



1. Name of the proposal

AssistID - Enhancing the participation of people with intellectual disability in education through assistive relationships

2. Scope of the proposal

The purpose of this research is to promote the participation and autonomy of people with intellectual disabilities (ID) in education, with a particular focus on the role of personal assistive relationships.

3. Rationale and Main aims of the research project

“Education is a social process. Education is growth. Education is, not a preparation for life; education is life itself.” (John Dewey)

Education is one of the most important aspects for the development of the person in general; for disabled people it is a key aspect to participation in life. Participation in education and lifelong learning are promoted by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan.

School is often the first instance of socialisation and contact with wider community and hence can provide a first step towards social inclusion of people with disabilities.

There have been significant moves towards more inclusive educational environments in European Countries but success for individuals often depends on the support and advocacy provided by assistants. For people with intellectual disability this type of assistance is particularly important because changes to the physical environment, and the provision of assistive technologies, are unlikely to be sufficient for full inclusion (and certainly less so than in providing for physical or sensory impairments).

There has been a substantial growth in the individualised assistance provided in education but according to recent research this mediation also risks the creation of new barriers to full participation (e.g. by substituting or distancing the participation of the person with intellectual disability themselves). While there has been a growing amount of educational research in schools, the inclusion of people with intellectual disability seems to present more challenges as students progress into higher education.

Much can be learned from the experiences of persons with intellectual disabilities and those who facilitate their participation, providing examples of good practice and suggesting ways to widen access and participation.

4. Research questions

- What different types of assistive relationship are available to disabled students in different European countries (e.g. support provided by school staff, other students, family members, or personal assistants) and to what extent have these models been applied to supporting students with intellectual disability in education?
- How do students with intellectual disability, and the people who support them, experience assistive relationships (e.g. what issues, benefits and difficulties arise from different types of assistive relationships)?
- What are the key characteristics of a successful assistive relationship that promotes autonomy and full participation for people with intellectual disability in education (e.g. what examples of good practice exist in school provision)?
- What is the potential to apply this good practice in other contexts (higher education) and what are the policy and resource implications?



5. Sampling and methods

A literature review will be conducted to explore existing research and knowledge regarding the participation of persons with ID in educational contexts, and also concerning research methods used.

This will be followed by observation in natural context: Schools (mainstream and special classes) aiming to study the relations between students with ID, their peers, teachers and assistants. These observations aim to collect data on the participation of students and interactions with the various intervenients.

However, observation would rely greatly on perceptions of the observers and would not be able to reveal the feelings and opinions of those who experience participation and barriers to participation in their daily lives. Hence, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with students with intellectual disabilities and those who were understood during the observation as providing assistance to participation. From these interviews we should be able to collect good practices and also barriers.

The key aspects and some extracts, both from observation and interviews, will be discussed and interpreted by focus groups: of persons with ID, assistants, teachers. This step aims to validate the data collected and to give more insight on how situations are viewed and understood by the various intervenients in the educational processes.

Since we aim for a qualitative research a big sample would not be necessary to achieve significant results.

The aim would be to be able to compare different approaches in different European Countries and cultures, hence we would be interested to have a variety of countries as partners in the project. For example both southern and northern European countries should be represented, and preferably countries which face education of persons with intellectual disabilities and educational systems in distinct ways. (e.g. Italy, Belgium, United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Austria, Spain).

6. Objectives

- 1) Identify different types of assistive relationship available to disabled students in different European countries (e.g. support provided by school staff, other students, family members, or personal assistants) (Lit Review and Observation/film)
- 2) Understand the views and experiences of students with ID and people who support them on assistive relationships (e.g. issues, benefits and difficulties arise from different types of assistive relationships) (Semi-structured interviews and focus groups)
- 3) Indicate key characteristics of successful assistive relationships that promote autonomy and full participation for people with ID in education (examples of good practice)
- 4) Examine the potential to apply good practices in other context
- 5) Examine National and European policies and resource implications
- 6) Promote participation of people with intellectual disabilities in education
- 7) Raising awareness on the assistive needs of persons with intellectual disabilities

7. Main outcomes of the project

- 1) Report on different types of assistive relationships in partner European Countries
- 2) DVD documenting good practices
- 3) Report on views of students with ID and people who support them on assistive relationships
- 4) Recommendations for policy makers concerning good practices of assistive relationships
- 5) Guidelines for assistants of persons with intellectual disabilities
- 6) Presentation of results in relevant conferences
- 7) Publication of results in relevant journals
- 8) Increase the number of people with ID participating in education
- 9) Raising awareness on the assistive needs persons with ID



8. Target Group

- Students/ people with intellectual disabilities (out 6)
- DPO's/ Orgs. People with ID (out 1,2, 3, 4, 5)
- personal/ learning support assistants (out 5)
- teachers,
- teacher trainers,
- policy makers

Indirect target groups:

- parents,
- educational authorities

9. Workplan

WP1: Management and co-ordination

WP2: Research on personal assistive relationships

Task 1 Literature review on personal assistive relationships

Task 2 Observation/ filming of classroom interactions

Task 3 Interviews with students with intellectual disabilities and people who assistants

Task 4 Focus groups

WP3: Analysis of research outcomes (Preparing reports, recommendations and guidelines)

WP4: Disseminating the project findings and outcomes

Presentation in relevant conferences (education, disability studies...),

Publication in relevant journals (education, disability studies, policy studies...),

EDF weekly mailing and education task force,

Communication to National relevant entities (DPO's, Government, Universities, etc)

WP5: Exploitation of results (benefits/ profit)

WP6: Evaluation

10. Potential Consortium

Universities/ Educational institutions (WP 2, 3, 4, 6)

Disabled Persons' Organisations (WP 2, 4, 5, 6)

Researchers with expertise on intellectual disability and participatory research (WP 2, 3)



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