Macrothink Institute™

Journal of Studies in Education
ISSN 2162-6952
2017, Vol. 7, No. 1

"This is the School I Want"

Young Adults with Intellectual Disability Describe Their Perceptions of a Good Vocational School

Anneli Hermanoff

Rantavitikka Elementary School, Rovaniemi, Finland

E-mail: Anneli.Hermanoff@rovaniemi.fi

Kaarina Määttä

University of Lapland

P.O. Box 122, 96101 Rovaniemi, Finland

E-mail: Kaarina.Maatta@ulapland.fi

Satu Uusiautti (Corresponding author)

University of Lapland

P.O. Box 122, 96101 Rovaniemi, Finland

E-mail: Satu.Uusiautti@ulapland.fi

Received: Dec. 4, 2016 Accepted: Dec. 14, 2016 Published: February 1, 2017

doi:10.5296/jse.v7i1.10400 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/jse.v7i1.10400

Abstract

Vocational education is a remarkable phase of life for all young people, including the ones with intellectual disability (ID). In addition to vocational skills and knowledge, vocational special education provided to people with ID has to meet their needs and enhance their life-management skills. However, their own perceptions of the quality of education has been less studied. The purpose of the research at hand was to give voice to young adults with ID themselves and ask how they would describe their ideal vocational school. In this qualitative study, 14 Finnish young adults with ID (aged 17-23) were interviewed. The study employed a narrative approach to reach the participants' voices and experiences. According to the

findings of this research, the location of the study place, company of same-aged peers, supportive teachers and tutors, and varied teaching arrangements typified a good study place. As the conclusion of the study, the ideal school according to the perceptions of young adults with ID is presented as a combination of the physical, pedagogical, and social learning environments. Education that can be molded according to individual needs and provides sufficient and tailored support and guidance services—in addition to hearing the young adults' own hopes and wishes—strengthen personal sense of responsibility, and transition toward adulthood and as independent life as possible.

Keywords: Intellectual disability, Vocational special education, Narrative research, Interview, Ideal school

1. Introduction

In Finland, people with intellectual disability (ID) may have vocational special education after graduating their basic education. These vocational special education institutions are meant for students who need special support in their studies and employment. They are taught by special education teachers in small groups.

The contents of vocational special education emphasize learning of everyday life skills and providing support in leisure time as well (Gorter, Stewart, & Woodbury-Smith, 2011). For example, the vocational education institution must provide activities outside school, organize counselling in residential issues, develop students' social skills, and coach them to life and employment holistically. Activities outside school provide all-round learning experiences. They help forming learning paths by developing students' sense of togetherness and strengthening relationships between students and teaching personnel (Swedeen, Carter, & Molfender, 2010).

In other words, vocational special education provided to people with ID has to meet their needs and support their life-management skills. Earlier studies have focused on the education providers' viewpoints of best ways of organizing such education and of its main emphases. Research is abundant: they have evaluated how successful various educational solutions have been, developed various activities that enhance students' self-determination, improved teaching practices, and influenced on school reforms (Wehmeyer, 2015). How do people with ID themselves think about education they have received? What do they think it should be like? What kind of education they find pleasing, interesting, and useful for themselves? This study contributes answers to these questions.

2. The Human-Centered Approach of Arranging Education for People with ID

The concept of intellectual disability has changed significantly during the past decades. The English literature and research have turned from using the concept of Mental Retardation (see Luckasson et al., 2002) into Intellectual Disability (see Shogren et al., 2009). The changes in terminology are based on increased discussion about mental disability, its construction, and the philosophical and epistemological questions related to its conceptualization (Greenspan & Switzky, 2006; Schalock, 2011).

The concept of Intellectual Disability refers to the multidimensional and socio-ecological background of disabilities according to which disability is not a peremptory and unchanging characteristic. Support services that focus on individual persons' strengths may increase their capabilities. The new concept is also less insulting and more consistent with the international terminology. However, it does change the definition but covers the same people than earlier (Schalock, 2013; Wehmeyer et al., 2008). At the same time, the basis of evaluating disability has changed from intelligence (IQ) measurements to the evaluation of adaptive functioning (AAIDD, 2010; Kirk, Gallagher, Coleman, & Anastasiow, 2012; Parmenter, 2011). Paying attention to the need for individualized support promotes the autonomy and social integration of people with ID (Wehmeyer et al., 2008; Äikäs, 2012) and improves their chances of participating in decision making about their own lives (Buntinx & Schalock, 2010;

Luckasson & Schalock, 2013).

