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**Disabled Student in Higher Education:****Unsigned Contract for Changes and Development**

**Synopsis:** There will be presented and analysed higher education (HE) accessibility for disabled students issues in Lithuania. Afterwards, qualitative research results for Phd studies project will be presented. The education process of young disabled people, starting from primary school till orientation to labour market will be looked through. The main focus will be given to the analysis of the active disabled students personality growth and changes during their study years. As well, the participation strategies which they do use during their study years and how it does affect changes in the organization of the study process will be discussed.

**General overview about Higher education accessibility issues for disabled in Lithuania**

Lately the number of disabled students in Lithuania has increased. Relatively it is a new social goal group whose special needs had been taken into account recently and the system of disabled students adequate representation is being developed while taking small steps. Although the accessibility of HE is stated in national legislation, disabled students still encounter problems such as physical inaccessibility of their environment, a lack of adapted training and educational materials (literature in braille, audio books, etc.), living conditions (e.g. in dormitories) not adapted to their specific needs, a need of assistants and a negative attitude of some members of the academic community.

**Pilot research about Disabled Students Education Process in Lithuania**

In order to find out the exact perspective about disability and HE which I would like to analyze deeper in my Phd theses, the pilot research have been implemented. There have been carried out a qualitative research, using semi-structured interviews. The data of disabled students interviews was analyzed using Grounded theory. Firstly, data was analyzed using Open-coding, afterwards – Axial coding.

There was a broad spectrum of topics which has been covered during the interviews. Roughly it covered the education period, starting from primary school and ending with orientation to labour market or, in some cases, participation in labour market. So, the research aim to reveal the education process peculiarities of disabled students, taking into

account both personal and institutional level. There was taken into account such issues as the changing process of disabled person itself. Then what were the supporting factors during the education process. More thoroughly there were analyzed participation issues in HE. Finally, the needs and wishes for the labour market were taken into account.

There has been carried out 10 interviews (7 disabled students, 2 disabled pupils, 1 disabled pupil mother) during the period of 2009/2010. Interviewees have been found using a snow-ball method. Interviews have been carried out in different coffee-bars or at home of interviewees, as well, in the cabinet of special pedagogue of the school. After the Axial coding six main categories/phenomenons have been revealed: „It was a complicated path traveled till university“, „The fear of four walls“, „The life of disabled is entire prove“, „Freedom through studies“, „The change in university was hapenning because I was visible and I needed to be everywhere“, „I want to work but not for nothing“.

### **The Future research about „Disabled Students Participation in Higher Education Institutions in Lithuania**

Theoretical background: One of the main theories which will be used in my Phd theses it is Anthony Giddens “Structuration theory“. The main idea of this theory is that agents, when they express themselves as actors, are continuously recreating the social practices and institutes which in turn are constraining agents actions. So, structure is both enabling and constraining agents activities possibilities and range. Then the interactional model of disability presented by Tom Shakespeare will be used „People are disabled by society and by their bodies“. Therefore Paulo Freire Pedagogy of Oppressed: Conscientizacao – means learning to understand social, economical and political contradictions and taking actions against the oppresing elements of reality. Also, the paradigm of social participation will be applied. According to it, it is important to guarantee disabled people participation in the community, according to their capabilities and competences, as well, guaranteeing that participation of disabled people won't be just for the sake of participation but it has to be meant for something (J.J.Detraux, S.Ebersold).

Research: My future research for my Phd would be concentrating mostly on the disabled students participation and making changes processes. The **research questions** are: how is changing the understanding of disabled students self-consciousness and self-power during studies in HEI? How disabled studying in HEI are changing the organization of the study process? What are the participation/changes strategies of disabled students in HEI? What kind of mobilization processes have disabled students and what resources do they use in order to act as an interest group? The **research object** is the participation of „ice-breakers“ disabled students in HE. The **goal of the research** is to reveal „ice-breakers“ disabled students participation process and changes which they are influencing in HEI. There will be

carried out qualitative research, using a semi-structured interviews with disabled students. Participatory action research is foreseen to be implemented as a kind of experiment in one of Lithuanian HEI.

**Literature:**

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