

Cross-Cultural Comparison for Treatments of Autism between Germany and the United States

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Abstract

- Purpose:
 - To compare perceptions of interventions for children with Autism between Germany and the United States
- A survey was developed in English and German, and sent to teachers, speech-language pathologists and psychologists in both countries

Abstract

- 9 Participants from the United States, and 3 from Germany
- Focus of the survey:
 - The difference between inclusive school systems and separate, or special, schools

Literature Review

- United States:
 - Typically attend an inclusive school setting (Powell, 2009).
- Germany:
 - More common for students with Autism to attend a *Förderschulen*, or a special school, for students with mental disabilities (Lohmar & Eckhardt, 2013)

Literature Review

- Human Development Index: a “composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development” (United Nations, 2014, p. 163)

Human Development Index

TABLE 1

Human Development Index and its components

TABLE 1

HDI rank	Human Development Index (HDI)	Life expectancy at birth	Mean years of schooling	Expected years of schooling	Gross national income (GNI) per capita	Human Development Index (HDI)	Change in rank	
	Value	(years)	(years)	(years)	(2011 PPP \$)	Value	2012–2013	
	2013	2013	2012 ^a	2012 ^a	2013	2012		
VERY HIGH HUMAN DEVELOPMENT								
1	Norway	0.944	81.5	12.6	17.6	63,909	0.943	0
2	Australia	0.933	82.5	12.8	19.9	41,524	0.931	0
3	Switzerland	0.917	82.6	12.2	15.7	53,762	0.916	0
4	Netherlands	0.915	81.0	11.9	17.9	42,397	0.915	0
5	United States	0.914	78.9	12.9	16.5	52,308	0.912	0
6	Germany	0.911	80.7	12.9	16.3	43,049	0.911	0
7	New Zealand	0.910	81.1	12.5	19.4	32,569	0.908	0
8	Canada	0.902	81.5	12.3	15.9	41,887	0.901	0

United Nations Development Programme. (2014). *Human Development Index*. Retrieved from: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>

Individuals with Disabilities Act

- Introduced in 1975, and amendments made in 2004
- Before IDEA, millions of individuals with disabilities were denied access to education (Office of Special Education Programs, 2004)

Individuals with Disabilities Act

- IDEA states: “A free appropriate public education is available to all children with disabilities residing in the State between the ages of 3 to 21, inclusive, including children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school” (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004, Sec. 612, (a)(1)(A))
- 3% of children with disabilities in the US go to a separate school (National Center for Institutional Statistics, 2013)

German Special Education

- Every student is assigned to one of three secondary schools after 4th grade (or 6th grade in some states)(Lohmar & Eckhardt, 2013)
- Children are assigned based on performance and assumed intelligence (Lohmar & Eckhardt, 2013)
- 83% of students with special needs are placed in a special school (Powell, 2009)

German Special Education

- Advocacy for individuals with disabilities did not start until the 1980's (Kock, 2005)
- Only some states have chosen the inclusive method for educating students with disabilities

German Special Education

- Separate schools for children with difficulties in:
 - Learning
 - Speech
 - Language
 - Emotional and social development
 - Cognitive Development
 - Physical Development
 - Hearing
 - Vision
 - Chronic illness
 - Autism

Inclusive Education

- The United Nations has commented that inclusive education is the favorable model (United Nations General Assembly, 1959)
 - Defined as: Incorporating children with disabilities into general classes with typically developing children and providing them with educational support (Razali et. al, 2013)



Inclusive Education

- Several advantages
- Students with Autism display three significant gains:
 - More social interactions with peers
 - “higher levels of social support”
 - Achieve higher competency scores
 - (Mavropoulou & Sideridis, 2014)
- Also reduces “anxiety in building friendships and attaining respect from others around them”
(Mavropoulou & Sideridis, 2014)

Inclusive Education

- Some limitations to consider
- A study conducted by Locke et. al (2010) found that students with Autism experienced significantly more loneliness than their typically-developing peers
- They also lack the social skills to make and maintain friends

Inclusive Education

- Many general education teachers are not trained to work with children with autism
- The National Research Council recognized teacher training as the weakest element in providing “sufficient and effective services for children with autism and their families”

(Razali et. al, 2013, p. 261).