Comparative studies on the quality of life in people with ID have also provided new perspectives on the theoretical definition of impairments (Buntinx & Schalock, 2010; Schalock, Gardner, & Bradley, 2007). At the same time, the ways of identifying, developing, and evaluating services and support for people with ID have changed (Matikka, 2001). Instead of segregating solutions, the focus is on individual support provided in participatory environments (Schalock, Gardner, & Bradley, 2007).

Intellectual disabilities set certain requirements to the physical environment, social interaction, and educational solutions. Needs for guidance and support in young people with ID vary in different environments. Therefore, the transition phase from basic education to vocational education is a significant period in the young adult's life. Difficulties in cognitive, social, and everyday life skills challenge coping with the transition as well (Floyd, Costigan, & Piazza, 2009; Haber, Karpur, Deschenes, & Clark, 2008).

When organizing vocational special education, it is important to pay attention to the individual people's strengths and needs for support (cf., Karan et al., 2010; Neubert & Leconte, 2013). Their own participation in educational planning and decision making can make it possible to them learn and practice life-planning and decision-making skills. Participation in the planning of transition to vocational education increases the young person's sense of self-determination (Neubert & Leconte, 2013). Students' strengths can either be strengthened or weakened during the transition process (see also Thompson, Wehmeyer, & Hughes, 2010).

Indeed, the personal study plan, which is an individual education plan, should be seen as a plan for the student's whole life course, especially if it can foresee certain changes sufficiently and individually (Heslop & Abbott, 2007). Student-centered, individualized planning has the emphasis on the person instead of the diagnosis. This type of planning has a strong connection with social conception of disability. According to this viewpoint, people's attitudes should be developed so that also people with ID could lead normal life (Pazey, Schalock, Schaller, & Burkett, 2015). The goal of an individual-centered approach is to empower a person with ID, to truly hear his or her own voice and opinions (Seabrooks-Blackmoore & Williams, 2012).

3. Method

The purpose of this study is to describe the expectations and perceptions of young adults with ID about a good study place. Their perceptions about vocational education after completing basic education have not been explored before. The study had one research question: What is the ideal vocational education school like according to young adults with ID?

The research participants of this study comprised 14 young adults with ID (aged 17-23; 10 boys and 4 girls). They all had personal study plans in basic education, and except for one, they all had completed basic education according to their study plans. The head researcher of the study knew these young adults when she worked as their special education teacher in basic education and later as the researcher (Hermanoff, 2016). All participants lived in the

North-Finland. All of them were able to speak, and one of them used also sign language and PC pictures to support communication (cf. also, Sipilä, Uusiautti, & Määttä, 2013).

The study leaned on the narrative research approach because it provided a way to collect the young adults' narratives as data. Narrative research pursues to give voice to the narrator (see Bruner, 2004; Chase, 2005; Webster & Mertova, 2007), which means that the narratives provided by the young people with ID describe their own experiences and perceptions (see Frank, 2012). In an emancipatory sense, it places emphasis on the participants' viewpoints and experiences, and critical thoughts, as well. By having people with ID participate in this kind of research that analyzed their position, living conditions and education, the purpose was also to perceive them as subjects and not just research objects (Sieber & Tolich, 2013; Snelgrove, 2005; WHO, 2011.)

The data were collected in the form of themed interviews in 2012 and 2014. All participants were interviewed personally. Plain language and pictures were used in the interviews to support communication. In plain language discussions, it is important to discuss one theme at a time and ask complementary questions if necessary. The interviewer's way of talking must be short, systematic, and appropriate to the interviewee's age level. The vocabulary used in the interview must be familiar mundane language, and gestures and expressions support communication (Tuffrey-Wijne & McEnhill, 2008). Based on the head researcher's experience, the plain language interview method would suit the participants the best to these interviewees and their communication abilities. Before the interviews were carried out, the participants had done a little task asking them to describe features of an ideal school. The task did not necessitate any writing or reading skills and the participants could decide how they would complete the task. They had the tasks with them in the interviews. Watson (2012) has noted that innovative methods can increase research participants' participation in the line with emancipatory research ideology, and the unrestricted nature of the research.

The research data were analyzed with a data-based content analysis (see Lincoln & Guba, 2000) that focused on the categorization of the contents of narratives (see Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). The data were coded and rearranged by using thematic reading and analysis. Thematic analysis is interested in what is said instead of how, to whom, or why something was said. Thematic analysis suits in various kinds of narrative research, such as those with narrative interview data (Riessman, 2008). In addition, the analysis employed narrative analysis methods that refer to analytic and interpretative approach and text analysis (see Polkinghorne, 1995).

