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## ***Hermeneutics as a Methodological Approach to Pedagogical Research<sup>2</sup>***

### **Extended summary**

Pedagogical research is based on specific views on the nature of truth and reality, which means that each research has its methodological orientation that determines the research approach and procedure. Since the study of methodological approaches provides insight into the world of educational research, it indirectly provides insight into the current state of educational theory and practice. The hermeneutic approach to research is one of the methodological approaches in pedagogy that has been unjustly neglected. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the importance, scope, and possibility of using this method in pedagogical research. Starting from the essence of pedagogical phenomena, the basic assumptions of hermeneutics are analyzed with regard to their application in pedagogical research. The author emphasizes the importance of a deeper insight into specific phenomena, events, and processes, as well as the need for this approach and the possibilities of applying hermeneutical circle not only in pedagogical research, but also in pedagogical practice. The importance of analyzing this approach is also reflected in the fact that qualitative research, more or less explicitly, is mostly based on the foundations of this approach.

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The representatives of the hermeneutic approach start from the insight that there is no uniform reality, but that it emerges as a consequence of construction in the consciousness of individuals. From the point of view of the hermeneutic approach, the purpose of pedagogy is to understand educational reality. Regarding the nature of man, the representatives of hermeneutics point out that man is not only a rational and intellectual being, but also an emotional and volitional being. Knowledge is acquired through interpretation. Interpretation is not based on any external criteria, but on the subjective construction of meaning. There is no universal knowledge, it is an individual construction and as such variable and relative. The importance of the context is emphasized. If we want to understand a phenomenon, it is important to observe it in its context. The research methodology is based on the hermeneutic circle. The research consists of a cyclical movement between self-reflexivity, talking about the experience, the current way of understanding a particular problem, the active construction of the interpretation of the experience, and the study of how this interpretation came about. The importance of moving back and forth between parts and the whole in order to understand a particular phenomenon is emphasized. The researcher and respondents have an active role in the research. Respondents are not seen as passive and neutral subjects in the research process, but as active agents who bring their own constructions of meaning of a particular situation to the research.

Significant for pedagogy as a social-humanistic science is the insight of representatives of the hermeneutic approach that the object of social sciences is qualitatively different from the object of natural sciences. Therefore, the research methodology must be clearly different from the research methodology of the natural sciences. The hermeneutic approach points to the importance of an in-depth investigation of the meaning of particular phenomena, events, or processes. It is argued that the nature of educational phenomena is such that they often cannot be expressed or measured quantitatively. Therefore, the approach and manner of studying pedagogical problems change. The importance of knowing the context and socio-historical conditions is emphasized, but also the importance of examining the relationship between the part and the whole of the problem under study. The hermeneutic circle has found its place in theory, but also in the practice of educational work. Certain types of research attempt to study phenomena cyclically and in stages; action research can be cited as an example. In pedagogical practice, the evaluation of work can also be based on the concept of the hermeneutic circle. In considering the limitations of the hermeneutic approach to research in pedagogy, it is generally pointed out that hermeneutics is primarily a philosophy, and researchers are expected to apply its postulates in research. This means that further elaboration of the hermeneutic approach in pedagogical research must be sought. As far as implementation is concerned, the process of hermeneutically oriented research is complex and methodologically demanding for the researcher.

**Keywords:** hermeneutics, methodological approach, epistemology, pedagogical research

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