

English summary

This dissertation examines the inclusive processes for pupils with autism and ADHD in Physical Education (PE) in two public schools in the municipality of Aalborg. In Denmark, three new significant law changes were made concerning the public schools: the law of inclusion from 2012, changes to the working hour agreement of the teachers effective from 2014, and the public school reform from 2014. These three changes, with their in many ways conflicting aims and intended and unintended consequences, have had a great influence on the way public schools organise themselves and they have also affected the everyday life of teachers and pupils. The largest group of pupils with special needs that are not included in the same way as before 2012 are those with autism and ADHD. Autism and ADHD are psychiatric diagnoses where especially children have some social challenges when it comes to communication and social interaction. Some of the children may also be cognitively challenged and/or face challenges with motor skills or their health in general. PE in the Danish public school relies to a great extent on activities and team games that require social interaction and collaboration as well as cognitive and motor skills.

The national evaluation reports from the period 2012-2016 indicate that many public school teachers find inclusion challenging and that the support towards inclusion is very low among teachers and other educators but somewhat higher on the management and leadership level. The well-being of the pupils with special needs is somewhat lower compared to the pupils without special needs; also the level of participation in the social group is lower both in and outside of school for these pupils. It is particularly interesting in this context that this tendency does not seem to have changed in spite of the law of inclusion. The teachers in particular highlight the challenges of teaching pupils with special needs and request more guidance regarding pupils with diagnoses.

Taking into account the existing literature on the topic in 2014 and 2017 it can be established that there is a gap in the research concerning inclusion of pupils with autism and ADHD in PE in Denmark, especially regarding what actually takes place regarding inclusion and exclusion mechanisms for the target group. This study takes its point of departure in process sociology and seeks to answer the following research question: *What possibilities and constraints are there for inclusive processes in PE for pupils with autism and ADHD in two public schools in the municipality of Aalborg? And what significance does the interaction in the PE figuration have for the process of inclusion?*

The dissertation consists of a total of eight chapters and is framed by the interpretive process methodology of Baur and Ernst (2011) and based on analyses on a macro, meso, and micro level as well as a summarizing discussion (sociogenesis).

Owing to the process sociology approach I have on the macro level done document analysis of historical documents connected to the definition of aims in PE over a period of about 40 years. On the meso level I have done document analysis of the inclusion strategies of Aalborg Municipality and the evaluations of the inclusion efforts in the municipality; all documents are from the period 2011-2015. The analysis on the micro level is the main focus of the dissertation.

The methodical approach of the study is mainly qualitative. It is a field study where I have observed 11 pupils with autism and ADHD and their interactions with their classmates and their PE teachers in the daily life of the school with a special focus on the PE classes as the primary domain. I have been at the schools for almost a year in total (2015), which covers two school years: 2014/2015 and 2015/2016. To answer my research question, I have covered several perspectives: that of the observed pupils, the PE teachers, the parents, the principals, the classmates, and the pedagogical consultant in the school management department of Aalborg Municipality. The methods I have used are participant observation of the PE lessons; individual semi-structured interviews with the observed pupils (with/without one parent or teacher), the principals, and the pedagogical consultant; focus group interviews with the PE teachers; telephone contact with the parents; and social network method (network analysis) of the observed pupils' social position in PE classes via a short questionnaire filled out by all the pupils in the class of the observed pupils.

The approach to the subject area of investigation has been abductive. In the strategy of analysis for the micro level, I have primarily been inspired by the three phases suggested by Halkier (2016): *coding*, *categorising*, and *conceptualising*, as well as the analysis strategy of Crabtree & Miller (1999): *the editing organizing style*, which is used in the interpretative paradigm.

The theoretical framework of the study is Norbert Elias' conceptualisation of *the civilizing process* (2000) with a particular focus on the terms figuration, interdependency, and power balances, which are used at all three levels of analysis. Also Elias' conception of the balance between I, we, and them identities (1978) as well as the distinction between established and outsiders has been applied as a way of understanding the power dynamic between groups and individuals in the PE lessons, especially at the micro level. In addition, I have chosen to also apply Erving Goffman's theories

about *stigma* (2009) and the *role playing* that takes place in the interaction between people (2014) in order to better understand some of the actions and interactions on the micro level. Based on the analyses of the macro, meso, and micro levels, the following significant results and conclusions of the dissertation can be extracted:

- The study shows that the common understanding of inclusive teaching from the definition of aims in PE, where there is a focus on accommodating everyone and that the surroundings should adapt to fit the child's needs, are inconsistent with how the PE teachers in actuality act towards and talk about this group of children. To a great extent, the PE teachers consider the problem to be inherent in the child and believe that the child should adapt to fit into the lesson, not the other way around.
- When the observed pupils' social conventions do not match the expectations of the school or the PE teachers it can limit the pupils' social inclusion and have a negative effect on their social position among both the PE teachers and the classmates. This is especially the case in the situations where the observed pupils lack the ability to show shame when they have broken the rules or overstepped someone else's boundaries. Thus, the PE teachers may unintentionally exclude the pupils they were meant to include.
- Special rules or special considerations for the pupils with autism and ADHD are experienced by the pupils themselves, their parents, the inclusion supervisors, and the principals as enabling for inclusion in the school. But the PE teachers find the special rules to be constraining, as they have a hard time sustaining them because there are – according to the teachers' statements – so many students now that need special considerations. In the cases where the observed pupils are exempt from PE lessons or the PE teachers 'turn a blind eye' to the pupils' (non)participation the teachers' actions have the unintended consequence that the pupils are socially excluded.
- The number of pupils and adults in the PE figuration as well as the diversity of students from different classes in a PE lesson has a great influence on the possibilities for inclusive processes. When the number is high and there are many pupils from other classes it limits the observed pupils' opportunities for inclusion, and they feel less confident in this case.

- The observed pupils' general social position in the class also has a large say in their social positions in the PE lessons, regardless of their PE competencies, i.e. their social position in the PE lessons is to a lesser degree dependent of their PE competencies.
- If the PE teachers are good at explaining the activities, have created a structure for the lesson, have considered the formation of teams, have prepared the observed pupils for the content of the lesson ahead of time, and have ensured a clear role assignment between the adult professionals, the opportunities for the inclusive processes in the PE lessons are optimized.

Based on these main conclusions I concentrate my attention in the 'future implications' section on some pedagogical implications for public schools and PE teachers that will hopefully help them support the inclusive teaching for pupils with autism and ADHD in PE moving forward.