Ethicality and reliability have an especial position in this research. The researcher's position and background as a special education teacher made it possible to recruit the research participants and get their and their parents' permission to participate in the research. Still, the uneven positions between a researcher and participants still had to be carefully discussed and analyzed. As the other has a diagnosed intellectual disability the interview setting is somewhat unsymmetrical. On the other, the whole research was based on the trust on the learning abilities of people with ID and the wish to improve their educational opportunities. The study thus aimed at speak up for people who may not be able to fend for themselves in

the current harsh world (Hermanoff, 2016).

Naturally, the participants' intellectual disability made the researchers to discuss ethical questions so that research permissions, agreements, and purpose of the study were carefully clarified (Uusiautti & Määttä, 2013). The sensitivity of the study was also well acknowledged (cf., Sarivaara, Uusiautti, & Määttä, 2013), and the supportive communication methods helped interviewees to participate in interviews and increased their trust in the research in general (Wilkenfeld, 2015).

The reliability of the study rests on the careful description of the data collection, analyses, and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The main purpose in the study has been to give voice to all research participants, and thus pursued to credibility, truthfulness, and justice (Lieblich, Tuval-Masiach, & Zilber, 1998). Much attention was paid on the participants' anonymity, and when reporting the findings, their identities are hidden. Instead, they are referred with numbers 1-14. The results include quotations from the interview data. They are translated from Finnish to English and follow the interviewees' expressions strictly, even though they might not be grammatically perfect in Finnish either.

4. Results

Despite the participants' obvious positive study attitude, transition from basic education to vocational education appeared to them as a comprehensive change in their life situation. Studies in a new school detach the young adult from his or her familiar community and environment. Changes that new study place present caused quite similar feelings—uncertainty, fear, and curiosity—than they would in other peers without the diagnosis. Everyday skills, health, living, and going to places are factors that set certain demands on the study place and people working there. According to the findings of this research, the location of the study place, company of same-aged peers, supportive teachers and tutors, and varied teaching arrangements typified a good study place.

4.1 "I Could Go to School from Home"

All young adults had started their vocational studies in their places of domicile after completing basic education. Especially, at the beginning of studies, the location of the vocational school near their homes increased their sense of security, because the emotional support they received from home was considered important. The participants' readiness and willingness to move to another place were different, and not all of them were able or willing to detach from their childhood homes.

Not too far, I would rather be close to home. I have all important things at my home. (7)

Public transportation and chances to use it formed the baseline of the ideal physical location and accessibility of the ideal school in the young adults' narratives. During the basic education, most of the participants had commuted to school with the municipal school transportation, and thus, using a bus increased their sense of independency and functional abilities, and presented a chance of being and acting like adults. Arranged transportation during basic education changed into public transportation when vocational education started.

I would hope that my ideal school was close to my home. I would like to go to school by bus. (13)

One of the developmental goals in vocational special education has been to create a suitable, accessible, and benign learning environment to the students with special education needs. A good learning environment enables and supports learning in various learners with different backgrounds. The small size of a study group, suitable length of school days, and functional school premises formed a good learning environment. On the other hand, participants talked about restlessness and lack of options in their current schools. Especially, high noise level was mentioned to disturb learning and interaction. Therefore, the physical environment was also connected to thriving at the vocational school.

The classroom should have few students. Then it would be more peaceful to study. The school should have more space in which you could do different things. We spend much time in this one space and sometimes there is too much noise. A peaceful place would be a good thing. (12)

4.2 "It Would be Important to Have Similar Friends"

The young people with ID described studies as a period in life when they could meet similar and same-aged young people, and form new social networks with them. Studying at a vocational education school was a phase of social learning as well. Saying hello and introducing oneself were routines that the young learned in order to include themselves and to be included in the student community. Peer students formed the core of the social learning environment and increased participation and interaction during school days both in guided and free situations. The social learning environment was important also after school days. Equal encounters happened in classrooms, diners, cafeteria, and other free-form situations.

Equality and participation became evident especially in discussions between the young themselves. They had the motivation and need to interact with each other, share their thoughts, emotions, and opinions, and become heard about issues important to them. Intellectual disability or possible difficulties in speech, action, and understanding did not hinder social interaction or development of social skills. Belonging to a group strengthened their sense of togetherness and solidarity.

Functional development was emphasized in doing to together and helping each other; students learned and received help in school tasks. Helping others actually seemed to increase their understanding of their own abilities and sense of being useful and helpful to others. In this way, the students with ID became appreciated and valued.

