

Expectations of parents with hearing impaired children at inclusive schools

Autor: Annette Leonhardt

Abstract

Expectations of parents with hearing impaired children at inclusive schools. – The results belong to a substudy of a comprehensive research program launched in 1999 at Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich. The substudy reports on the experiences and expectations of parents of hearing impaired children and adolescents attending integrative/inclusive schools, in the form of questionnaires completed by these parents. The results highlight a high degree of contentment with the inclusive system on the one hand but also underline such problem factors as stress and discontentment experienced by other parents.

Keywords: inclusive schooling, parents, hearing impaired schoolchildren, school and out-of-school learning situations, social situation

Klíčová slova: inkluzivní výuka, rodiče, sluchově postižení žáci, školní a mimoškolní vzdělávací situace, sociální situace

Introduction and background information

Leonhardt reports¹ on the current research program, launched in 1999. Meanwhile the project comprises 20 substudies, which more or less arose as the study progressed. The results of five of these studies, serving as a general overview, are considered, including the subject relating to the experiences and expectations of parents of children undergoing inclusive schooling. In this article, the subject is presented in detail. Funded by a third party (Leopold-Klinge-Stiftung) it became a substudy no. 6. Responsibility for the processing of this study lies with Kirsten Ludwig.²

The original research focused on school integration; nowadays this is mostly referred to as school inclusion. It should be noted that something can only be “researched” if it actually exists in a concrete form; i.e. in practice in regular schools. Inclusion, however, is still (2019) conceived of as an intended goal, a normative requirement. As an intrinsic value inclusion can be discussed in philosophical, political or pedagogical theoretical terms.

¹ LEONHARDT, Annette. Schulische Inklusion Hörgeschädigter – Ausgewählte Ergebnisse aus einem Forschungsprogramm. In PELCOVÁ, Naděžda, KVĚTOŇOVÁ, Lea et al. (Hrsg.). *Stejně a jiné ve filosofické a speciálněpedagogické reflexi. Inkluzivní škola*. Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2019, pp. 263–273; LEONHARDT, Annette. Inclusive Schooling for the Hearing Impaired – Selected Results of a Research Programme. In PELCOVÁ, Naděžda, KVĚTOŇOVÁ, Lea, RYBÁK, David (ed.). *Sameness and Alterity in Philosophical and Special Pedagogic Reflection. Inclusive School*. Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2018, p. 87–95.

² LEONHARDT, Annette, LUDWIG, Kirsten. „Es ist ein unwahrscheinlicher Kraftakt...“ Elternerfahrungen zur schulischen Integration. *Schnecke*, 2007, 18 (55), pp. 29–32; LUDWIG, Kirsten. Eltern und Integration – Erfahrungen und Erwartungen. In LEONHARDT, Annette. (Hrsg.). *Hörgeschädigte Schüler in der allgemeinen Schule. Theorie und Praxis der Integration*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009, pp. 148–179.

Empirically speaking, it can only be analysed if it is attained.³ This poses a dilemma as to whether the term “school inclusion” defies empirical investigation.

Research questions

In the substudy, “Expectations of Parents Concerning Inclusion of their Hearing Impaired Children at Regular Schools”, the following questions were considered:

- What are the reasons governing the decision for school inclusion?
- What expectations do parents have of school inclusion?
- What experiences do parents have of everyday school life? Are there stressful situations? How satisfied are they?

Research participants

Parents of children and adolescents undergoing inclusive education at regular schools in *Bavaria* were interviewed in the form of questionnaires. The pupils in question had lateral or bilateral peripheral hearing impairment. Since the families could only be contacted via *the Special Needs Service* (following authorisation by *the Bavarian Education Department*) the families were thus selected from *the Special Needs Service* carers. Parent participation was voluntary.

837 questionnaires were sent out, of which 452 (54 %) were completed and returned. Due to error or incomplete responses, 20 (2 %) could not be included in the evaluation. This yielded 432 (52 %) of the 452 returned questionnaires for evaluation. The relatively high number of returned questionnaires could be attributed to the high level of interest on the part of the parents. Presumably, this was an opportunity to report on both their children’s and their own experience with school inclusion.

Research methods

A questionnaire was completed by the parents. The questionnaire comprised a list of closed questions, with responses limited to 2 options: “true” or “false” or a scale of 5 possible answers: true/more or less true, half and half, hardly true or false. The parents were also requested to include an assessment in order that their expectations as well as experience could be ascertained. Here the options were on a scale of 5 (“very important to not important” or “not stressful to very stressful”).

