

# Quality of EHC Plan Outcomes for Primary Students with Down Syndrome

Results from Research Masters Thesis project completed by Camilla Brooks University of Oslo

## About the project

EHC plan outcomes are what inform the details of the plan, regulate provisions and provide areas of focus for the students learning and development (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2015). These outcomes should be high-quality, participation-focused and in line with SMART criteria descriptions as stated in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 2015. High quality outcomes provide students with special educational needs and disabilities the best opportunities to achieve their learning and development aspirations. This thesis aimed to evaluate the quality of outcomes contained within the EHC plans of English primary students with Down syndrome. 17 EHC Plans were included in the quantitative analysis of this non-experimental descriptive research project which provided 226 outcomes to be examined. These plans came from 6 of the 9 regions of England, belonging to 10 boys and 7 girls ranging in age from 5 to 12 years. The outcomes were rated using McWilliam's Goal Functionality Scale III (2014) with 10% of the outcomes being rated by two independent, trained raters to calculate inter-rater agreement, which was found to be highly reliable ( $\alpha=0.985$ ).

## Results and conclusions

The Education, Health and Care plan outcomes for English primary school students with Down syndrome were found to be of overall low quality with high variance across items on the Goal Functionality Scale III, showing higher frequencies of meeting quality criteria relating to participation in a routine [item 1], being observable and measurable [item 2] and demonstrative of a necessary or useful skill [item 3]. While limitations related to the large variance of outcomes per plan and the distribution of outcomes across categorical variables cause caution in interpreting results in relation to the larger population of primary students with DS not included in the sample, the implications and suggestions for further research and development can still be applied. If students with DS are to receive high quality education and have the greatest potential for achieving their aspirations, their outcomes must be that of high quality. Researching the effects of outcome quality on pedagogy and implementation of provisions, the development of a tool of quality indication specifically in line with the context of the EHC plan, English SEND policy and SMART criteria, utilization of the ICF as the language of outcomes and better training programs for teachers and related service members to write and implement these outcomes are all suggested points of development from the research project.

**A massive thank you to those who participated and were involved in the project!**

Want to know more or read the full thesis?

Contact Camilla Brooks at  
[camillajeansbrooks@gmail.com](mailto:camillajeansbrooks@gmail.com)