Inclusive Education

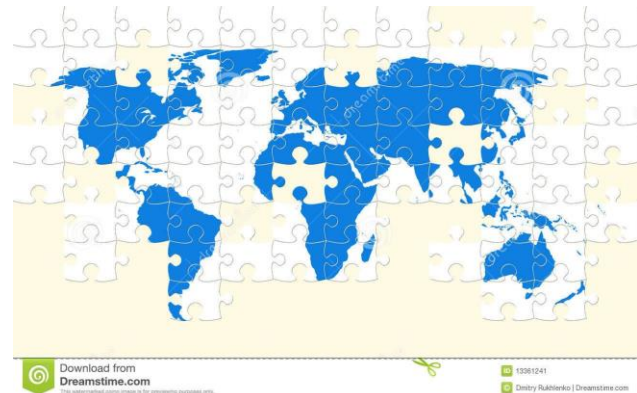
- One study conducted by Razali et. al in 2013 found two main obstacles for general education teachers:
 - a. Not enough training, or none at all
 - b. Time constraints

Segregated Education

- For Germany, there are benefits to using this segregated system
 - Special education schools which are segregated receive more funding from the government (Powell, 2009).
 - With the current system of placing students based on assumed intelligence and performance, integration has been, “exceedingly difficult to achieve” (Powell, 2009).

Segregated Education

- There are several limitations to segregation
 - Integration increases social and cognitive skills
 - Segregation causes “fear, discrimination, and prejudice towards people with disabilities” (Razali et. al, 2013, p. 261).



Methodology

- This survey was designed to determine whether educational personnel perceive that the *Förderschulen* in Germany or inclusive schools in the United States positively or negatively affect students with Autism

Methodology

- Teachers, speech-language pathologists and psychologists were asked if they perceived these systems as beneficial for students with Autism, or if there are any perceived disadvantages of this system
- Survey questions asked about participant demographics, treatment methods used with children diagnosed with Autism, and expected outcomes of individuals with Autism
- This survey also contained questions about the differences of the two school systems

Methodology

- The survey was sent in January 2015, and data was collected until March 18th
- There were two forms of the survey, one in English and one in German

Methodology

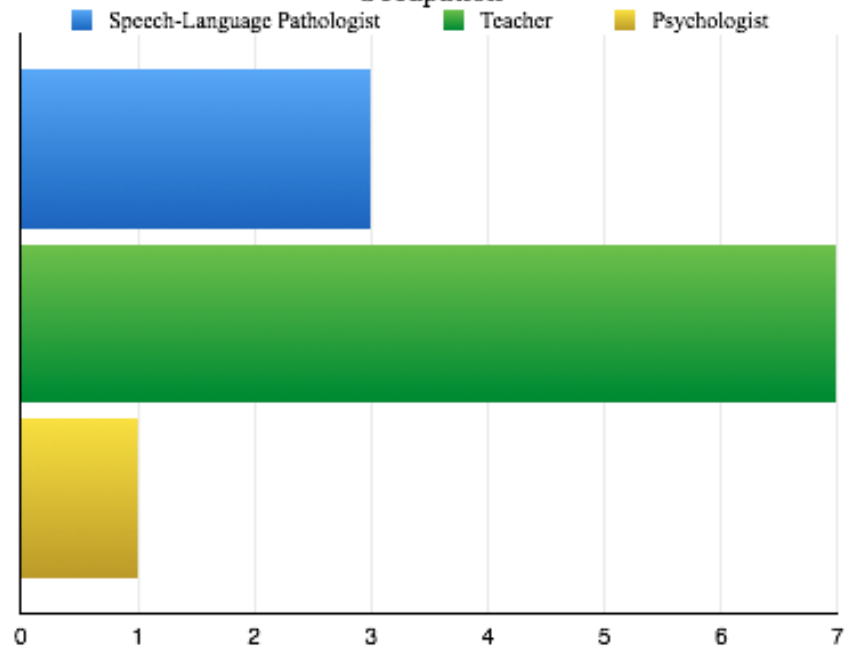
- Convenience and snowball sampling was used to identify participants for the study
- A survey link was sent, and these persons were asked to send the link along to friends and colleagues in the field
- There were 9 total participants from the US, and 3 from Germany

