

39. Annual Conference on Inclusive Research

Research – Attitude – Activism?

Inclusion Research between Educational Utopia and System Conformity

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Second publication of the Calls for Papers

Submission Period: 01.08.-15.09.2025

You may find the platform for entering papers and to register for the conference here: <https://ifo2026.uni-bremen.de/anmeldung/>

Four decades of the annual conference on inclusion research provide an opportunity to reflect on past developments and to discuss inclusive perspectives within research, educational institutions and society. The future direction of the conference was discussed at the IFO 2025 in Cologne. At the discussion forum 'Inklusionsforscher:innentagung – wohin, woher, wie weiter? (Inclusion Research Conference: Where to, Where From, How to Go On?), it was noted that the IFO is more political (and perhaps more normative) than other conferences and has often positioned itself as a conference oriented towards exchange through formats such as open spaces and continuous thematic threads. At the same time, various expectations and demands regarding the IFO were expressed, including questions about accessibility for persons outside the research community and the role of political and praxis-related positions within the IFO framework.

In the context of inclusion, research and activist perspectives interact at various levels. For example, activists and developments in practice inspire research projects, as reflected in the history of the Integration/Inclusion Researchers' Conference. Researchers themselves are often closely linked to practice through their professional biography and intensive cooperation. Thus, activist and political initiatives such as Eine Schule für alle e.V. (One School for Everyone) or the Association against Segregation as well as initiatives for specific resolutions on current developments have always played a vital role at the IFO conference. It is against this background that scientific discourse and results on inclusion often have a high transfer component. Their aim is to support practical developments, generate reflective knowledge and accompany transformation processes in practice. Many projects are also directly linked to the objective of initiating such transformation processes.

At the annual conference of inclusion researchers, both perspectives often manifest in participants' work as well as in their attitudes. However, this dual perspective on the orientation of inclusion research is also subject to critical questioning: It could be with the question of which normative assumptions characterise the research (see

Balzer 2019). Or the extent to which complex processes of '(mis)appropriation' can be observed, whereby affected groups are given unequal access to academic spaces and representation in research, and where impulses from activist movements perceived as 'too radical' are excluded from research altogether (Boger, 2022, p. 48). The intertwining of activist and research perspectives creates several key areas of tension that have been repeatedly raised at previous conferences, and which we intend to address in our 2026 exchange. Some central questions are:

1. To what extent does an activist attitude contradict the requirements of scientific work (e.g., quality criteria, but also the pragmatic constraints of the scientific process)? Is inclusion research without a normative stance in the sense of striving to include everyone even possible or desirable? But also: What processes of appropriation towards practitioners and activist perspectives, especially those from marginalised groups, arise if this attitude is not (or cannot be) combined with consistently participatory approaches?
2. To what extent does the adoption of activist attitudes, or even merely the orientation of research towards the instigation of practice transformations, align with a political positioning of researchers? Which implications of the aforementioned points arise for inclusion research as a discipline? Is there - especially in the current political situation - an apolitical (inclusion) research?
3. To what extent has a process of disentanglement occurred, in the course of which inclusion research is increasingly retreating behind the safe walls of the ivory tower of science? Are there generational differences in the self-image of activists and researchers in the context of inclusion?

The concept of inclusion remains open to interpretation, as evidenced by the ongoing discourse surrounding its definition (cf. Köpfer 2019). The claim to include the relevant dimensions of difference (intersectional) raises the question of why dimensions such as racism and anti-Semitism, gender and queer studies, migration, language or topics such as adultism are still underrepresented within inclusion research. At the time, establishing networks with the discipline of Disability Studies is still a work in progress. The concept of inclusion as an educational utopia, aimed at ensuring maximum participation with minimum discrimination, directly points to its transformative potential, especially with regard to structural developments. It focuses on all students whose equal participation is restricted.