The questionnaire included questions pertaining to:

- Reasons for opting for inclusive schooling.
- Expectations of parents concerning the inclusion of their child.
- School learning and homework situation.
- Relationship between their child and fellow pupils.
- Experience with regard to the teachers at regular schools.
- Experience with the mobile support teachers.
- Overall assessment of experience and contentment with school inclusion.⁴

³ LEONHARDT, Annette. Inklusion als fachspezifische Aufgabe der Gehörlosen – und Schwerhörigenpädagogik. *Sprache – Stimme – Gehör*, 2011, vol. 35 (4), pp. 222–223.

The selection of subsections was determined on the basis of the available results of substudies either completed or at the time currently in progress.⁵ The questionnaire was designed in such a way that several items were allocated to each of the substudies in question. At the end of the questionnaire there was room for any comments the parents wished to add.

Results

Selected results for some of the substudies are presented below, beginning with an overall assessment of contentment with school inclusion.

Statements concerning overall contentment

The overall contentment reflects the experience of the parents in general. The comments were entered at the end of the questions and were intended to highlight the general mood concerning inclusion. This was followed by the specific question: How contented are you with the school integration of your child?

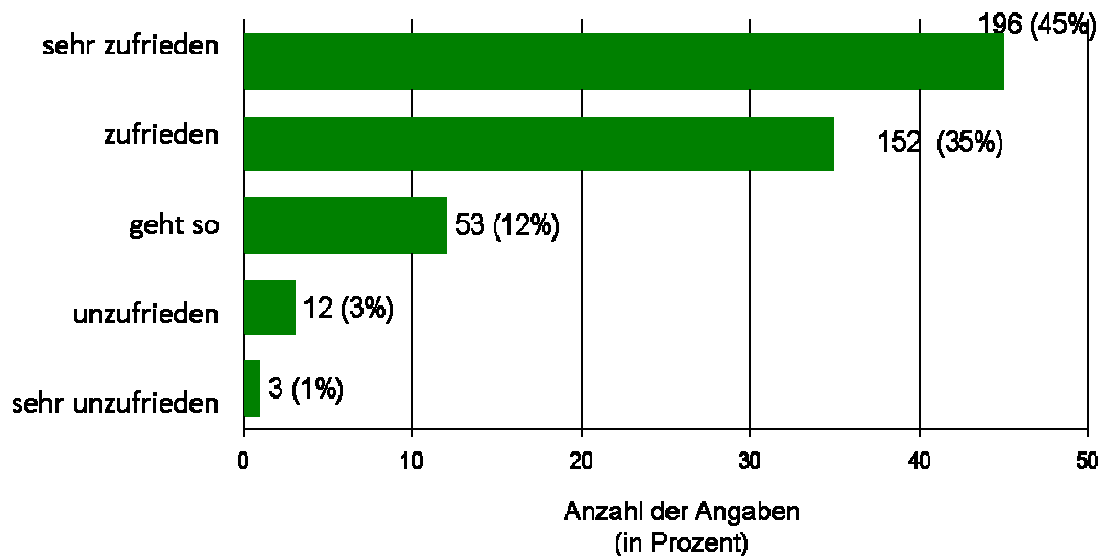


Fig. 1: Overall contentment of the parents concerning school integration of their child.⁶

⁴ LUDWIG, Kirsten. Eltern und Integration – Erfahrungen und Erwartungen. In LEONHARDT, Annette. (Hrsg.). *Hörgeschädigte Schüler in der allgemeinen Schule. Theorie und Praxis der Integration*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009, p. 149.

⁵ SCHMITT, Julia. *Hörgeschädigte Kinder und Jugendliche in allgemeinen Schulen. Untersuchung von schulischer Einzelintegration in Bayern unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Übergangs in die Sekundarstufe*. Aachen: Shaker, 2003;

STEINER, Katrin. *Schulische Integration Hörgeschädigter in Bayern: Die Wahrnehmung der Integrationssituation durch Lehrer, Mitschüler und hörgeschädigte Schüler*. München, 2008, p. 341. Dissertation. Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, Faculty of Psychology and Pedagogy, Chair of Deaf and Hearing Impaired Pedagogy;

LINDNER, Brigitte. *Schulische Integration Hörgeschädigter in Bayern – Untersuchung zu den Ursachen und Folgen des Wechsels hörgeschädigter Schüler von der allgemeinen Schule an das Förderzentrum, Förderschwerpunkt Hören*. München, 2007, p. 341. Dissertation. Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, Faculty of Psychology and Pedagogy, Chair of Deaf and Hearing Impaired Pedagogy.

