

Sounds in European E-Learning - SEEL
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Visual Impaired in Germany - P1, UPB – Germany



SEEL

Visual Impaired in Germany

Sound in European E-Learning

Activity A3

Research Paper

P1 University Paderborn – UPB Germany

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SEEL – Visual Impaired in Germany

Blindness and visual impairment is part of our society. Society has to provide support for blind and impaired people to integrate them into schools and working life. The World Health Organization differentiate between for levels of visual function and defines Blindness and visual impairment in the following way:

„There are 4 levels of visual function, according to the International Classification of Diseases -10 (Update and Revision 2006):

- normal vision
- moderate visual impairment
- severe visual impairment
- blindness.

Moderate visual impairment combined with severe visual impairment are grouped under the term “*low vision*”: low vision taken together with blindness represents all visual impairment.” (WHO:
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs282/en/>)

All over the world there are more than 280 million people blind or visual impaired.
(<http://www.who.int/blindness/GLOBALDATAFINALforweb.pdf?ua=1>)

In Germany there were overall about 350 thousand people blind or visual impaired (see figure 1). But these classification number must been seen critically. Because there exist other estimations which are much higher. For instance the club for blind and visual impaired explains that it is very hard to estimate how many blind and visual impaired people lives in Germany.

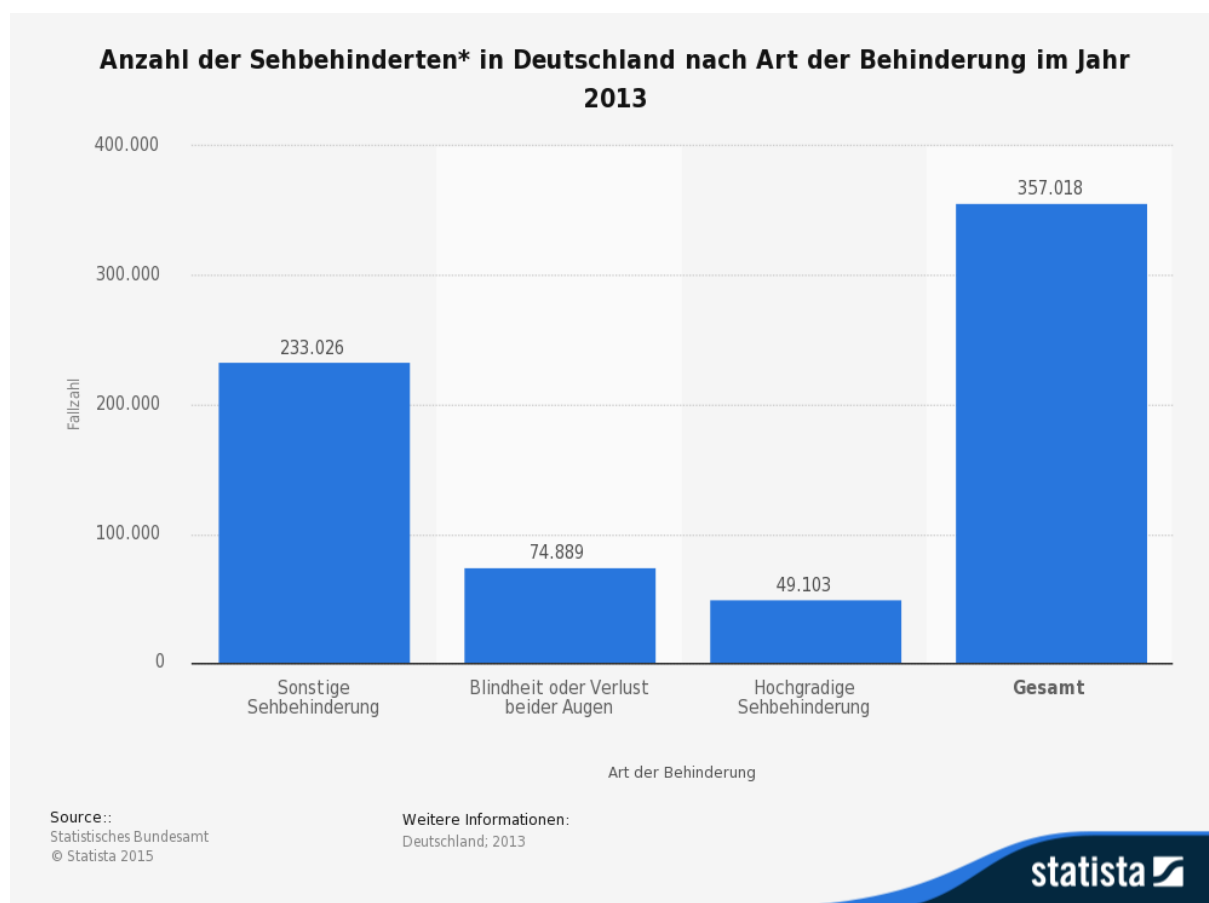


figure 1: Blindness in Germany

(Statistisches Bundesamt. n.d. Anzahl der Sehbehinderten* in Deutschland nach Art der Behinderung im Jahr 2013. Statista. Zugriff am 10. September 2015. Verfügbar unter <http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/247948/umfrage/anzahl-der-sehbehinderten-in-deutschland-nach-schwere-der-behinderung/>.)

No matter what numbers are right it is important to integrate those people into society. That means that every person should have access to education. Furthermore in Germany each person should be educated in an individual way. The Federal Republic of Germany has a differentiated network of consulting and educational institutions that have the mission to teach blind and partially sighted people in a suitable way. The institutions and schools should promote the skills of competences in a way that allows them to work and participate in our society.

It could be differentiated between the particular methodology and didactics as well as the disability specifically designed learning environment and organization. On the one



hand general school knowledge and professional knowledge and skills are taught. On the other hand specific knowledge and methods for blind and visually impaired students are taught. For instance:

- the Braille,
- the use of magnifying vision aids or
- specific computer peripherals

