Abstract

RESEARCH METHODS FOR THE SWEDISH RESEARCH PROJECT EDUCATION FOR PARTICIPATION – PHILOSOPHIZING BACK A ‘NEW’ LIFE AFTER ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY

Ylva Backman, Teodor Gardelli, Viktor Gardelli, Åsa Gardelli, and Caroline Strömberg, Luleå University of Technology, Sweden

Persons with acquired brain injuries (ABI) constitute a marginalized but sizable group. Re-integration into society requires regaining of communication abilities and cognitive skills. Research on the potential for philosophical dialogues as an effective educational method for persons with ABI has been non-existent. The interdisciplinary research group conducts a project (financed by the Swedish Research Council) in order to assess effects in communication and cognitive skills of two small-scale interventions carried out in the northern part of Sweden. The two groups participated in twelve dialogues each during a period of fifteen weeks from January 2015 to May 2015. In addition to the persons with ABI, staff participated in the philosophical dialogues in both groups.

Due to the study population, we chose a single group pre-test post-test and mixed-method triangulation design. The project uses both qualitative and quantitative data. The data collection consisted of observations, interviews, and tests.

Observations. Each of the 24 philosophical dialogues was sound recorded as well as filmed with two cameras from different angles. One researcher in the project kept observational protocols during 21 of the philosophical dialogues. The facilitators and the observing researcher had discussions after the dialogues, and one of the facilitators took notes after the dialogues.

Interviews. Individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with all of the participants with ABI and concerned (i) perceptions of communicative ability, critical thinking skills, and causes of possible development, (ii) “the Cantril ladder” (translated into Swedish by the researchers), (iii) “the satisfaction with life scale”, and (iv) (in the post-interviews) perceptions of the philosophical dialogues. Focus group interviews and individual interviews were conducted with staff about perceptions of the research participants’ communicative and critical thinking development and factors perceived causing such development. All interviews were sound recorded.

Tests. The persons with ABI received the New Jersey test of reasoning skills in a Swedish translation made by the project group with authorization from Montclair State University.

The data collection was completed in June 2015 and some of the data sets have been processed. For analysis of the filmed material, the Argumentation Rating Tool was used in a pre-test post-test setting. The interviews with the staff were coded thematically. The results of the test scores will be statistically analyzed in order to see whether there are any significant differences between scores from pre to post in the experimental groups and the control groups (which consisted of the same individuals as the experimental groups but before the intervention started). The research group is now finalizing the data processing, triangulating the data sets and drawing conclusions.