The participants recognized that the other students were their peers. The experience of similarity seemed to strengthen their sense of togetherness and helped them understand their "difference". Thus, intellectual disability was a connective and positive feature.

Nice friends are important. Group work is nice because you have to help others, and you learn from others' doings. Then there is no bullying. (5)

4.3 "In the School, Good Adults are Important"

In the interview data, having a sufficient number of adults was mentioned as an important factor of an ideal school. When referring to adults, the participants meant teachers and tutors. The teacher's professional expertise appeared as the teaching of new information and skills, while the role of tutors was more emphasized in the everyday encounters and in situations the young needed practical support. One of the students explained this by referring to how to proceed with tasks at a workplace:

Always the boss has to show first what you have to do. You must not start doing by yourself at first. It is a good thing that they show first. Sometimes, the boss comes to see and that is a good thing. You need guidance and help. (6)

In the narratives, the teacher's social and pedagogical skills and personal features determined a good teacherhood. The importance of teacher's good social skills became emphasized in teaching situations. Friendliness and a good sense of humor increased and strengthened positive interaction but did not bring down the teacher's authority. The teacher's ability to provide feedback in learning situations was also considered important because it served as the means of evaluating, guiding, and motivating the students.

My teacher is not nice. Sometimes I feel oppressed. The teacher could guide better. If you do something a little wrong, it gives the reason to nag. The teacher speaks crossly. The teacher could say it more nicely and guide better. (11)

In the ideal school, adults—both teachers and tutors—enabled the youth to participate and noticed their needs for support. The needs were very individual and occurred especially during practical work periods and activities outside school. The time the tutor spend with students had a special meaning in the narratives: it supported their learning considerably. The tutor was described as an important source of functional and information support.

In my classroom, there would be enough adults and I would have an adult by my side to support me. They would understand my special features and need for support. During the practical training at a workplace, the tutor would always be with you. (1)

4.4 "Yes, There Should Be Theory and Practice; They Both Are Important."

The teaching methods used in the vocational special education develop key skills needed in society and work, such as problem-solving, collaboration, and interaction skills. In the participants' opinion, teaching should be in accordance with their learning outside the school institution. For example, they should practice visiting various offices and departments that all citizens have to visit at some point. In addition, the young people mentioned that their motivation increases if work tasks are right and actual, and beneficial for their other areas of life.

It would be important to learn the Swedish language at school. Other important things are sewing with a sewing machine, music, and physical exercising. It would be nice to take care of animals, too. This school is close to the city. We do not visit any bureaus, it is not part of studies. It would be nice anyway, because it is important to take care of your businesses. I

cannot do it very well yet. (13)

The participants of the study wished that the school would support and strengthen skills they need in work. In the preparatory education, practicums had been quite traditional; cleaning and kitchen maid's tasks and tasks in the service sector. According to the young people with ID, the ideal school has a wide range of options to choose from and practical work periods would better fulfill their own wishes and prepare them for their actual future work and employment.

In the ideal school, it would be nice to learn to do various kinds of work, for example at a store or in a day care center. I have been in a summer job in a day care center, it was nice to be with children. I have also worked in Siwa [a grocery store chain] and at a school kitchen. I liked the day care center the most. You could choose where you want to go, there would be options. (12)

5. Conclusions

To summarize the findings, the ideal school according to the perceptions of young adults with ID was a combination of the physical, pedagogical, and social learning environments (see Figure 1).