Concurrently, the concept of inclusion remains predominantly narrowly understood, particularly within educational policy and administrative practice, encompassing the joint schooling of pupils with and without disabilities or with and without special educational needs. This narrow interpretation of inclusion, fosters an individualistic perspective which is evident in the mode of individual support. This understanding is evident in the current prevalence of certain modes of operation within significant

segments of the school landscape and research funding. These modes stabilise the relationship between selection and support within the school system and associated structures, thereby ensuring that the concept of inclusion is interpreted in accordance with the system's framework. The two strongly accentuated interpretations of inclusion have been shown to influence the framing and shaping of both activist and research-based action, thus providing further insight into the interplay between research, attitudes and activism. The following questions may be posed:

1. In what ways do researchers balance different conceptions of inclusion, for example regarding an intersectional stance or 'attitudes' and the utilisation of a pragmatic sampling and categorisation approach? Or in relation to the necessity of transferring findings into extant systems whilst concurrently upholding transformative aspirations?
2. Is research capable of delivering results that contribute towards the realisation of an educational utopia, or will it remain empirically rooted within and constrained by the existing system, for example regarding the relationship between individual support and criticism of the system?
3. To what extent does an emphasis on the reflection and transformation of exclusionary structures, as well as the design of (educational) systems that facilitate the greatest possible participation, advance activist demands for inclusion research? The role of direct support for activist and educational policy initiatives must also be considered?
4. To what extent are findings from other lines of research, such as disability studies, gender studies or critical racism research, taken into account in inclusion research? This is relevant both in terms of interdisciplinary scientific standards and in terms of the specific perspective on empowering issues and structures, as well as on the relationship between science and activism.
5. To what extent is it ultimately a 'research utopia' to consistently implement inclusive claims in science - for example at conferences?

These ambivalences are a subject of controversy in both academic and activist contexts and assume a further layer when activist demands are imposed on science or activist perspectives are subjected to critical analysis from a scientific standpoint. The following contribution formats are planned: SymposiumPlus, individual contribution, symposium, discussion forum, poster session, and research workshops. These formats are outlined on the following pages.

The submission period starts at the **1st of August and ends on the 15th of September**. You may find the platforms for entering Papers and to register for the conference here: <https://ifo2026.uni-bremen.de/anmeldung/>.

The review process will once again be conducted with the involvement of an advisory board. Furthermore, an open review process is being planned, to which all those submitting papers will be invited. Comprehensive details pertaining to the composition of the advisory board and the open review will be made available in the near future on the conference website.

Subsequent to the conference, all contributions except those submitted as posters will be invited to submit an extended abstract for the conference publications. It is anticipated that the number of contributions received will far exceed the capacity of the conference proceedings to accommodate them. Therefore, the organisation of an online documentation of all conference contributions (including the posters) in an abstract is also being planned. All contributors will be furnished with further information in the period leading up to the conference.

Literatur:

- Balzer, N. (2019). Eine Pädagogik der wohlkalkulierten Anerkennung: Zum ‚Umgang mit Differenz‘ im erziehungswissenschaftlichen Inklusionsdiskurs. In E. von Stechow, P. Hackstein, K. Müller, M. Esefeld & B. Klocke (Hrsg.), *Inklusion im Spannungsfeld von Normalität und Diversität. Band I: Grundfragen der Bildung und Erziehung* (S. 69–82). Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Boger, M. (2022): Risse in der Landschaft der Inklusionsforschung – Aktuelle offene Entwicklungen und offene Fragen. In B. Schimek, G. Kremsner, M. Proyer, R. Grubich, F. Paudel & R. Grubich-Müller (Hrsg.), *Grenzen.Gänge.Zwischen.Welten. Kontroversen – Entwicklungen – Perspektiven der Inklusionsforschung* (S. 43-58). Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Köpfer, A. (2019). Rekonstruktion behinderungsbedingter Differenzproduktion in inklusionsorientierten Schulen. In J. Budde, A. Dlugosch, P. Herzmann, L. Rosen, J. A. Panagiotopoulou, T. Sturm et al. (Hrsg.), *Inklusionsforschung im Spannungsfeld von Erziehungswissenschaft und Bildungspolitik* (S. 143–164). Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich.