⁶ All diagrams in this article were created by Dr. Kirsten Ludwig, Academic Director at the Chair for Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at the University of Munich.

(*sehr zufrieden* = extremely contented; *zufrieden* = contented; *geht so* = partially contented; *unzufrieden* = discontented; *sehr unzufrieden* = extremely discontented; *Anzahl der Angaben /in Prozent/* = number of responses /percentage/)

Fig. 1 demonstrates that a clear majority of the parents are “extremely contented” (45 %) or “contented” (35 %) are contented with the school integration of their child. This represents 80 % of the respondents. 12 % (53 parents) respond with “partially contented”. Only 4 % of the parents were “discontented” (12 parents) and “extremely discontented” (3 parents). At first glance this result would appear positive:

- 91 % would opt for integration again and
- 56 % would recommend school integration to other parents.

At the same time there are:

- 96 % of the parents who claim they felt guilty about their decision for school integration of their child and
- 88 % consider the school integration situation as extremely stressful.

Furthermore:

- 91 % of the parents have not yet considered placing their child in a school for the Hearing Impaired. Additionally,
- 8 % of the parents divulge their worries that as the child progresses through school, learning difficulties become more apparent.

School learning situation

Results focus on parent assessment of the influence and engagement of the teachers at regular schools. Concerning the statement “The teachers know how the hearing impaired child is to be taught”, is considered as “very important” or “important” by 89 % of the parents. But only 22 % of the parents actually witness this (fig. 2). This means that just slightly more than one fifth of the parents actually know how a child with hearing impairment should be taught.

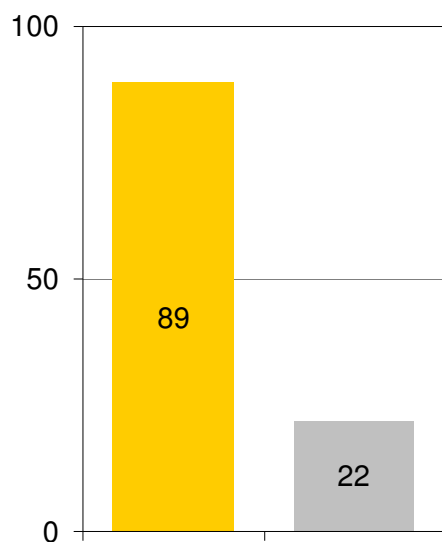


Fig. 2: Parent assessment concerning regular teacher awareness of how children with hearing impairment should be taught (yellow = „important” or “very important” that the regular teacher is aware; grey = what the parents actually experience).

Statements entered into the space for comments reinforce these results:

“In our experience there is a lack of teachers with adequate training in this type of impairment.”⁷

The teachers are unable to cope with a hearing impaired child in the classroom “they lack the basic know-how”.⁸

“In trying to keep up with the lessons directed at normal hearing children, our daughter’s will power and energy is stretched (Anm. d. V.). Dictations proved to be the last straw. In the long run she will not be able to cope.”⁹

Further questions focused on how important it was for the regular school teacher to ensure that the child hears, understands and is able to follow, as well as checking that the child knows what the homework is. Here, too, was a huge discrepancy between the wishes of the parents and the actual situation in practice (fig. 3).

