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Merita Poni

Characteristics of social network relationships that improve social inclusion and wellbeing of women with intellectual disabilities in the Czech Republic

Dissertation is focused on key issues which are closely related to social inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities. There is a clear link between Merita's professional practice, interests, and chosen research topic.

The research methods are systematically presented with rigorous analyses of data gathered. Overall the selected research methods are sufficiently justified. I particularly value descriptions and critical discussions of the key terms such as intellectual disability and quality of life. Up-date and contrasting definitions, ideas and models are involved.

Research methodology of the study is based on phenomenological tradition (p. 46). Here I see major question (can be answered during viva) in understanding social constructivism/phenomenology in relation to quality of life (whose?) and summaries in chapter five. Paradoxically, key participants in the research were not included – women with intellectual disabilities as evidence for conclusions can be found only in interviews with mothers or sisters. Whose quality of life do we talk about here – women with intellectual disabilities or their mothers/sisters? We can only search for answers such as how family members perceive social networks and community involvement of their daughters/sisters (and not women with intellectual disabilities themselves). Thus quality of life of mothers/sisters and personal satisfaction can only be assessed (and presented) rather than quality of life of women with intellectual disabilities as they had no say in presented study. It is thus rather narrowly focused study on mothers'/sisters' perspective of the subject. It has been forgotten (or not critically analyzed and discussed) that mothers themselves can play a significant role in limiting opportunities of their daughters with intellectual disabilities in community involvement. These comments should be addressed during viva.

Nevertheless, the research report has reached conclusions which are based on evidence. The author demonstrated significance of the conclusions for future research and practice and for future professional practice in the Czech Republic. Shame, that there are no concrete suggestions for Albanian reality.

The assignment is correctly presented in standard English and professionally edited. Merita's writing skills has to be also acknowledged.

Over all it is very good assignment! Well done.

Jan Šiška  
Praha 7.8.2008  
Mark suggested: 1 - 2

