the adjustment of the whole school

building and appropriate training are significant to the success of inclusive practice within mainstream schools.

The study provided significant insights into Austrian EFL teachers' views regarding inclusive education and into common concerns for teachers. It also offered suggestions regarding appropriate resources and supports that teachers deem beneficial to inclusive practice.

It needs to be pointed out that one limitation of the study was its small sample size of teachers. In order to obtain more significant results and make generally valid findings, a larger sample would be needed. As the teachers surveyed for this study taught the secondary level of schools in Vienna, the results are only representative of a small part of Austria. It would be interesting to take a look at the other Austrian federal regions as well.

Thus, further research should be undertaken to investigate a larger sample of teachers from the whole of Austria. This would enable more generalizable findings. To develop a full picture of attitudes, additional research into children's and parents attitudes towards and perceptions of inclusive education would offer further insights into how best to implement inclusive practice.

Since the content of the survey in this study was kept rather general, future investigations would be very informative. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, would enable more in-depth insights into EFL teachers’ views regarding inclusion.

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10. Appendix

Questionnaire

Umfrage zum Thema "Inklusion im Englischunterricht"

Sehr geehrte Englischlehrer*Innen,

mein Name ist Edita Hasanovic und ich studiere Lehramt für Englisch und Psychologie und Philosophie an der Universität Wien. Zurzeit schreibe ich meine Diplomarbeit zum Thema "Inklusive Bildung" (gleichberechtigte Teilnahme an der Schulbildung). Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es die Einstellungen hinsichtlich Inklusion im Englischunterricht von Wiener Englischlehrer*Innen zu untersuchen.

Alle Daten werden vertraulich behandelt und nicht an Dritte weitergegeben. Die Umfrage dauert maximal 5 Minuten und sollte bitte bis spätestens Sonntag, den 02.02.2020, beantwortet werden.

Wenn Sie Interesse an den Ergebnissen oder Fragen haben, können Sie sich gerne per E-Mail an mich wenden: a00804645@unet.univie.ac.at

Herzlichen Dank für Ihre Unterstützung.

Edita Hasanovic

Geschlecht

- o weiblich
- o männlich
- o divers

Alter

- o unter 30 Jahre
- o 30-40 Jahre
- o 41-50 Jahre
- o über 50 Jahre

Wie viele Jahre Unterrichtserfahrung haben Sie in der Schule?

- o weniger als 5 Jahre
- o 5-10 Jahre

- 11-20 Jahre
- mehr als 20 Jahre

An welchem Schultyp unterrichten Sie im Moment?

- AHS Unterstufe
- AHS Oberstufe
- Neue Mittelschule
- Sonstiges

Ist Ihnen der Begriff „Inklusion“ bekannt?

- ja
- nein

Haben Sie gewusst, dass sich Österreich zur Umsetzung der inklusiven Bildung gemäß UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention verpflichtet hat?

- ja
- nein

Haben Sie in Ihrer Ausbildung über Inklusion gehört?

- ja
- nein

Haben Sie eine/mehrere Fortbildung(en) im Bereich der Inklusion besucht?

- ja
- nein

Wenn Sie die letzte Frage mit „ja“ beantwortet haben: Nennen Sie bitte die Fortbildung/en und geben Sie an wie lange sie jeweils gedauert haben.

...……....

Haben Sie schon mal Schüler*Innen mit Behinderungen unterrichtet?

- ja
- nein

Im Folgenden ist eine Liste von Behinderungen / Beeinträchtigungen angeführt. Bitte geben Sie für jede einzelne an, inwieweit ein(e) Schüler*In mit dieser Behinderungen an Ihrem Englischunterricht teilnehmen könnte.			
Schüler*In kann …	teilnehmen	bedingt teilnehmen	nicht teilnehmen
Körperbehinderung	○	○	○
Gehörlosigkeit	○	○	○
Schwerhörigkeit	○	○	○
Blindheit	○	○	○
Sehbehinderung	○	○	○
Kognitive Behinderung	○	○	○
Sprachbehinderung	○	○	○
Lese-Rechtschreibschwierigkeit	○	○	○

Im Folgenden finden Sie verschiedene Aussagen. Bitte geben Sie an inwieweit Sie jeder einzelnen Aussage zustimmen.				
Dieser Aussage stimme ich …	vollkommen zu	eher zu	eher nicht zu	gar nicht zu
Das Unterrichten von Schüler*Innen mit Behinderung sollte ausschließlich an Sonderschulen stattfinden.	○	○	○	○
Das Unterrichten von Schüler*Innen mit Behinderung sollte ausschließlich an Sonderschulen stattfinden.	○	○	○	○
Schulische Inklusion wäre für mich eine neue Herausforderung.				
Schulische Inklusion würde Schüler*Innen ohne Behinderung benachteiligen.	○	○	○	○
Schulische Inklusion kann das Erlernen der englischen Sprache für einzelne Schüler*Innen einschränken oder erschweren.	○	○	○	○

Schüler*Innen mit Behinderungen würden im Englischunterricht nicht die Unterstützung bekommen die sie brauchen.	○	○	○	○
Inklusion im Englischunterricht bringt auch Kindern ohne Behinderungen Vorteile.	○	○	○	○
Die Arbeit mit Schüler*Innen mit unterschiedlichen Bedürfnissen könnte den Englischunterricht besonders interessant und abwechslungsreich machen.	○	○	○	○
In meinem Englischunterricht könnte ich mit vereinzelten Behinderungen arbeiten.	○	○	○	○

Welche Ressourcen würden Sie für Inklusion in der Schule bzw. speziell für den Englischunterricht benötigen?

……

Was wäre aus Ihrer Sicht notwendig für eine erfolgreiche schulische Inklusion? (bitte max. 3 Aufzählungen)

……

Falls Sie noch Anmerkungen haben nutzen Sie bitte das Freitextfeld.

……

Danke für Ihrer Teilnahme!

Responses concerning further training for inclusive education (original responses)

(1) English for Lower Achievers & Disabled Pupils, zwei Nachmittage
(2) Diverse Kurse der LehrerInnenbildung der Universität Wien - Sommerkurse
(3) Inclusion in the Classroom, ein Nachmittag
(4) Fortbildungsangebot der PH Wien
(5) Lehrgang „Pädagogische didaktische Ergänzung“ an der PH Niederösterreich (mehrere Seminare zum Thema Inklusive Pädagogik)
(6) Vorlesung im Rahmen der allgemeinen pädagogischen Ausbildung, ein Semester
(7) Spezialisierung Inklusive Pädagogik (Uni Wien)