

A turning point in inclusion: "One size does not fit all"

Separate measures can be useful

by Michael Felten*



Michael Felten.
(Picture ma)

The Intercantonal *University of Special Education Zurich* (HfH) has made a remarkable shift in its approach to inclusion. It now states in one of its guiding principles on inclusion: "The goal is for all children and young people to learn together. If special needs cannot be met in an inclusive setting,

separate or partially separate measures may be appropriate."¹

Rector Prof. Dr. *Barbara Fähr* explains this as follows: "We will continue to need special schools because they have expertise in dealing with specific impairments. Separate measures are also part of the education system and are therefore geared towards the goals of participation and autonomy. If we think about the school system as a whole, the different formats complement each other. And why not rethink things: when does integration into regular schools make sense on a temporary basis?"

This has given the debate about the advantages and disadvantages of inclusive and separate school types a new grounding. In Basel and Zurich, children with special educational needs are already being taught again in remedial classes or school islands; other cantons are set to follow suit. In Germany, too, federal states are gradually returning to separate learning (at least in phases): Schleswig-Holstein talks of "temporary learning groups" and "campus solutions", while Baden-Württemberg refers to "support classes".

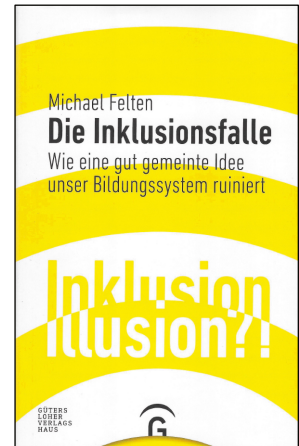
This is entirely in line with the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD,

2006), which states that special schools or classes should not be abolished – on the contrary: "In all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration." (Art. 7.2) And: "Special measures which are necessary to accelerate or achieve de facto equality of persons with disabilities shall not be considered discrimination under the terms of the present Convention." (Art. 5.4)

After years of external criticism, the HfH had maintained in a position paper that inclusive schooling was fundamentally superior to and preferable to separate schooling. However, a new article by HfH staff members supports the "dual-track approach" (*Otto Speck*). Their conclusion: "Empirically, there is currently no fundamental advantage of inclusive over separate school forms." Whether inclusive or separate schooling is advisable in individual cases must be decided based on the type of disability. "The decisive factor seems to be less the question of school inclusion or separation than what happens in the classroom." The researchers' recommendation: "The priority should be on improving the quality of education rather than engaging in ideological debates about the type of school."²

The HfH has now taken this perspective into account in its newly formulated guiding principles, also following the author's intervention. In short: as much integration as is sensible, as much separation as necessary.

(Translation «Swiss Standpoint»)



ISBN 978-3579086729

* Michael Felten, born in 1951, taught mathematics and art for 35 years. He is the author of non-fiction books and teaching materials, works as a freelance teacher trainer and received the 2014 Human Award from the University of Cologne. www.eltern-lehrer-fragen.de.

¹ <https://www.hfh.ch/leitsaetze-zur-inklusion>

² <https://www.esse-zeitschrift.net/download/inklusive-versus-separative-schulformen/?wpdmdl=2533&refresh=68626b0186ec81751280385>