
I want a family too! Adoption of children with disabilities in Hungary

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Abstract

The Hungarian Child Protection Act, according to international conventions, prefers the out-of-home care of children in families, instead of institutional settings, excluding children with disabilities, who are, referring to the international empirical data (Argent 1998, Bunt 2014, Egbert-Lamont 2004, Gallinger 2012, Glidden 2000, Goetting-Goetting 1993, Grant-Thomas 2013, Macaskill 1988, Marcenko-Smith 1991, Mckenzie 1993, Rosenthal 1993, Unger-Deiner-Wilson 1988), one group of the so called hard to place” children. The aim of our state-aided empirical study (OTKA K111917) is to reveal the characteristics of the families that deliberately adopt children with disabilities. This basic research uses qualitative and quantitative approaches, in the theoretical framework of (Feminist) Disability Studies. Implementing the participatory research in various ways, member of the research group is an adoptive father of a disabled child, a leader of an NGO that coordinates the adoption of children with Down Syndrome, and a 21 year old man with Down Syndrome who lives in an adoptive family. First element of the process was a questionnaire with 52, open ended and closed ended questions. 23 answers were analysed, that is, according to the statistical database, 10-25% of the full sample. As a second step, 15 narrative interviews are made with adoptive parents and in the last sequence 7 focus groups are conducted. The focus groups involve all the relevant stakeholders of the adoption process: experts of the governmental and non-governmental organisations, parents who have placed their child for adoption (and their other children), the adoptive children, and their siblings in the adoptive family. As a result, we can get closer to the biographies of the parents who decide to adopt, and we can identify potential groups that can be encouraged to adopt. We better recognize the needs of families, their pleasures and difficulties after the adoption, that can help to establish adequate supports in their everyday lives. These empirical evidences can also lead to a legislation reform, and more children with disabilities can live in families.

Keywords: adoption, children with disabilities, participatory research, Disability Studies, Feminist Disability Studies

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