Methodology

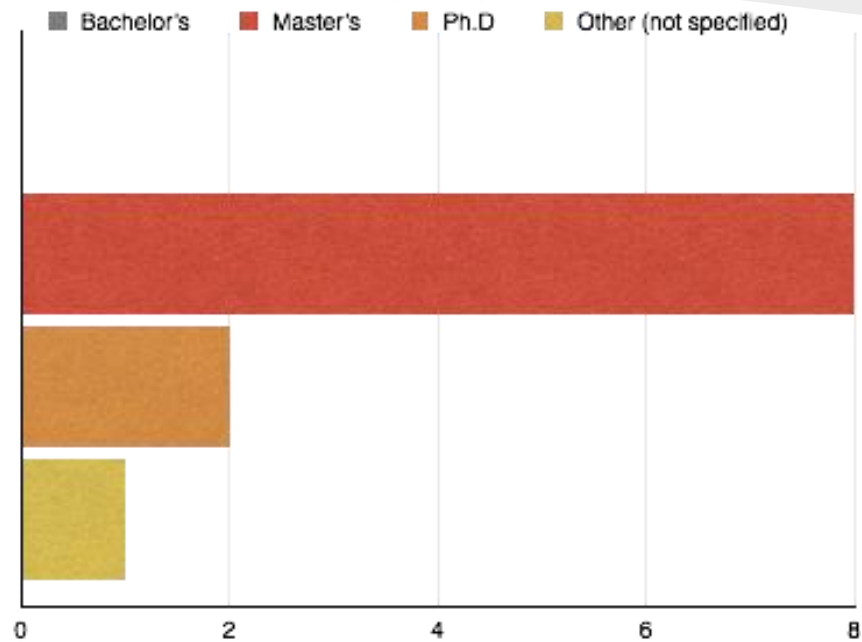
- The response rate was lower than expected
- In the United States:
 - 9 participants out of a potential 150
 - Response rate: .06%
- In Germany:
 - 3 participants out of a potential 50
 - Response rate: .06%

Results

Occupation



Education



Results

- Participants from the United States unanimously said children without disabilities always had the opportunity to interact with children with disabilities
- When asked the reverse, 6 answered “always” and one answered “sometimes”

Results

- *“My students are high functioning & require my support for gen ed courses/accommodations”*
- *“Our basic classrooms are half-day programs that meet 4 times per week. Two-three times per week I also am part of a multidisciplinary team that evaluates students suspected of having a disability, including ASD.”*

Results

- *“I work with on average 6 students per hour. I modify assignments, consult with teachers, offer encouragement, monitor potential triggers, redirect focus, facilitate socialization opportunities.”*
- *“Functional communication skills are addressed through a variety of AAC systems”*