Contribution formats at the IFO 2026 in Bremen

At IFO 2026, contributions can be submitted in six event formats: (1) individual contribution, (2) symposium, (3) discussion forum, (4) poster session and (5) research workshop.

It is the objective of the organisers to ensure that approximately 50% of the contributions in all formats explicitly address aspects of the conference theme. However, in order to accommodate the broad spectrum of contemporary inquiries and inclusion-related focal points among researchers, it is imperative to allocate space open topic contributions in all formats. At the time of submission, contributors themselves choose whether their contribution should be reviewed in the 'conference topic' or in the 'free contributions' strand.

When selecting the contributions, we strive for an appropriate participation of scientists in the qualification phase as first and sole authors in the case of a majority of positively reviewed submissions. A balanced ratio of completed projects and projects still in progress is also taken into account.

The following section contains comprehensive details regarding the event formats, including information on abstracts and other requirements. It is stated that a maximum of two contributions by one person will be included in the review process as first author.

Individual contribution

The format of the individual contributions provides a structured framework for the presentation of scientific research and subsequent discussion. In response to the frequently expressed desire for additional time for discussion following the presentations, it has been decided that only two presentations will be held within an 80-minute slot. It is therefore anticipated that a time frame of 40 minutes will be allocated for both individual and group contributions (with a maximum of 25 minutes designated for the presentation and a minimum of 15 minutes allocated for discussion). The objective is to guarantee that the content of the contributions within the individual slots is suitable.

Abstract: 2500 characters (incl. spaces, excl. literature), **deadline: 15.09.2025**

Symposium

The 'traditional' symposia comprise two to three short presentations on a specific topic. The symposia are submitted as complete events (including information on the time allocation and the concept for the exchange).

Abstract: Abstract for the symposium with information on the planned structure, time allocation and exchange component: 3000 characters (incl. spaces, excl. literature,

abstracts for the short presentations: max. 1500 characters (incl. spaces, excl. literature), **deadline: 15.09.2025**

Discussion Forum

In the 'discussion forum' format, specific questions pertaining to the conference topic or contemporary issues relating to inclusion research can be deliberated in a controversial manner. The discussion organisers are responsible for designing introductory impulses, selecting discussion methods and organising the moderation. Depending on the format of the discussion, individual representatives from academia, practice, politics and civil society can also be listed as panellists in advance. The discussion organisers are tasked with the responsibility of documenting the course of the discussion and the ensuing results, which are to be made available on the conference website or in the conference proceedings.

Abstract with thematic description and information on the planned structure and design of the exchange 2500 characters (incl. spaces, excl. literature), **deadline: 15.09.2025**

Poster

The poster session facilitates the presentation and discussion of current and future research projects. In order to provide adequate prominence to the poster contribution format at the IFO, information regarding the posters will be disseminated via brief video teasers prior to the poster session. Two to three teasers will be presented in the panel slots on the days preceding the poster session, with the proviso that they are thematically appropriate. Following a successful review of their contribution, contributors will receive specific information, including a template and a creation guide for the teasers.

Abstract: 1000 characters (incl. spaces, excl. literature), **deadline: 15.09.2025**

Research Workshops and Open Spaces

The **research workshops** provide a forum for the intensive analysis of data material from current research projects. The research workshops are scheduled to last for a duration of 90 minutes. Participants enrolled in a workshop are entrusted with the responsibility of independently organising the event. Furthermore, it is possible to register a workshop that utilises material from two projects. The research workshops are realised within the 'Open Space'.

Abstract for the research workshops: 1000 characters (incl. spaces), **deadline: 15.09.2025**

During the Open Space, additional rooms can be used for ad hoc events, new projects can be started or working group meetings can be organised. The announcements for open space offerings are collected during the conference in an

introductory session and - unless they are closed working groups - made known to the conference participants.

Contact Conference Bureau:

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You may find further information here:

<https://ifo2026.uni-bremen.de/>