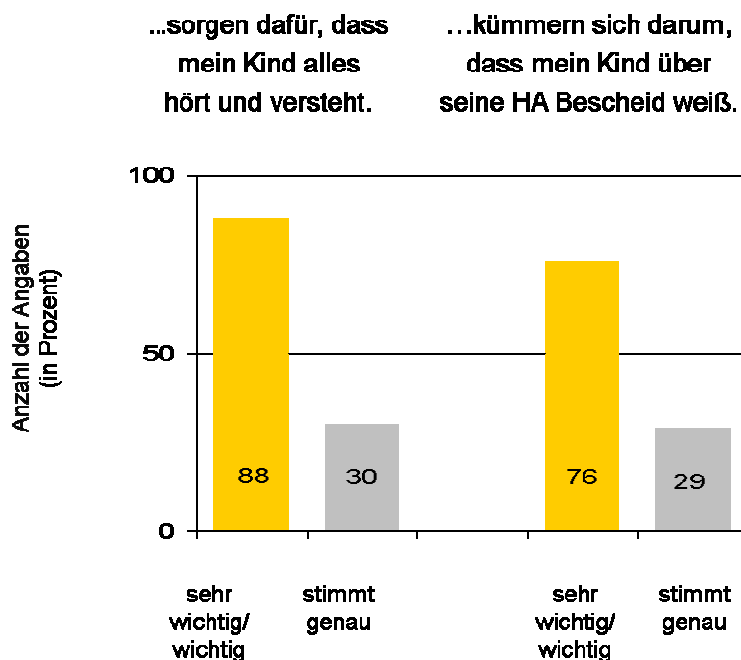


Fig. 3: Parents’ wishes (yellow) and actual situation in practice (grey).

(... sorgen dafür, dass mein Kind alles hört und versteht = ... ensures that my child hears and understands; ... kümmern sich darum, dass mein Kind über seine HA Bescheid weiß =

⁷ LUDWIG, Kirsten. Eltern und Integration – Erfahrungen und Erwartungen. In LEONHARDT, Annette. (Hrsg.). *Hörgeschädigte Schüler in der allgemeinen Schule. Theorie und Praxis der Integration*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009, p. 157.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

ensures that my child is aware of his handicap; Anzahl der Angaben /in Prozent/ = Number of responses /as percentage/; sehr wichtig/wichtig = very important/important; stimmt genau = exactly so)

The diagram shows that almost 90 % of the parents consider it “important” or “very important” that the teacher ensures that their child hears and understands properly during the lesson. About 75 % of the parents consider it “important” or “very important” that the teacher ensures that the child knows what the homework is. In both criteria, these expectations are met by roughly only one third in practice.

Here, too, parents communicate their concerns:

“When my daughter goes up to the teacher to inform him about her hearing impairment, she is waved to her seat.”¹⁰

“It is a major task to encourage the teacher to design the lesson in such a way that the hearing impaired child can keep up with the pace (...) with the last teacher I simply gave up.”¹¹

Out-of-school learning and homework situation

67 % of the parents who submitted the questionnaires confessed that their children needed massive learning support at home in order to keep up with the school work. Such support – in various form – needed frequent input on the part of the parents. Precisely speaking, 38 % of the parents admitted to having to go through the lessons at home with their children. 10 % of the parents tried to prepare their children in advance of the lessons so that they could follow the lessons at school more easily. Almost one third, 29 % to be precise, felt they were doing the work of the teacher. The extra work at home often placed a strain on family life and relationship with the child. 51 % of the respondents admitted that the extra learning and practice at home was extremely time consuming for the family. “The homework situation posed a strain on the relationship with my child” was recorded by 35 %, i.e. over one third.

The results concerning the question: How stressful do you find

- the extra learning? and
- homework situation?

are presented in fig. 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

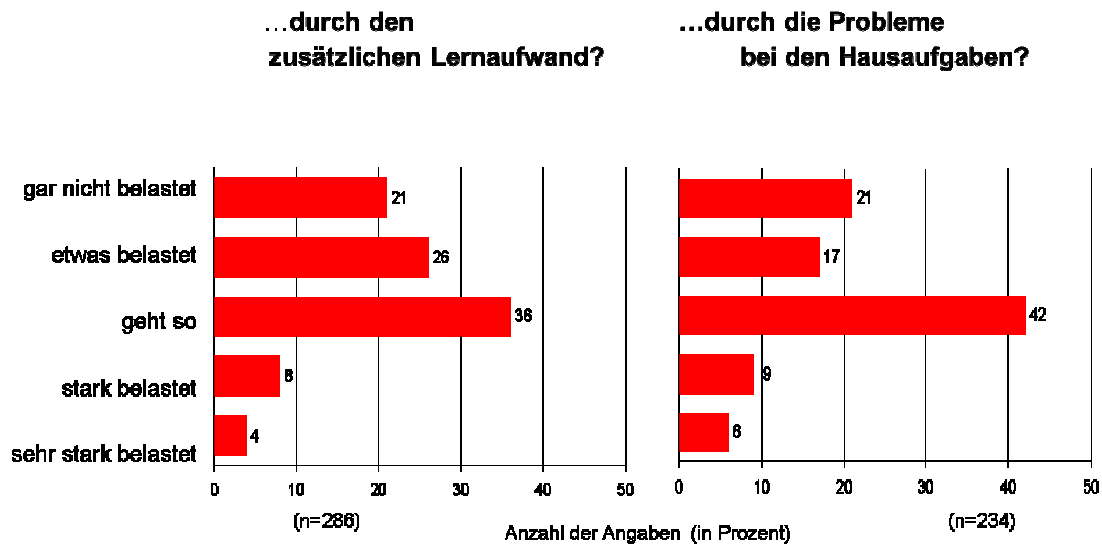
Wie belastet fühlen Sie sich insgesamt ...