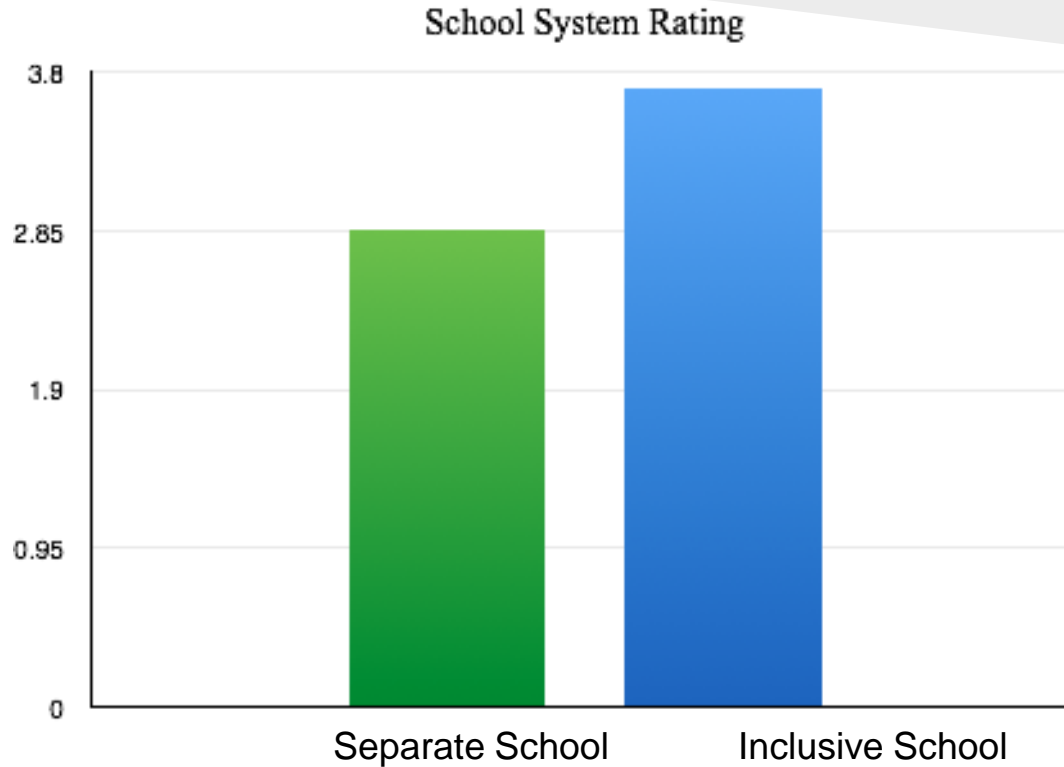
Results

- ***“I meet with my students to monitor their progress and see how they are doing. I help to advocate on their behalf and teach them self-advocacy skills.”***

Results

- Upon graduation, all participants indicated students should have communication skills and vocational skills
- Half of the participants indicated that students actually have these skills

Results



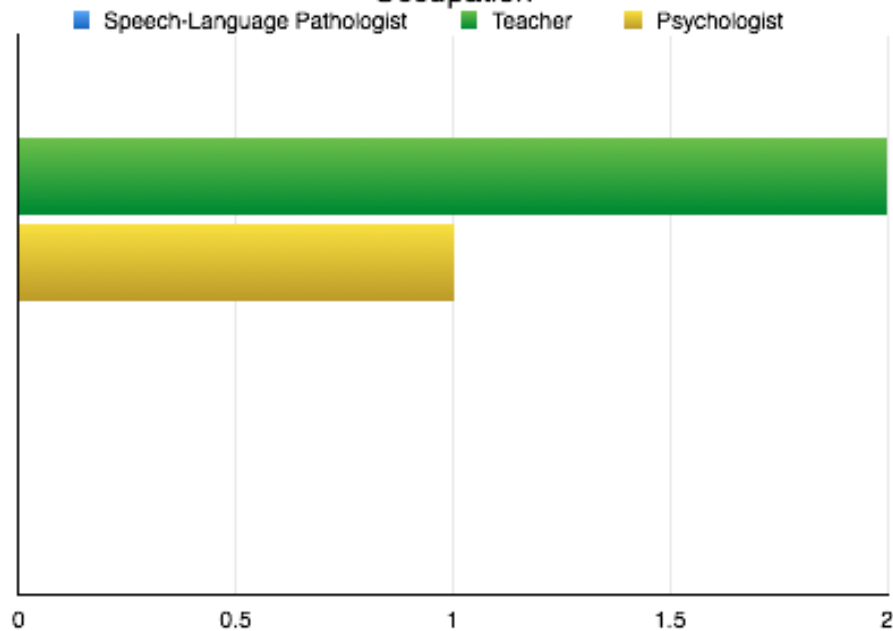
Results

- What should change?
 - Three participants said these students should have more vocational skills
 - Two expressed the need for more support and resources