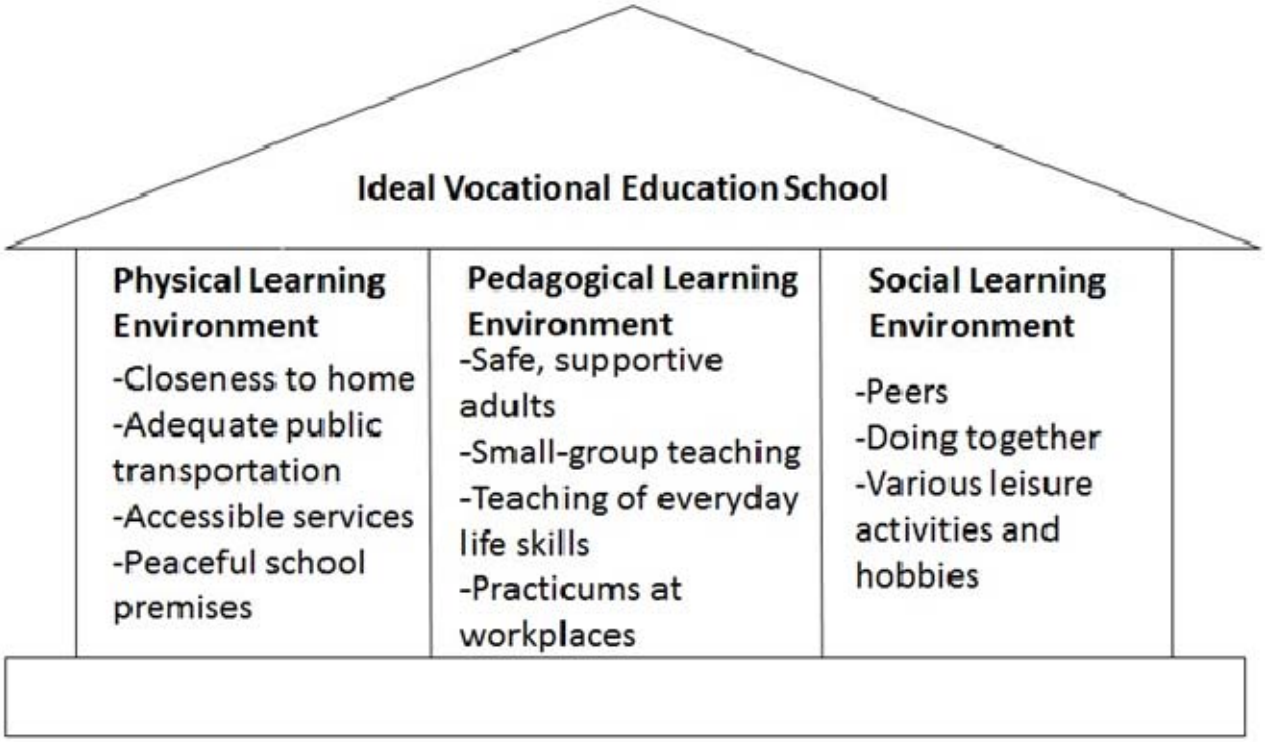

Figure 1. The construction of an ideal school

The physical learning environment consisted of the location of the school and the school premises. Three dimensions were especially emphasized in the young adults' narratives: location in their place of domicile, opportunity to use public transportation, and services

located close to school. The closeness of home and emotional support provided from the young adults' homes appeared to be of primary importance during the transition phase from basic education to vocational education (see also Blustein, Carter, & McMillan, 2016). The opportunity to use public transportation supported the students' becoming independent and strengthened their sense of being adult and autonomy. Naturally, it also increased their opportunities to hang around outside home and school during their free time. Special transportation services provided according to the law of the services for the disabled are, however, a double-edged sword as Asikainen's (2015) showed. Transportation services may make it easier for the disabled to move around but they can also limit their citizenship and free goings if the customers, in this case the students, do not have a chance to participate in service planning.

In addition, the ideal school as a physical learning environment should have small group sizes in teaching, flexible arrangements in the usage of school premises, and tranquility. A well-designed soundscape makes it easier for people with ID to process information and comprehend what they listen (Dockrell & Shied, 2012).

The pedagogical learning environment included teachers' and tutors' positive personalities and their teaching methods and support (see also Koski-Heikkinen, Määttä, & Uusiautti, 2014). Diversified teaching and guidance were considered important as well as the clear connection between education and practical work and other practical doing. Services located close to the school formed an informal learning environment that enabled and supported the students' learning in real-life situations (see also Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, & Hamby, 2006). Learning environments that resemble the workplace motivated the participants of this research to study and achieve their own goals (Kittelman, Bromley, & Mazzotti, 2016). The goal of vocational special education is, addition to vocational skills, to educate the young to live everyday life and to become full and active members of society. Versatile learning content and flexible teaching arrangements and methods encouraged the young adults with ID to go beyond their comfort zones and turn from a passive receiver's role into an active agent's role (see also Väyrynen, 2013).

The ideal school was a social learning environment in which the young interacted with each other and others in their environment (see also Schuh, Sundar, & Hagner, 2014). Social relationships strengthened commitment to the learning community. The more attached the student felt to the community, the better he or she could enjoy the social support it provided. In an interactional learning environment, learning is based on shared learning experiences and processes in which individual process various knowledge and skills according to their abilities (Clarke, Camilleri, & Goding, 2015).

Clarity, flexibility, practice-orientation, and communality were the features of an ideal school according to the findings of this study. They can be seen as the features of accessible education, as well, if the afore-mentioned dimensions of physical, pedagogical, and social learning environments converge (see also Lakkala, Uusiautti, & Määttä, 2014).

