

Dissertation evaluation

Title of dissertation: Skills in Adolescents and Adults with Intellectual Disabilities: Towards Independent Living within the Society

Author of dissertation: Sulabha Karunanidhi

Evaluator: PhDr. Iva Strnadová, Ph.D.

The shift of researchers' attention from pre-school and school age of children with intellectual disability (ID) to their adolescence, adulthood and aging brought significant changes in service provision for people with ID and their families, but also revealed its weaknesses. I consider the submitted dissertation as a valuable contribution to this area of research, especially due to its focus on independent functioning of adolescents with ID in nowadays society. You have logically structured your dissertation into six chapters, bibliography and appendices.

The background of the research is presented in chapter one based on your professional practice which is illustratively appended by your personal experience.

The key terms and concepts are well described, though I would like to hear your voice more, especially in chapter two which tends to be rather based on relevant literature (though references are properly cited), so the terms are defined but not discussed. The subchapter on research instruments so far used in the area of skills needed for independent living of adolescents with ID is lacking. ***Suggestion for the viva: Have you been inspired by some other questionnaires used in the investigated area?***

Generally I find the chapter two too broad and at the same time disproportionate in terms of the topic of your dissertation (e.g., 1) The Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities characterized in subchapter 2.2.5 would be suitable rather as an appendix. 2) Subchapters 2.2.6 and 2.7 are questionable as you have not even commented their relevance to the investigated topic. 3) Subchapter 2.6.2 Skills related to Independent Living which directly relates to the aim and topic of the research would deserve more space. 4) Subchapter on the research carried out in your investigated area is – as mentioned above – missing completely).

The aim of the research - to investigate the skills needed for the adolescents with intellectual disabilities (ID) to function as economically and socially independent individuals in the society – was reached. The research strategy selected in order to gain the responses of 16 teachers, 16 parents and 2 employers – the combination of questionnaires and interview - was a good decision.

Chapter four focuses on analyzing data. Your analysis of quantitative data is rather descriptive and I would expect more than only few professional comments. Subchapter 4.2 brings only transcriptions of teachers' answers without any further comments. I would also highly recommend using coding for quoting the answers of parents (which you did with answers of teachers).

Chapter five presents solid display of your ability to evaluate the results of the research and also to bring it into context of the relevant literature.

Conclusions are well perceived, *but I would like to see more refined implications for future research.*

The suggestions for improvements:

- The formal side of the dissertation deserves a bit more attention – e.g., the titles of subchapters within the chapter four and five are more text-like than heading-like, etc.
- I find your division of students to “able/ disabled” unfortunate expression (see page 1).
- Your explanation of changes in approaches of society towards people with ID during history on page 9 is too simplistic and I would recommend you the works of Foucault for gaining more profound in-sight into this area.
- It would be desirable to quote primary sources (e.g., definition of mental retardation by AAMR on page 11).
- According to your dissertation, there is “primary education and secondary education” in the Czech Republic and India (see page 18). What about tertiary education? Isn't the need of inclusion valid also on this level?

- Interview questions for employers are rather impelling (e.g., “Do they do it because they pity them?”). I would find more appropriate (from preventing bias point of view) to ask only for motivation for employing people with ID.

The suggestions for the viva:

- *When constructing the questionnaires for teachers, parents and employers, you have focused on seven skills. How did you decide which areas of skills you will implement in the questionnaires?*
- *You state in your abstract that it was found during your research the employers provide work for people with ID because of being afraid to pay compensation of 49.000,- Czech crowns per year if not doing so. This information has been gained by interviewing only two employers. Do you find this sufficient for generalization?*

I recommend the dissertation to be accepted to the viva.

Evaluation: 3

Prague, 5. 8. 2007



PhDr. Iva Strnadová, PhD.