

The key competences in the process of lifelong learning in the self-evaluation of employees with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities

Summary

The key competences seem to be useful in pursuit of the fast-paced changes occurring in the contemporary world. Those competences can also become the condition helping people with intellectual disabilities become part of society and make it possible for them to build their own social capital. My PhD thesis encompasses the problem of key competences of this group of people, that are being developed in the course of formal, informal and non-formal lifelong learning.

According to the definition provided by The Council of the European Union, the lifelong learning process is associated with undertaking activities in one's entire life, which main objective is to strive towards personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship (Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning 2018/C189/01). Until now the creation of a complex and professional support system for persons with intellectual disability has proved ineffective. The reality requires solutions coming from the system that would enable persons with intellectual disabilities to get access to the process of lifelong learning and, effectively, acquisition of key competences. The solutions coming from the system must concern employment, housing and lifelong counselling. The acquisition of key competences is of the particular importance – it prevents persons with intellectual disabilities from social exclusion.

Polish and foreign literature provides no results of research on the process of lifelong learning and acquisition of key competences of persons with intellectual disabilities. It may result from the lack of standardized research tools, difficulties acquiring of a research sample or the organisation of research itself. Due to the importance of key competences I have conducted a research that aims to establish 8 key competences in the self-evaluation of employees with intellectual disabilities.

In my research project my aim was to explore the relationship between the variables, in accordance to the research subject: how are gender, age, the type of school reviewees graduated from, work position, the courses reviewees completed, linked to the variability of the results of the self-evaluation tests which aim was to measure the level of selected competences in terms of the natural sciences, technology-based and engineering; interpersonal and the ability

to adopt new competences; active citizenship; entrepreneurship; cultural awareness and expression? Before the main research, the standardizing has been conducted. 111 persons stemming from facilities preparing persons with intellectual disabilities to start working on the Polish job market (training schools; occupational therapy workshop; centres for people with special needs) have participated in the standardizing research. I have intentionally chosen the research sample. The participants of the main research consisted of 222 persons with moderate and significant intellectual disabilities from 3 Polish non-governmental organisations contributing to supported employment (“DZWONI” Center, The Foundation for Persons with Disabilities “Arkadia”, The “Otwarte Drzwi” – “Open Door” Association).

Persons with mental disabilities have participated in the research project as competent judges and contributed to the creation of the research tool. In my PhD thesis I have aimed to point out the new perception of persons with intellectual disabilities in the context of 8 key competences as defined by the Council and Parliament of the European Union. The contribution of persons with mental disabilities to the creation of social capital has also been highlighted in my PhD thesis.

Out of 7 chapters of the PhD thesis, 4 include the theoretical part of the thesis, the following one covers the methodology used in the thesis and the 2 final chapters include the data analysis and commentary concerning them. I have chosen the theoretical basis for the research project by comparing the theories of social capital coming from Bourdieu (1980, 1985), Coleman (1990), Putnam (1995) and Fukuyama (2000). The second chapter covers the definition and concept of the lifelong learning, including its forms and characteristic of the process when persons with mental disabilities take part in it. Next I have defined each of 8 key competences and described the use of them by the interviewees. The following chapter covers the definition of mental disability by focusing on the new perception of such disability in the social life. In the 4th chapter I have covered the revision and assessment of the ability of persons with intellectual disabilities to acquire key competences by dividing the learning process into the following types: formal, informal and non-formal. The 5th chapter includes the description of the structure of research process that has been accomplished by the use of Rubacha methodology (2008). The data has been collected with the use of testing method. The creation process of my research tool has been described – The Key Competences Test for Adult Persons with Intellectual Disabilities. The data analysis along with interpretation thereof has been covered in the 6th chapter. The most important conclusions from the research are: younger persons have received higher overall self-evaluation test results and results regarding all groups of competences; women tend to achieve overall self-evaluation test results and those the digital

competences; persons who have completed courses have achieved a higher overall self-evaluation test results regarding active citizenship as compared to persons who have not completed any courses. This relationship does not refer in any way, however, to other groups of competences; the type of school a person has graduated from does not influence the results of the self-evaluation test of a person with intellectual disabilities; persons employed in the person-person job group have received higher self-evaluation test results as compared to persons working in the person-technology group. The final chapter of the dissertation includes my attempt to present the social context of the research along with the recommendations for praxis that pertain the acquisition of key competences in schools, occupational therapy workshops and during workshops dedicated for persons employed on the open job market. The research tool along with the research results can be used by specialists such as occupational therapy instructors, job coaches, teachers working with persons with intellectual disabilities or when such a person strives for employment of upkeeping thereof.