6. Discussion

The development of vocational special education reflects the wider development of social and health care services as well as changing conceptions of disability. The structural and administrative changes in vocational education have molded also the practices of special education.

The changed conception of learning emphasizes individuality in learning, and its social and context-bound nature. What has been significant in the development of vocational special education is collaboration with workplaces which has offered new opportunities of arranging special education. It has become possible to employ the so-called open learning environments and work-based learning as a part of vocational special education (Carter et al., 2009). The emphasis has moved from care and nurture toward active subjectivity and worker citizenship (Hall, 2010). Indeed, it is important to consider how the idea of learning environments should expand from school and study environment to cover the whole society and its various branches (Furco, 2010).

Vocational education and vocational special education has a central position in realizing and fulfilling decent human functioning and individual choices for people with ID (Nussbaum, 2009). Education that can be molded according to individual needs and provides sufficient and tailored support and guidance services—in addition to hearing the young adults' own hopes and wishes—strengthen personal sense of responsibility, and transition toward adulthood and independent life.

Learning the practical skills needed in everyday life improve quality of life. Simultaneously, teaching and learning them support responsibility, autonomy, and sense of taking care of their own business in the young adults with ID (Alwell & Cobb, 2009; Sheppard & Unsworth, 2010). These skills encourage the young to act and participate, and create lives that they want for themselves. For example, Greeno (2006) emphasizes that agency is based on the fact that the young adults with ID are treated as active subjects. Development in their agency necessitates opportunities to participate and make decisions.

The young with ID are experts of their own lives and therefore, they deserve to be heard carefully. This was the purpose of this research as well. It is important to enable their participation in research and understand the meaning of it in practice and also when planning political guidelines regarding the education of people with ID (Carlson, 2013; Wilkenfeld, 2015). The young adults with ID are not able to respond to the current society's demand on taking care of their own well-being and quality of life—at least not alone. They need people who support them and understand their specialty, and who are ready to walk by their side to build their own kinds of life paths toward adulthood. Walking by their side, not doing it for them but guiding them. An ideal vocational special education pays extra attention to the realization of this goal.

References

AAIDD. (2010). *Intellectual disability definition, classification and system of support.* (11th ed.) Washington, DC: AAIDD.

Alwell, M., & Cobb, B. (2009). Functional life skills. Curricular interventions for youth with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 32*(2), 82–93. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0885728809336656

Asikainen, E. (2015). *"Me olemme postipaketteja". Tutkimus Helsingin vammaiskuljetuksista vuosina 2002–2007* ["We are postal packets" A study of transportation services for people with disabilities in Helsinki in 2002-2007]. (PhD diss., University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland.)

Blustein, C. L., Carter, E. W., & McMillan, E. D. (2016). The voices of parents post–high school expectations, priorities, and concerns for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *The Journal of Special Education*, iFirst. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022466916641381

Bruner, J. (2004). Life as narrative. *Social Research, 71*(3), 691–710.

Buntinx, W. H. E., & Schalock, R. L. (2010). Models of disability, quality of life, and individualized supports: Implications for professional practice in intellectual disability. *Journal of Policy & Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 7*(4), 283–294. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-1130.2010.00278.x

Carlson, L. (2013). Research ethics and intellectual disability: broadening the debates. *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine, 86*(3), 303–314.

Carter, E. W., Trainor, A. A., Cakiroglu, O., Swedeen, B., & Owens, L. A. (2009). Availability of and access to career development activities for transition-age youth with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 33*(1), 13-24. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0885728809344332

Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry. Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 651-679). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Clarke, R., Camilleri, K., & Goding, L. (2015).What's in it for me? The meaning of involvement in a self-advocacy group for six people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 19*(3), 230–250. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1744629515571646

Dockrell, J. E., & Shield, B. (2012). The impact of sound. Field systems on learning and attention in elementary school classrooms. *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research, 55*(4), 1163–1176. http://dx.doi.org/10.1044/1092-4388(2011/11-0026)

Dunst, C. J., Bruder, M. B., Trivette, C. M., & Hamby, D. W. (2006). Everyday activity settings, natural learning environments, and early intervention practices. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 3*(1), 3–10. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-1130.2006.00047.x

Floyd, F. J., Costigan, C. L., & Piazza, V. E. (2009). The transition to adulthood for individuals with intellectual disability. *International Review of Research in Mental Retardation, 37*, 31–59. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0074-7750(09)37002-0

Frank, A. W. (2012). Practicing dialogical narrative analysis. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Varieties of narrative analysis* (pp. 33–52). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Furco, A. (2010). The community as a resource for learning: an analysis of academic service learning in primary and secondary education. In H. Dumont, D. Istance, & F. Benavides (Eds.), *The nature of learning. Using research to inspire practice* (pp. 227–251). Paris: OECD.

