

Constructivism and Situational Analysis as Background for Researching Complex Phenomena: Example of Inclusion

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Abstract : It's impossible to capture complex phenomena, such as inclusion, with reductionism. The most common form of reductionism is the objectivist approach, where processes and relationships are reduced to entities and clearly outlined phases, with a consequent search for relationships between them. Constructivism as a paradigm and situational analysis as a methodological research portfolio represent a way to avoid the dominant objectivist approach. They work with a situation, i.e. with the essential blending of actors and their environment. Primary transactions are taking place between actors and their surroundings. Researchers create constructs based on their need to solve a problem. Concepts therefore do not describe reality, but rather a complex of real needs in relation to the available options how such needs can be met. For examination of a complex problem, corresponding methodological tools and overall design of the research are necessary. Using an original research on inclusion in the Czech Republic as an example, this contribution demonstrates that inclusion is not a substance easily described, but rather a relationship field changing its forms in response to its actors' behaviour and current circumstances. Inclusion consists of dynamic relationship between an ideal, real circumstances and ways to achieve such ideal under the given circumstances. Such achievement has many shapes and thus cannot be captured by description of objects. It can be expressed in relationships in the situation defined by time and space. Situational analysis offers tools to examine such phenomena. It understands a situation as a complex of dynamically changing aspects and prefers relationships and positions in the given situation over a clear and final definition of actors, entities, etc. Situational analysis assumes creation of constructs as a tool for solving a problem at hand. It emphasizes the meanings that arise in the process of coordinating human actions, and the discourses through which these meanings are negotiated. Finally, it offers "cartographic tools" (situational maps, social worlds / arenas maps, positional maps) that are able to capture the complexity in other than linear-analytical ways. This approach allows for inclusion to be described as a complex of phenomena taking place with a certain historical preference, a complex that can be overlooked if analyzed with a more traditional approach.

Keywords : constructivism, situational analysis, objective realism, reductionism, inclusion

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