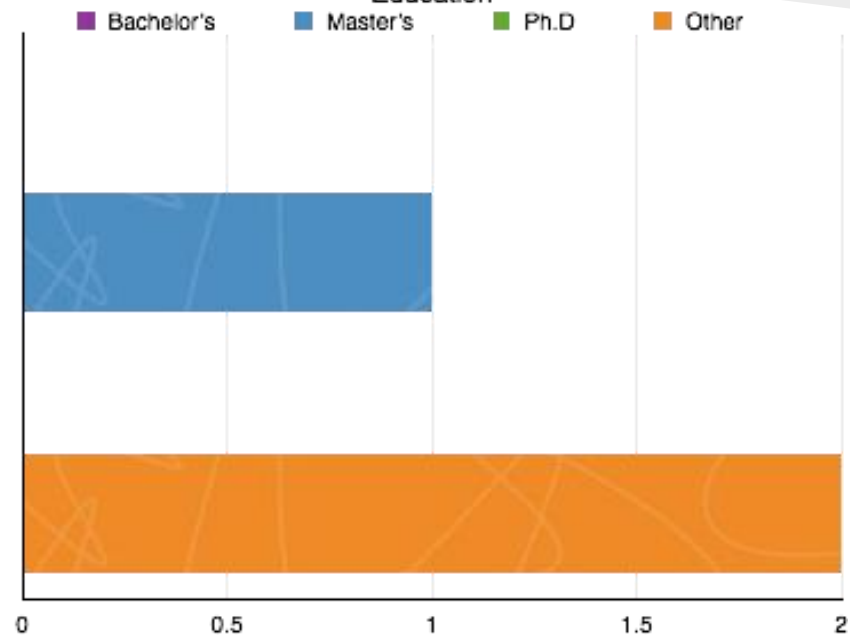


Results

Occupation



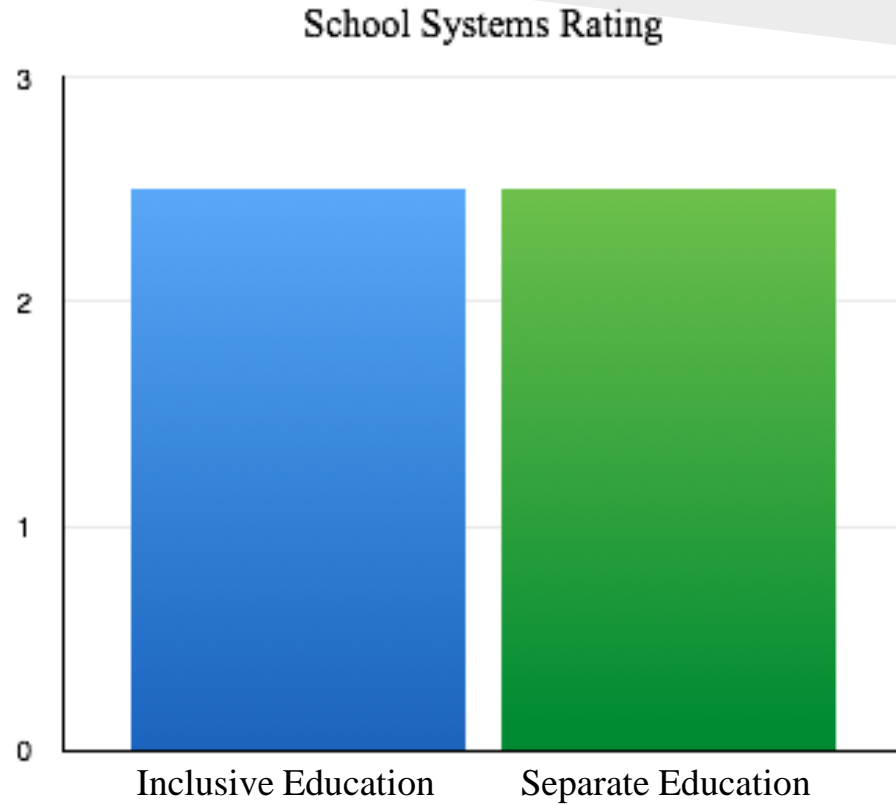
Education



Results

- When asked if children without disabilities have the opportunity to interact with children with disabilities, two indicated “always” and one indicated “rarely”
- All participants indicated that children with Autism always have the opportunity to interact with children without disabilities

Results



Discussion

- No significant conclusions can be drawn due to the low response rate
- The results do lead to further questions
 - Could the low rating given by the Germans indicate that both systems need major improvements?
 - Why wouldn't Germany start building inclusive education settings?
 - Why do only half of professionals agree that students graduate with adequate skills?

Discussion

- Overall, the research completed was inconclusive, but further research can be accomplished to look closer at the differences between these systems, and why countries still use the segregated model for education children with special needs.



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