Gorter, J. W., Stewart, D., & Woodbury-Smith, M. (2011). Youth in transition: care, health and development. *Child: Care, Health and Development, 37*(6), 757–763. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2214.2011.01336.x

Greeno, J. G. (2006). Authoritative, accountable positioning and connected, general knowing: progressive themes in understanding transfer. *The Journal of the Learning Science, 15*(4), 537–547.

Greenspan, S., & Switzky, H. N. (2006). Lessons from the Atkins decision for the next AAMR manual. In H. N. Switzky & S. Greenspan (Eds.), *What is mental retardation? Ideas for an evolving disability in the 21st century* (pp. 279–298). Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Retardation.

Haber, M. G., Karpur, A., Deschenes, N., & Clark, H. B. (2008). Predicting improvement of transitioning young people in the partnerships for youth transition initiative: findings from a multisite demonstration. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research, 35*(4), 488–513. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11414-008-9126-2

Hall, E. (2010). Spaces of social inclusion and belonging for people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 54*(S1), 48-57. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2788.2009.01237.x

Heslop, P., & Abbott, D. (2007). School's out: pathways for young people with intellectual disabilities from out of area residential schools or colleges. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 51*(7), 489–496. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2788.2006.00901.x

Hermanoff, A. (2016). *"Mukava mennä iloisella mielellä". Narratiivinen tutkimus kehitysvammaisten toisen asteen opinnoista* ["It is nice to start with a happy mood" A narrative research on vocational education studies among the youth with mental disabilities]. (PhD Diss., University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland.)

Karan, O. C., Don Aroma, P., Bruder, M. B., & Roberts, L. A. (2010). Transitional assessment model for students with severe and/or multiple disabilities: competency-based community assessment. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 48*(5), 387–392. http://dx.doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-48.5.387

Kirk, S. A., Gallagher, J., Coleman, M. R., & Anastasiow, N. (2012). *Educating exceptional children.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Kittelman, A., Bromley, K. W., & Mazzotti, V. L. (2016). Functional behavioral assessments and behavior support plans for work-based learning. *Career Development and Transition for*

Exceptional Individuals, iFirst. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2165143416633682

Koski-Heikkinen, A., Määttä, K., & Uusiautti, S. (2014). "Professional, approachable, and fair" – Students' perceptions of the vocational education teacher's authority. *International Journal of Human Sciences, 11*(2), 446-463.

Lakkala, S., Uusiautti, S., & Määttä, K. 2014. How to make the neigbourhood school a school for all? Finnish teachers' perceptions of educational reform aiming toward inclusion. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, online, http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12055

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research. Reading, analysis and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). The only generalization is: there is no generalization. In R. Gomm, M. Hamersley, & P. Foster (Eds.), *Case study method* (pp. 27–44). London: Sage.

Luckasson, R., Borthwick-Duffy, S., Buntinx, W. H. E., Coulter, D. L., Craig, E. M., Reeve, A., Schalock, R. L., Snell, M. E., Spitalnik, D. M., Spreat, S., & Tasse, M. J. (2002). *Mental retardation: definition, classification and system of supports.* (10th ed.) Washington, DC: AAMR.

Luckasson, R., & Schalock, R. L. (2013). Defining and applying a functionality approach to intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 57*(7), 657–668. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2788.2012.01575.x

Matikka, L. (2001). *Service-oriented assessment of quality of life of adults with intellectual disabilities.* (PhD Diss., University of Helsinki. Helsinki, Finland.)

Neubert, D. A., & Leconte, P. J. (2013). Age-appropriate transition assessment: the position of the division on career development and transition. *Career Developmental and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, 36*(2), 72–83. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2165143413487768

Nussbaum, M. C. (2009). The capabilities of people with cognitive disabilities. *Metaphilosophy, 40*(3-4), 331-351. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9973.2009.01606.x

Parmenter, T. R. (2011). What is intellectual disability? How is it assessed and classified? *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 58*(3), 303–319. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2011.598675

Pazey, B. L., Schalock, R. L., Schaller, J., & Burkett, J. (2015). Incorporating quality of life concepts into educational reform creating real opportunities for students with disabilities in the 21st century. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, iFirst. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1044207315604364

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J. Amos Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 5–24). London: Palmer.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human science.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sarivaara, E., Määttä, K., & Uusiautti, S. (2013). Sensitivity in indigenous identity research. *European Social Sciences Research Journal, 1*(2), 145-157.

