

# THE ATTITUDE OF PARENTS TOWARDS SCHOOLS FOR MENTALLY RETARDED CHILDREN IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT OF LOWER FRANCONIA

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Parents whose children attend a school for the mentally retarded in the Administrative District of Lower Franconia were surveyed about their attitude towards these institutions, and their satisfaction with them, their demands for and expectations about integration and cooperation in school and school life. The parents think highly of this type of school, but they also have constructive ideas and desires regarding further development of schools for the mentally retarded. The variables sex, age, occupation, degree of handicap of their children, and the duration of attending the school influence and moderate this parents' attitudes decisively.

**Key words:** parents' attitudes, mental retardation, tretman

## INTRODUCTION

The attitude of parents with children attending a school for the mentally retarded towards this institution, and their demands and expectations towards it are an important aspect of an ongoing discussion about the "crisis of special education for the retarded" in general, and the "crisis of schools for the mentally retarded" in particular. Handicapped people, particularly those who are mentally retarded, are faced with social prejudice. Many specialists, parents, and persons affected regard educational integration as a chance for reducing the social separation of these handicapped people. With a view to nationwide endeavors for educational integration within the Federal Republic of Germany, Heinz Mühl (1994) asked about the future of schools for the mentally retarded. The parents' loss of image through this type of school seems to be considerable. Parents are, according to Mühl, afraid of a limiting "handicapped" career for their

children (Mühl, 1994). The concept of practical education (oriented toward the practical things in life) is doubted, and abilities of reading, writing, and arithmetic should increasingly determine school life.

Mühl considers the future of the school for the mentally retarded as an optional school offered in addition to integrated forms of teaching. Wocken (1995) calls for subsidiary special education for the retarded. Eberwein (1995) states in summary that the "system of special education for the handicapped and the retarded, has failed: it can no longer be supported in terms of scientific-theory in practical teaching" (Eberwein, 1995).

An adequate opening for integrative efforts of Bavarian schools giving special support to their pupils, which has been

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