

Health education and workplace health promotion for people with intellectual disabilities

Exploration of an empowerment-oriented programme



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Background

People with intellectual disabilities are often affected by specific health risks and face multiple barriers in health care^{1,2,3}. However, health promotion and education programmes are seldom targeting or including this group of people. The project *GESUND!* is investigating, how health promotion can be realized for and with people with intellectual disabilities. Starting point for the participatory research is the implementation of a health education programme in a workshop for adapted work (sheltered workplace) in Germany.

Objectives

To investigate how the health education programme

- (1) can strengthen participants' health literacy;
- (2) support participation in workplace health promotion;
- (3) support participation in health research.

Methods

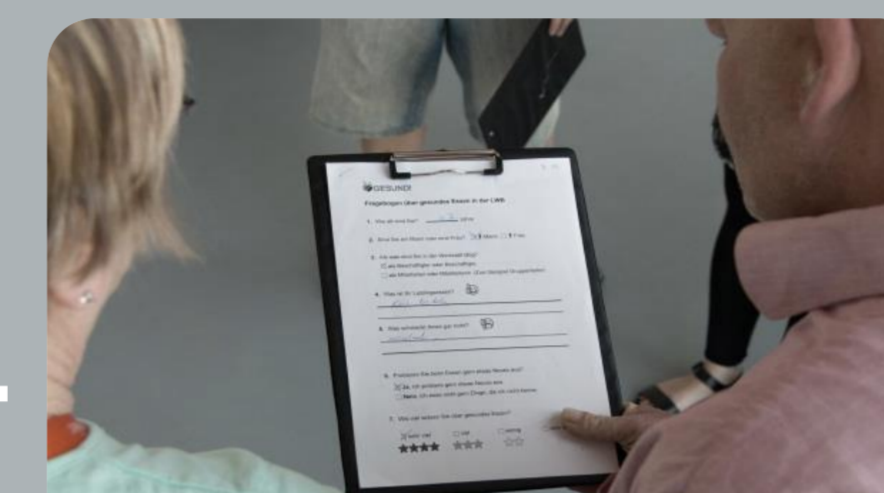
A practice research approach is used to explore the education programme^{4,5}. A qualitative content analysis is following an process of systematically reflection of the researchers' experience in the classes and participants' feedback.

Development of the education programme

- Basis for the curriculum are principles of participation, emphasis on competence and the involvement of participants as peer-multipliers and peer-researchers.
- The programme consists of two phases: a learning and a research phase.
- To ensure the sustainability of the project, structures for occupational health management were established in the company (health panels).



The health education programme



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Health classes

- 6 month, 12 participants
- Methodical diversity: Use of video summaries, role plays, group discussions, games, field trips

Participatory research projects

- 3 month, 10 participants
- Focus of projects: Noise and nutrition at the workplace

Results

Increase of individual competencies

- Raised awareness
- Increased knowledge
- Improved communication skills

Empowerment to act for better health

- Sharing health information with peers
- Bringing complaints up to the management
- Engaging in research projects and health panels

Changes on company level

- Enhanced health communication
- Establishment of inclusive health panels
- Development of specific recommendations

Conclusions

Participatory and action-oriented health classes seem to be appropriate for strengthening health literacy and for preparing employees with intellectual disabilities to contribute in workplace health promotion and research.

Main messages

- Although people with intellectual disabilities are often overlooked in health promotion and education, they can benefit from tailored activities in various ways.
- Health interventions, like workplace health promotion, can benefit significantly from the participation of people with intellectual disabilities.

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Literature

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