Knowing, being or doing?
A comparative study of human service professionals perspective on quality in day-to-day encounters with clients with intellectual disabilities.

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Presentation at the ASID Conference "Pushing the Boundaries", 8-10 November, Hobart Tasmania, 2017
A comparative research project on policy, leadership and direct care work with clients with intellectual disabilities in schools, social services and healthcare in Sweden

Postdoc position. Dept of Education
Umeå University, Sweden
2014-2018
Methods and data collection

• Digital web-based questionnaire (Google Drive) to human service professionals working with people with intellectual disabilities in Sweden
  – Schools, Social Services and Healthcare
  – Standardized and open-ended questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Social services</th>
<th>Healthcare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff, response rate</td>
<td>68 %</td>
<td>73 %</td>
<td>69 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n =)</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders (response rate)</td>
<td>47 %</td>
<td>46 %</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n =)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Analysis
  SPSS – means, medians, ratio, and standard deviation
  Calculating frequencies and percentages
  Thematic Content Analysis
Quality in professional encounters

• Ability to demonstrate ethical awareness through professional judgements and to decide and act within a framework of professional accountability is an important feature of quality in service provision.
  – However, what does it mean to decide, act and behave in a professional manner towards people with intellectual disabilities?

• Interest in how and with what social consequence organizational context influences perceptions and definition on quality in day-to-day encounter with people with ID.
Research approach

- Limited amount of studies examining professionals views on what constitute quality and moral worth in encounters with people with ID
- Limited amount of comparative studies examining differences and similarities amongst professionals from different organizational contexts
  - Scandinavian disability research evaluative and non-theoretical “does-it-work” approach
- Welfare organisations operate within different regulative frameworks and thus have their own specific rule and norm systems
- Organisational context an important analytical theme, not at least because context—structure, culture, norms and values—frames and influence how organisational actors act, think and behave
  - Comparative approach to professional experiences
Aim

• To analyse how human service professionals define quality in encounters with people with intellectual disabilities
• To compare organizational differences in responses and experiences
  • Schools
  • Healthcare
  • Social services
Findings 1 (4)

• Personal attributes
  – Patience
  – Committed
  – Emphatic
  – Open-minded
  – Positive

• Excerpts about the personal characteristics of professionals that are required to be able to establish appropriate and qualitative encounters.
  
  *Humble, flexible, thinking outside the box, not take things for granted*.
Findings 2 (4)

• **Pertinent knowledge**
  – Medical
  – Pedagogical
  – Individual
  – Contextual

• *knowledge about limitations may follow from their disabilities (MK)*

• *It is important to consider how we [as professionals] can arrange the environment for students to be able to perform at their maximum level (CK)*
Findings 3 (4)

- **Professional action**
  - Adaptive approach
  - Confirmation
  - Responsivness

- Excerpts which associated quality with actions and behaviour

- Language on an appropriate level (AA), make them fell valuable and competent and aware of their needs (C), be attentive to signals, because they don’t communicate as persons without intellectual disabilities (R)
Findings 4 (4)

• Ideological awareness
  – Treat them as ordinary people
  – See the person, not the ID
  – Equality

• Respond and meet them as you should meet all people, with respect and sympathy, see behind the diagnoses, A human being is a human being, and having an intellectual disability doesn’t change that fundamental fact
# Organizational differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Social services</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Healthcare</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal attributes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pertinent knowledge</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional action</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological awareness</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative organizational differences

- Definition of contextual knowledge (Pertinent knowledge)
  - Health Care and Social services emphasised ability to establish secure frames of encounter (immanent legitimacy)
  - Schools reported ability to promote learning and development (progressive legitimacy)
Qualitative organizational differences

• Professional action
  – ”Being explicit”:
    • Health Care – a general attribute
    • Social service – relates to information about decision
    • School – relates to rules
  – ”Offer time”
    • Health Care and Social service – relates to F2F interactions
    • Schools – student performance (a means to an end)
  – ”Being collaborative”
    • Health Care and Social services – empowering ambitions
    • Schools – personal responsibilities
Conclusions

• Political and ideological aspects evenly distributed – more differentiated and responses in relation to “active” and work-related aspects
• Variations – quantitatively and qualitatively – in responses, which seems to be associated with organization affiliation of respondents
• Human service professionals may be poor change agents to increase knowledge utilization in daily work
• Organisational theories provide new analytical frameworks to understand actions and interactions in human service organizations
  – Ethical implications: [Social consequences] organisations have their own rule and norm systems to which both clients and professionals needs to relate to ensure smooth daily encounters.
Furter reading

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