Schalock, R. L. (2011). The evolving understanding of the construct of intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability, 36*(4), 223–233. http://dx.doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2011.624087

Schalock, R. L. (2013). Introduction to the intellectual disability construct. In M. L. Wehmeyer (Ed.), *The story of intellectual disability. An evolution of meaning, understanding and public perception* (pp. 1–18). Baltimore, MA: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Schalock, R. L, Gardner, J. F., & Bradley, V. L. (2007). *Quality of Life for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. Applications across individuals, organizations, communities and system.* Washington, DC: American Association on Intellectual and developmental Disabilities.

Schuh, M. C., Sundar, V., & Hagner, D. C. (2014). Friendship is the ocean. Importance of friendship, acceptance, and leadership in the transition to adulthood. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, 38*(3), 152-161. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2165143414528031

Seabrooks-Blackmore, J., & Williams, G. (2012). Transition planning Strategies. In M. L. Wehmeyer & K. W. Webb (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent transition education for youth with disabilities* (pp. 91–101). New York, NY: Routledge.

Sheppard, L., & Unsworth, C. (2010). Developing skills in everyday activities and self-determination in adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education, 32*(5), 393–405. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0741932510362223

Shogren, K. A., Bradley, V. J., Gomez, S. C., Yeager, M. H., & Schalock, R. L. (2009). Public policy and the enhancement of desired outcomes for persons with intellectual disability. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 47*(4), 307–319. http://dx.doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-47.4.307

Sieber, J. E., & Tolich, M. B. (2013). *Planning ethically responsible research.* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sipilä, A.-K., Uusiautti, S., & Määttä, K. (2013). The significance of physical aid in facilitated communication according to the facilitators' opinions. *International Journal of Science Commerce and Humanities, 1*(2) 116-129.

Snelgrove, S. (2005). Bad, mad and sad: developing a methodology of inclusion and a pedagogy for researching students with intellectual disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 9*(3), 313–329. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603110500082236

Swedeen, B. L., Carter, E. W., & Molfenter, N. (2010). Getting everyone involved: identifying transition opportunities for youth with severe disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 43*(2), 38–49.

Thompson, J. R., Wehmeyer, M. L., & Hughes, C. (2010). Mind the gap! Implications of a person-environment fit model of intellectual disability for students, educators, and schools. *Exceptionality, 18*(4), 168–181. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09362835.2010.513919

Tuffrey-Wijne, I., & McEnhill, L. (2008). Communication difficulties and intellectual disability in end-of-life care. *International Journal of Palliative Nursing, 14*(4), 189-194. http://dx.doi.org/10.12968/ijpn.2008.14.4.29133

Uusiautti, S., & Määttä K. (Eds.) (2013). *How to study children? Methodological solutions of childhood research.* Rovaniemi: Lapland University Press.

Väyrynen, S. (2013). Esteettä opettamaan [Accessible teaching]. In M. Laitinen (Ed.), *Miksi joka paikkaan pitää päästä* [Why should you get everywhere?] (pp. 162-178). Vantaa: Kansanvalistusseura.

Watson, N. (2012). Researching disablement. In N. Watson, A. Roulstone, & C. Thomas (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of disability studies* (pp. 93–105). New York, NY: Routledge.

Webster, L., & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method. An introduction in using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Wehmeyer, M. L. (2015). Framing the future self-determination. *Remedial and Special Education, 36*(1), 20-23. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0741932514551281

Wehmeyer, M. L., Buntinx, W. H., Lachapelle, Y., Luckasson, R. A., Schalock, R. L., Verdugo, M. A., Borthwick-Duffy, S., Bradley, V., Craig, E. M., Coulter, D. L., Gomez, S. C., Reeve, A., Shogren, K. A., Snell, M. E., Spreat, S., Tassé, M. J., Thompson, J. R., & Yeager, M. H. (2008). The intellectual disability construct and its relation to human functioning. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 46*(4), 311–318. http://dx.doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556(2008)46[311:TIDCAI]2.0.CO;2

WHO. (2011). *World report on disability.* Malta: WHO Press.

Wilkenfeld, B. F. (2015). "Being heard": Qualitative Research conundrums with individuals with developmental disabilities. *Research on Social Work Practice, 25*(6), 702–710. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1049731514547768

Äikäs, A. (2012). *Life after upper secondary education. A narrative study of the education and employment of a severely disabled young adults.* (PhD Diss., University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland.)

Copyright Disclaimer