

Improvement of self-determination in young persons with intellectual disabilities

Results of longitudinal research

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Background and research question

Support to youngsters with intellectual disabilities is increasingly provided in order to equip them with relevant competences for self-determination, corresponding to their possibilities and learning style, with the ultimate goal of full participation in society. We investigated how these competences have developed in one of the parts of 's Heeren Loo Care Group, the Netherlands.

Method

In a longitudinal research project (2011–2015) competences of 96 youngsters aged 10–23 years old were measured three times by INVRA (INventarisatie Van Redzaamheid Aspecten, Inventory of Self-Determination Aspects), which is a broad, generic observation list of 114 skills. In between, an assessment of the degree of the implementation of the support method OEB (Op Eigen Benen, On Your Own Legs) was made. We used a single-group pretest-posttest design (all participants receive the same intervention, the results before and after the intervention are compared with each other).

Most important results

- The order of the INVRA categories with respect to the average sum scores is equal each of the three times. Most of the skills are mastered in 'dealing with others', the least in 'social skills' (see table).
- The mastering of skills strongly develops during the years.

Girls achieve considerably higher scores on skills than boys.

- The relationship between OEB and the development of skills can not be proven statistically. Three possible reasons for this are the lack of sensitivity of INVRA, the general character of OEB and the presence of several unforeseen organisational events which disturbed the process of the project.

Relevance for practice

The results with respect to INVRA give directions about how to support the development of skills of youngsters with intellectual disabilities in daily life. The results are being used to connect support more closely to the individual needs and goals. Also, the awareness of the importance of stimulating competences by support workers was improved. Management became more aware of the need to complete the chain of support.

Further research

It is important to use a more operational description of the support method OEB.

A strong control of context is needed, i.e. an experimental design with a control group on individual level, with qualitative as well as quantitative data. In that way the research can be connected closer to practice.

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INVRA categories	Score t1	Score t2	Score t3	Difference score	
				t2-t1	t3-t2
1. Self-care and health	1,39	1,61	1,66	0,22 ***	0,05 (n.s.)
2. Household skills	0,79	1,01	1,05	0,22 ***	0,04 (n.s.)
3. Cognitive skills	1,20	1,42	1,48	0,22 ***	0,06 (n.s.)
4. Social skills	0,70	0,96	0,99	0,16 ***	0,03 (n.s.)
5. Dealing with others	1,53	1,82	1,86	0,29 ***	0,04 (n.s.)
Total 1 to 5	5,62	6,82	7,05	1,20 ***	0,23 (n.s.)

*** Sign. $p \leq 0,001$ (t-test)

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