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An Inclusion-Sensitive Educational Approach and its Empirical Application to Musical Group Settings



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AN INCLUSION-SENSITIVE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH AND ITS EMPIRICAL APPLICATION TO MUSICAL GROUP SETTINGS

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Abstract

The vague nature of the term “inclusion“ and the normativity of the discourse on inclusion present a particular challenge for descriptive analytical research work in this area. There is a lack of basic theory to help illustrate the complexity of educational practice without defining normative specifications. At the same time, the focus on ambiguities appears to present a promising opportunity. Consequently, this study addresses the central research question:

**To what extent can a perspective based on ambiguity broaden the
(music educational) discourse on inclusion?**

To this end, a theoretical approach to inclusion-sensitive educational practice will be developed based on the ambiguities described in inclusion discourse and also on the structural antinomies of professionalization (Helsper 2004, 2010). Finally, the opportunities and limitations presented by the approach in terms of theory, practice and empiricism will be discussed.

Problem Statement

Within academic literature, there is wide consensus that the terminological use of the word “inclusion“ is unclear (cf. inter alia Katzenbach, 2016, p. 17). This can have far-reaching consequences for empirical educational research, for example, by making it more difficult to operationalise or safeguard the concept (Grosche, 2015, p. 22). Moreover, Jörg Schlee (2012) points out the risk of “misunderstanding(s), inaccurate planning and difficulties in implementation“ (ibid., p. 103) due to a lack of clear comprehension of the term. The vague nature of

the term “inclusion” is therefore becoming a challenge for research work in this area. The fact that pedagogical discussions on inclusion are mainly normative presents a further challenge. Although a focus on norms and values is considered essential in the educational field (Böhm & Seichter, 2018, p. 350), it raises the question of how educational research should respond to this requirement (Humrich & Kramer, 2011, p. 218; Tenorth & Tippelt, 2012, p. 531). Due to prescriptive definitions and the “interconnection of normativity and methodology, or rather the analytical function of recognition“(Demmer & Heinrich, 2017, p. 179), there is a risk of being firmly focused on specific outcomes in advance or of counteracting analytical descriptive research (cf. also Stöger & Ziegler, 2013, p. 5).

Both of these challenges impede descriptive analytical research work in the area of inclusion. The possible ways of dealing with these challenges represent approaches that are based on a non-normative definition and/or incorporate the inherent conflict potential and ambiguity of inclusion¹. As a result, focusing on ambiguities appears to be particularly constructive, as indicators of the potential for conflict with regard to societal or institutional parameters, and the appropriateness of the specific situation, are then taken seriously. In addition, the lack of inter-definitional and intra-definitional conceptual clarity, and the inconsistencies between and also within different approaches, encourage closer examination of this ambiguity. However, until now, there has been an absence of a theory of inclusion that 1) refrains from normative standards in the sense of a defined “correct“ or “incorrect“, 2) illustrates the aspects of inherent conflict potential and ambivalence and 3) can precisely capture the subject matter in its complexity and with the multi-perspective integration of structural requirements. This piece of research aims to fulfil this aspiration with its focus on educational practice.

1 Relevant examples here include Reflexive Inklusion by Budde and Humrich (2015), Die Theorie der trilemmatischen Inklusion by Boger (2015), the description of the Integration-Inclusion-Participation Model by Kastl (2016) and the description of various areas of tension by Speck-Hamdan (2015).

Research Question, Project Objective and Approach

Based on the problem statement outlined above, the central research question of this doctoral project is:

**To what extent can a perspective based on ambiguity broaden the
(music educational) discourse on inclusion?**

Several key questions were posed in order to answer the question. They are dealt with in different sections of the study:

1. What ambiguities are described within the discourse on inclusion? How can they be amalgamated in a theory?
2. How can the perspective based on ambiguity be implemented within empirical music educational research in an exemplary way?
3. What facilitates the perspective based on ambiguity with regard to inclusion? What are the limitations?

The aim of this research is to make a contribution to a discriminating discussion on (music educational) inclusion, taking into account findings from General Education, Educational Science and Sociology. This should be achieved on the basis of preliminary work, where a non-normative approach was used with a clear focus on a specific, explicitly defined area of inclusion and yet, which demonstrates the multi-perspectivity and complexity of the subject of inclusion within this narrowly defined area. Focusing on ambiguities appears inevitable in achieving the project objective, due to the inherently ambiguous nature of inclusion.

The project objective will be achieved by creating an inclusion-oriented educational theory based on ambiguities and through subsequent discussion of the theory. In order to answer the research question, a literature search was initially conducted to identify and classify dilemmas, antinomies, areas of tension and paradoxes within inclusion discourse. These were then combined and expanded using the approach of structural antinomies of professionalization by Helsper (2004, 2010). Building on this basis, a theoretical approach was developed

that shows how inclusion can be understood as multi-perspective from an anti-paradoxical viewpoint. As the study progresses, as example demonstrates how this theoretical approach makes it possible to work in a theoretical reflexive, practical and empirical way. The empirical section involves investigating negotiation processes between teachers and pupils in musical group settings based on the paradox of freedom and compulsion. The empirical research is designed as a videography; video interaction analysis by Tuma et al. (2013) was used as a method of evaluation.

Results to Date

As described at the beginning, finding a descriptive-analytical project within the discourse on inclusion presents a challenge (Grosche, 2015). The complexity of the term will be dealt with in this study through a form of systematisation, which is subdivided into levels of inclusion, lines of difference with regard to content and definition groups. In addition, the normativity of inclusion discourse will be presented in detail and existing ways of dealing with it will be outlined. The comprehensive way in which both of these challenges are addressed is considered to provide an initial research result based on the problem statement.

The listing and systematisation of over 50 ambiguities found in the literature presents a further result. The two results will be combined using the theoretical approach of structural antinomies of professionalization (Helsper, 2004, 2010), by critically analysing them with regard to completeness. Furthermore, the results arrived at so far enable Helsper's existing, established and researched approach to be specified for the field of inclusion.

The development of a unique, inclusion-oriented theoretical approach based on the identified connections also represents a research outcome. This theory focuses on the ambiguities of inclusion and how they are dealt with reflexively by teachers and leaders of educational activity. The theoretical approach is based on the sociological perspective of inclusion and exclusion, the fundamental area of tension between universalism and individualism within inclusion, and further factors of complexity. Within this perspective, inclusion-sensitive education is seen on the one hand as an act of mediation in the area of tension between individual and

environment, and on the other hand as a permanent, situational way of handling the inevitable constitutional paradoxes in educational settings. Consequently, it is not a normative framework for “correct“ or “incorrect“ behaviour that will be demonstrated, but a non-normative one of reflection and analysis, which emphasises the contextual and situational dependence of the decisions that arise as a result of the areas of tension and paradoxes.

Furthermore, a discussion of the results is planned concerning the opportunities and limitations of the approach with regard to theory, practice and empiricism. In order to answer the question as to whether the theory can be useful in (music educational) empirical research, an empirical application will be conducted in the form of a qualitative mini-study. In the mini-study, negotiation processes relating to the antinomy between autonomy and compulsion will be analysed using video data from musical situations involving heterogeneous groups. The video interaction analysis by Tuma, Schnettler and Knoblauch (2013) will be used as the method of evaluation. On the basis of case reconstructions from educational group leaders, the aim is to illustrate the different methods of dealing with the antinomy, the effects of these methods and music educational specifications.

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