In Germany blind and visual impaired could visit regular schools or school for people with special needs. The actual trend is, that blind and visual impaired pupils should visit the regular schools. In general there are two different options for blind or visual impaired pupils.

The first option is education in the general school system. This is meant with inclusive education. The reality is different. On the one hand there exist a single inclusion in schools with a relatively small number of students who are blind or visually impaired. But on the other hand there are also efforts to establish focus schools. Such schools has a focus on the support of a group with a certain disability. The reason for that is to become a expert in a specific field of inclusion. In that case specialized schools could improve their specific knowledge and learning condition in long term. But there is a lot of critic against such schools because it is against inclusion.

In public schools special education teachers are employed to support the other teachers. In a class could be up to five pupils with a disability. The total number of pupils in such a class should not be larger than 25 pupils. The "Förderbereich Sehen" (support for pupils with blindness, visual impairment or with significant disturbances of the central processing of visual impressions) will promote currently blind pupils with teachers from schools for blind and visually impaired pupils. The resources of these schools are (further) used in this way.

This care and support is called since the school year 2014/15 in NRW "collaborative learning". Classes have the same curricular and therefor the same goals. If there are further special needs the pupils will educate in a specific way with a special curriculum.

In North Rhine-Westphalia there exists twelve schools which are specialized on pupils which are blind or visually impaired. These schools work together with the general schools to foster the idea of inclusion.

The Curriculum for pupils with a visual impairment aims to promote the pupils in specific areas:

- perception promotion,
- techniques, tools / computer,



- orientation & mobility
- every day skills,
- social skills,
- specific for writing and reading.

Furthermore there should be a strong cooperation of all stakeholders (pupils, parents, teachers, ophthalmologists / opticians, other institutions).

The second option is to go to a school with a focus on special need. There are in North Rhine-Westphalia twelve schools with a focus on visual impairment. If somebody want to visit such a school it requires the parents wish or/and the assignment by the school authorities.

At these schools there are differences in the educational programs and areas of work. There are primary and secondary school classes, so that pupils could achieve simple or qualified secondary school levels. At some schools the pupils could even achieve their A-levels.

In the special schools the subjects and teaching content according to the elementary and secondary school policies and educational programs are issued. The priorities are set at the schools.