Fig. 4: Stress level of parents caused by extra learning load and homework problems.

(Wie belastet fühlen Sie sich ... = How stressful do you find ...; ... durch den zusätzlichen Lernaufwand? = ... the extra learning load; ... durch die Probleme bei den Hausaufgaben = ... the homework sessions; gar nicht belastet = not at all stressful; etwas belastet = a little stressful; geht so = tolerable; stark belastet = very stressful; sehr stark belastet = extremely stressful; Anzahl der Angaben in Prozent = No of entries /as percentage/)

Remarkable is the fact that the level of stress attributed to the extra learning and homework situation is mostly recorded as “tolerable”. Presumably, the parents consider their input at home as a duty (in the role of either mother or father) and therefore perceive the level of stress differently to what it actually is.

Social situation of the children at school

The social situation of a child at school is experienced by both the child and the parent. 33 % of the parents completing the questionnaire indicated that they were aware of problems between their hearing impaired child and hearing peers. The actual percentage is probably higher, since the parents can only base their assumptions on certain situations either divulged by the child or observed by themselves.

The degree of suffering on the part of both child and parent is reflected in such statements as:

“The child feels shut out during the break or journey to school. Fellow pupils often don’t know how to communicate with a hearing impaired child. This afflicts our family most of all.”¹²

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 168.

“Uncertainty, ignorance, intolerance and lack of motivation or initiative of teacher and peers turns the school day into a daily struggle for our daughter to gain recognition and social integration. We never imagined it to be like this!”¹³

The answer to the question “How do the problems between your child and fellow pupils affect you?” is presented in fig. 5. Here one can perceive that 25 % of the parents find the problem “very stressful” or “considerably stressful”. One third indicated the situation was “tolerable”, which is also an indication of a burdensome situation. “Not at all stressful” was recorded by 17 % und “a little stressful” by 19 % of the parents.

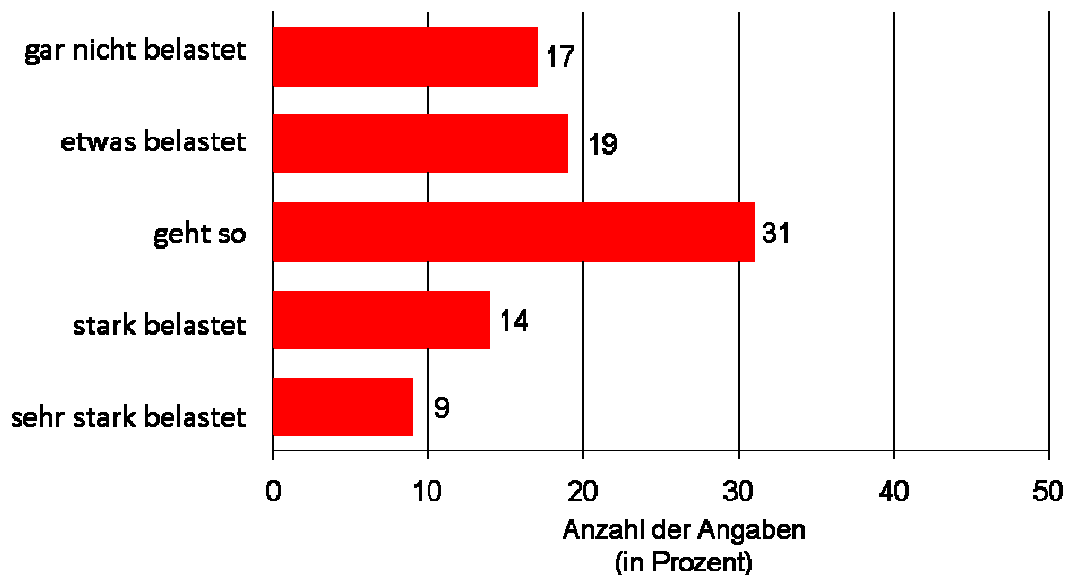


Fig. 5: Stress level of the parents due to problems with their child and fellow pupils.

