

## Inclusion in Higher Education

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In 2024 Rudolf Steiner University College launched the pilot project *Inclusion in higher education*. The project is situated within the bachelor's degree in social pedagogy, led by course leader, Josefin Winther. The aim of the project is to develop higher education for people with disabilities by establishing diverse student groups which requires didactical innovation and new styles of teaching based on an epistemological re-negotiation of the current scientific paradigm within higher education. The first part of the project took shape in two-week teaching module for bachelor students and guest students with disabilities, with two upcoming modules planned in 2024-2025.

The research places itself within the field of action research as a *cooperative inquiry*, with a focus on social intervention and a stated intention to improve practice<sup>1</sup>. This is a method for a collaborative first- and second-person research practice developed by Heron and Reason<sup>2</sup>. The method can be described as exploratory and participative, because it largely emphasizes first-person phenomenological experiences and because it uses the participants in a co-creative way in the research<sup>3</sup>. Here an attempt is made to operationalize the *extended epistemology*, indicating four forms of knowledge: *experiential, presentational, propositional and practical*.

Participatory research allows for what can be described as "artful knowing".<sup>4</sup> Artistic activities and perspectives are essential to the project, not only in the teaching and didactics itself, but also with the idea that thinking can both be cultivated through, and take shape as, art<sup>5</sup> and movement<sup>6</sup>. The development of the mind starts with stimulation of the senses<sup>7</sup>, inspired by Susanne Langer who places "embodied meaning and experience at the heart of human understanding and existence".<sup>8</sup>

Creating education for a group of people who are a more genuine expression of our society will awaken the need to address more aspects of the human being in a serious and targeted way. This leads us to the question of epistemology, and what forms of knowledge we want to cultivate in higher education. All people have knowledge, and all people have the potential to deepen and expand their knowledge. However, not all people have a cognitive apparatus that is suitable for teaching based on theoretical models and abstract thinking. And even more urgent in today's educational system: An overload of theoretical education is not necessarily beneficial, even though students and pupils can endure it. This form of knowledge "is what we most readily recognise as knowledge within the dominant Western worldview"<sup>9</sup>. An important part of the research project is to demonstrate the intrinsic discrimination and intellectual ableism that this epistemological bias leads to.

Exploring the opportunities for inclusion in higher education, is not only an ethical responsibility in a humanist society. It is also a way to explore new approaches and possibilities within teacher training. Here we can create didactics that comprehend the intelligence of the body, social intelligence, individuality, empathy, mutual joy and acknowledges for human diversity and provide authentic

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<sup>1</sup> McNiff & Whitehead, 2010

<sup>2</sup> 1986, 1997, 2001

<sup>3</sup> Lumma & Weger, 2023

<sup>4</sup> Gaya, 2021, p. 178

<sup>5</sup> Eisner, 2003, s. 343



Human  
Intelligence

<sup>6</sup> Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, s. 28

<sup>7</sup> Eisner, 2003, s. 341

<sup>8</sup> Chaplin, 2020, p. 257

<sup>9</sup> Gayá, 2021, p. 177

learning situations that enable students to develop relevant practical knowledge<sup>10</sup> for pedagogical and social work.

This lecture presents the foundations and reasoning for the pilot project, with focus on the unleashed potential in re-understanding teaching considering extended epistemology and artistic approaches, enabling diverse student groups to take part on constructive terms.

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<sup>10</sup>Heron 1992, 1996