

➔ **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY**

There will be three separate studies looking at educational and occupational developments and approaches to the concept of inclusion from three different angles. However, all areas face similar challenges, and this is demonstrated in the relevance of the following three overarching research topics for all three studies.

➔ **RESEARCH TOPIC I:**

Organizational Design and Human Resource Development

Qualified human resources, coherent concepts, and adaptable structures are essential for successful inclusion policies. Specialized personnel must be able to cope with new challenges. One of several factors, the educational needs of classroom groups is becoming more heterogeneous. Staff must pursue additional professional qualifications. Furthermore, new distribution of tasks puts the whole organizational design in question. Research questions are:

In which ways are workplaces and human resource requirements changing? What human resource development strategies are already being applied? And, which are viable?

➔ **RESEARCH TOPIC II:**

Social Legislation and Maneuvering Room

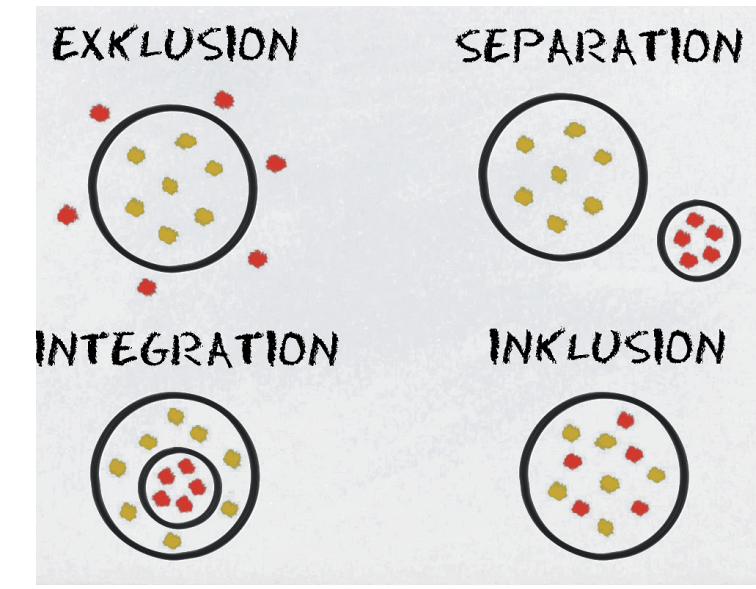
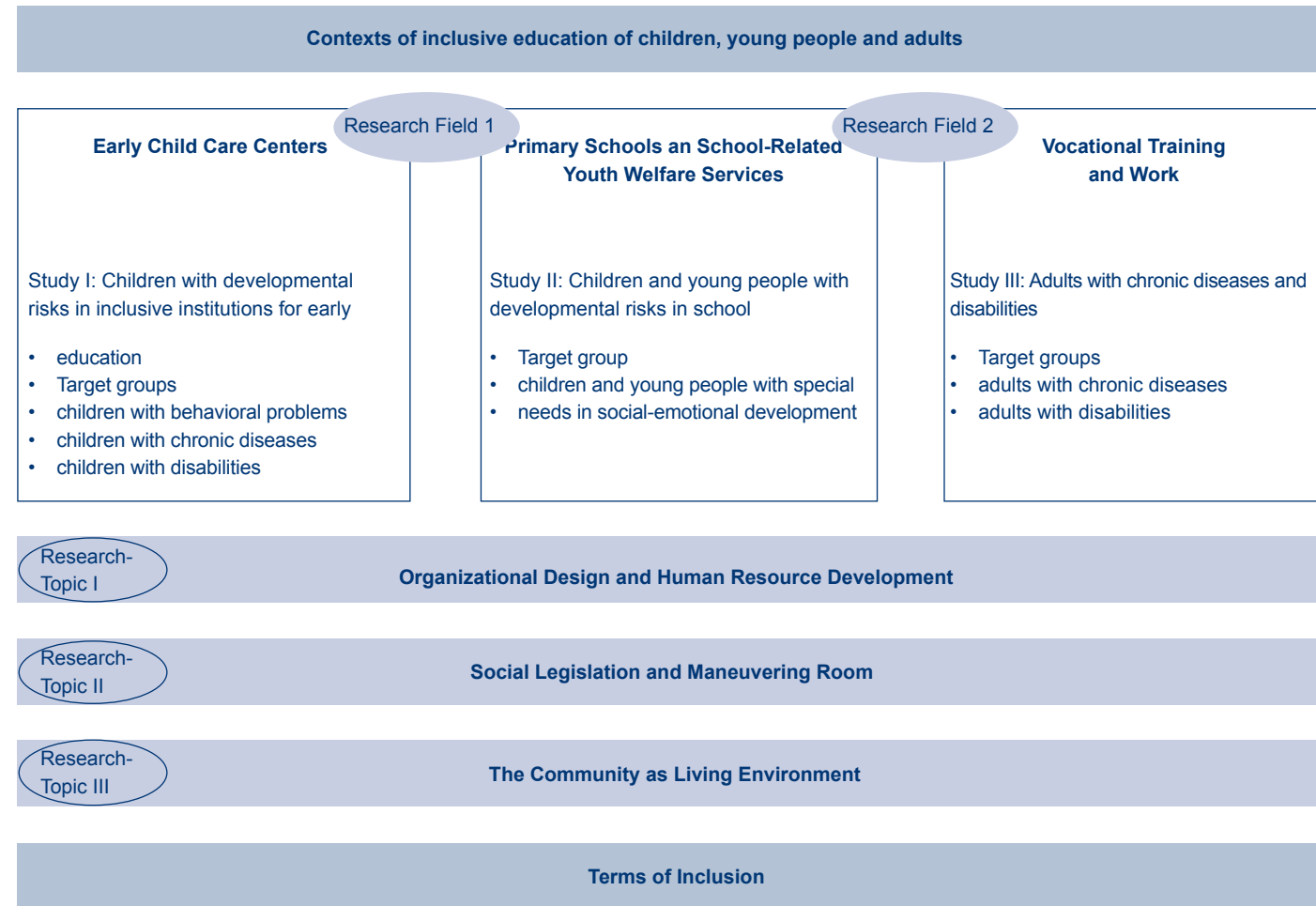
In addition to the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which came into effect in Germany in 2009, the German Constitution (Article 3 par.3 line 2) establishes the legal foundation for inclusive education: “No person shall be disfavored because of disability.” For the interpretation of this law, it is necessary to establish legal criteria, on which subsequent laws and regulations can be based. To date, no comprehensive explanation of inclusive education exists, only fragments scattered throughout many laws. An all-encompassing scientific study of these rules has yet to be made. This study will enable the researchers to assess to what extent the UN convention is being implemented in Germany. This is the key to determining what must still be done in the legal realm to encourage disabled people to participate in our society.