(*gar nicht belastet = not at all stressful; etwas belastet = somewhat stressful; geht so = tolerable; stark belastet = very stressful; sehr stark belastet = considerably stressful; Anzahl der Angaben in Prozent = No of entries /as percentage/*)

In answer to the more specific question as to the nature of the problems experienced, parents responded as follows:

The child is laughed at because of poor speech.	8 %
The child is laughed at due to lack of comprehension.	19 %
Fellow pupils do not want to spend time with my child.	16 %
Pupils make fun of my child's handicap.	17 %
My child is an outsider in the classroom because of his/her handicap.	12 %
My child has no school friends.	10 %

¹³ *Ibid.*

Summary

The results show that the contentment of the parents is influenced by numerous factors. Expectations concerning school integration are realised in part only. It is also apparent that the success of school integration, or inclusion largely depends on the personality of the child. Almost all children and adolescents go through a phase where the success of integration or inclusion is higher or inadequately lower at some stage of their schooling. Individual class communities present varying preconditions for the integrative/inclusive process. Last not least, the personality of the teacher plays a considerable role. A further significant influence on the success (or failure) of the integrative process –, and with it the realisation of parent expectations – is exerted by the mobile support service. The more effective this is, the higher the success of the inclusion process.

SEZNAM LITERATURY

LEONHARDT, Annette. Inklusion als fachspezifische Aufgabe der Gehörlosen – und Schwerhörigenpädagogik. *Sprache – Stimme – Gehör*, 2011, vol. 35 (4), pp. 222–223. ISSN 0342-0477.

LEONHARDT, Annette. Schulische Inklusion Hörgeschädigter – Ausgewählte Ergebnisse aus einem Forschungsprogramm. In PELCOVÁ, Naděžda, KVĚTOŇOVÁ, Lea et al. (Hrsg.). *Stejně a jiné ve filosofické a speciálněpedagogické reflexi. Inkluzivní škola*. Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2019, pp. 263–273. ISBN 978-80-7603-036-7.

LEONHARDT, Annette. Inclusive Schooling for the Hearing Impaired – Selected Results of a Research Programme. In PELCOVÁ, Naděžda, KVĚTOŇOVÁ, Lea, RYBÁK, David (ed.). *Sameness and Alterity in Philosophical and Special Pedagogic Reflection. Inclusive School*. Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2018, p. 87–95. ISBN 978-80-7603-035-0.

LEONHARDT, Annette, LUDWIG, Kirsten. „Es ist ein unwahrscheinlicher Kraftakt...“ Elternerfahrungen zur schulischen Integration. *Schnecke*, 2007, 18 (55), p. 29–32. ISSN 1438-6690.

LINDNER, Brigitte. *Schulische Integration Hörgeschädigter in Bayern – Untersuchung zu den Ursachen und Folgen des Wechsels hörgeschädigter Schüler von der allgemeinen Schule an das Förderzentrum, Förderschwerpunkt Hören*. München, 2007. Dissertation. Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, Faculty of Psychology and Pedagogy, Chair of Deaf and Hearing Impaired Pedagogy. Retrieved from WWW: http://edoc.ub.uni-muenchen.de/7941/1/Lindner_Britte.pdf.

LUDWIG, Kirsten. Eltern und Integration – Erfahrungen und Erwartungen. In LEONHARDT, Annette (Hrsg.). *Hörgeschädigte Schüler in der allgemeinen Schule. Theorie und Praxis der Integration*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009, pp. 148–179. ISBN 978-3-17-019574-5.

SCHMITT, Julia. *Hörgeschädigte Kinder und Jugendliche in allgemeinen Schulen. Untersuchung von schulischer Einzelintegration in Bayern unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Übergangs in die Sekundarstufe*. Aachen: Shaker, 2003. ISBN 3-8322-1622-7.

STEINER, Katrin. *Schulische Integration Hörgeschädigter in Bayern: Die Wahrnehmung der Integrationssituation durch Lehrer, Mitschüler und hörgeschädigte Schüler*. München, 2008. Dissertation. Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, Faculty of Psychology and Pedagogy, Chair of Deaf and Hearing Impaired Pedagogy. Retrieved from WWW: https://edoc.ub.uni-muenchen.de/9529/1/Steiner_Katrin.pdf.

(Prof. Dr. Annette Leonhardt, Lehrstuhl für Gehörlosen- und Schwerhörigenpädagogik, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in München.)