Research paper

Pathways to inclusion in European higher education systems

Parcours vers l'inclusion dans l'enseignement supérieur européen

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents biographical data from the European Science Foundation-project Quali-TYDES, a collaborative research study underway since 2010 at universities from Ireland, Austria, Spain and the Czech Republic. The project analysed accounts of the experiences of persons with disabilities, most aged between 20 and 30. It is a generation educated in a time of radical policy shifts in the educational sector in all involved countries. This paper will solely focus on the narratives of interviewees who had access to tertiary education. Using a life course model developed by Priestley and Shah, the paper will discuss which institutional pathways facilitated the access to higher education, which transitions and turning points could be identified in the individual biographies, and which resources and capital were activated to what effect. The data show that economic, social and cultural capital, including family resources, advocacy and social networks, are necessary to access inclusive pathways. In the long run public service

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provisions, notably personal assistance, can facilitate greater educational attainment and increase the opportunities for self-determination.

R É S U M É

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Cet article présente les données biographiques issues du projet Quali-TYDES de la Fondation européenne de la science, recherche collaborative qui a été menée depuis 2010 dans des universités des pays suivants : Irlande, Autriche, Espagne et République tchèque. Le projet analyse les témoignages de personnes handicapées. La plupart des sujets sont de la tranche d'âge 20–30 ans. Il s'agit d'une génération qui a été scolarisée dans une période de changements radicaux des politiques éducatives de tous les pays impliqués. L'article met seulement l'accent sur les témoignages des personnes interrogées qui ont eu accès à l'enseignement supérieur. Sur la base d'un modèle de parcours de vie développé par Priestley et Shah, l'article s'interroge sur les voies institutionnelles qui ont facilité l'accès à l'enseignement supérieur, sur les transitions et les tournants constatés dans les biographies individuelles, sur les ressources et les financements qui ont été mis en place, et ceci à quelles fins. Les données révèlent que les ressources économiques, sociales et culturelles, y compris les ressources familiales, les mouvements de défense des personnes et les réseaux sociaux, sont indispensables pour l'accès à des parcours inclusifs. À long terme, l'offre de services publics, notamment l'accompagnement personnalisé, peut faciliter l'accès à des niveaux scolaires supérieurs et augmenter les chances d'autodétermination.

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1. Background

Over the last three decades, European disability policy has moved from an explicit care model towards a human rights perspective. Starting in the 1980s, educational policies shifted from provision of segregated environments to more integrative forms. Legislative reforms in several countries through the 1990s and the European Year of People with Disabilities in 2003 brought wide discussion of mainstream forms of education. In the following years, a number of European programs raised awareness of the need for educational reform, especially in those countries, which entered the European Union at a later stage. The European Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (European Commission, 2010) represents the culmination of a number of EU initiatives aimed at increasing the participation of people with disabilities within society. This strategy explicitly aims to implement the rights of disabled people outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) at EU level. Enabling people with disabilities to be full participants within society has implications for how education systems are structured, and implicit barriers to participation are identified and addressed.

This paper emerged from the European Science Foundation-project "Qualitative Tracking with Young Disabled People in European States (Quali-TYDES)". Quali-TYDES project (project website: http://quali-tydes.univie.ac.at/) investigated how new developments in global, European, national/local policies are impacting on the lives of young disabled adults in four European countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Ireland and Spain) who had distinct approaches to public policies in relation to disabled people. The authors wished to create a 'diverse' sample that reflected a variety of welfare models operating in European countries. The Sapir (2005) typology was used where four types of