➔ **RESEARCH TOPIC III**

The Community as Living Environment

For this topic, the crucial question is: In what way is inclusion part of urban development? Social issues have to be dealt with on the community level, where young people, adults, and families live. Hence, it is important to make trained and responsive contact people available. Furthermore, it is relevant to know how

people actively shape their neighborhoods and thereby their living environment. The researchers want to develop a process and classification schematic of inclusion policies at the community level. To this end, they will examine existing infrastructures and develop best practices for further advancements.



Research Programme
Inclusive Education - Participation as Core Guiding and Organizational Principle

➔ INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – RESEARCH APPROACH

Demand for inclusion is among the most significant paradigm changes in national and international education policy in recent years. Regarding diversity in our society, the principle of enabling people to participate dominates: providing equal opportunities, encouraging self-determination, supporting talent and enabling participation are the understood aims. While integration emphasizes the differences between people, inclusion underscores the value of diversity.

One example of changing policy: The German federal state of Lower Saxony is introducing mandatory inclusive education policies in schools starting with the 2013/14 school year. This decision is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2006. In Germany, the convention came into effect in 2009.

The implementation of inclusion policies generates enormous research workloads in terms of personnel and organizational development, legal arrangements, and local practice. Against this background, the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrueck has established a research programme on inclusive education: “Inclusive Education – Participation as core guiding and organizational principle.” In the course of the coming three to five years, this research will be sponsored with up to 630,000 Euros. An interdisciplinary group of researchers intends to implement the results in the development of reliable and practical strategies. The study will cover three foci: early child care centers in Lower Saxony, schools and the school-related youth welfare services, and workplaces in regional companies.



➔ STUDY I:

Early Child Care Centers

Many empirical studies show that children with disabilities or special education needs excel in various areas when taught at inclusive educational institutions. These results have helped to make the implementation of inclusion policies in early education a widely discussed topic in Germany. In the first step of this research project, children, parents, and educational personnel will describe the problems facing the implementation of inclusion policies from their perspectives. In the next step, the researchers will discuss the areas in which inclusion is beneficial and where the challenges arise. The concluding question will be: “In which ways can children, parents, and educational personnel contribute to a successful inclusion strategy in the field of early education?”

➔ STUDY II:

Primary Schools and School-Related Youth Welfare Services

Recent studies have shown a steady increase in the proportion of pupils with special needs. This means that, although there has been an expansion of inclusive education for pupils with special needs, the number of pupils at special schools have not decreased. Hence, the transition from a special school system to an inclusive school system has yet to begin. Studies have also shown that whether pupils attend a school for special education is heavily influenced by the geographical location of their family residence. Furthermore, girls and boys with migration backgrounds are clearly overrepresented in these schools. There is still much to be done to achieve equality of opportunity. Following a situation analysis focusing on when inclusive education strategies succeed and when they fail, concrete options will be identified for the individual schools.

➔ STUDY III:

Vocational Training and Work

People who seek work or a vocational training in spite of disabilities or chronic diseases need inclusive workplaces to achieve their occupational aims. But, these places rarely exist. These people normally end up working in the “secondary” labor market, mostly in state-subsidized, sheltered workshops. The Osnabrueck researchers’ goal will be to examine the situation in Lower Saxony, where there are insufficient inclusive workplaces. Regional companies will be interviewed about their experiences with inclusion policies. Finally, best practices will be developed for personnel and organizational structures.



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