

### 3. Shifting from Adjusting to Flourishing – A Neuroaffirmative Approach in Education and Research

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**Moderation:** sought

The purpose of education for neurodivergent learners has often narrowed to the expectation of adjusting to their environment. Educational success is measured through compliance, attendance, academic outcome, or simply a day that passes without crisis. When a child is described as unable to communicate and/or participate, this names only one side of a relationship and reflects a very deficit-orientated view rather than asking how the environment – and especially the adults involved – have failed to understand and support them in fostering inclusive environments.

The Double Empathy Problem and the concept of neurodivergent intersubjectivity give this asymmetry a name, and reframe difference as relational rather than deficit-based.

This working forum starts from the question of what it would mean to take this reframing seriously and to shift the goal of education and research from adjustment to flourishing, grounded in a eudaimonic understanding of well-being rather than functioning alone.

We open with a short conceptual input situating flourishing within neurodiversity-affirming theory, the Double Empathy framework, and current debates on eudaimonic well-being and flourishing in school contexts. This sets the ground for the central questions we want to work on with participants:

- What does flourishing mean for neurodivergent students, and how might we recognise it beyond academic outcomes, attendance, and behaviour?
- What does a neuroaffirmative approach look like in practice in truly inclusive classrooms and in research designs?
- How are autistic students currently heard and involved in research and school practice, and how can their voice be anchored methodologically and structurally (as co-authors of knowledge, not only as participants or informants)?

This last question is the methodological core of the forum. We want to move beyond stating that student voice matters, and work concretely on how participation can be built into research and school practice: what forms of involvement are realistic and meaningful across different ages and support needs, what currently prevents this, and what concrete approaches or formats participants have found useful.

Following the input, we will work together on these questions, drawing on our own and participants' research, teaching, or lived experience. A closing plenary will bring the group's results together and identify shared questions and concrete next steps for collaboration beyond the conference.

The working forum is aimed at researchers, educators, self-advocates and other persons interested in a participatory, neurodiversity-affirming development of inclusion. Rather than presenting finished ideas, we want to use this forum to start building a shared, practical understanding to further develop research and inclusive practice with neurodivergent students.