EXPERIENCES OF INTERACTION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN ONLINE UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

Dzenana Jalovcic
Final Oral Exam
November 3, 2017

Committee Members:
Dr. Susan Moisey
Dr. Cynthia Blodgett-Griffin
Dr. Linda Chmiliar
Dr. Susan Crichton
Presentation overview

- Problem statement
- Literature review
- Research questions
- Methodology
- Findings and discussion
- Implications
NEW OPPORTUNITIES
- Technological advances
- Proliferation of online learning
- Enabling human rights legislation

INCREASING PARTICIPATION
- Lower participation and attainment rates
- Various barriers

INCREASING RESEARCHERS’ INTEREST
- Under-researched area
- Technology and accessibility in focus
- Mostly quantitative with limited understanding of the experience from students’ perspective
“The first great silence relates to the fact that the voices of stakeholders are still largely ignored ... assumptions are made about their perspective, but little is drawn directly from personal narratives and experiences of the stakeholders themselves.”

What is the structure of experience of interaction for undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities who study online?

- What are their experiences of interactions with content, instructors or tutors, other students, system, and support services?
- What are the barriers and facilitators that shape the online learning experience for students with disabilities?
METHODOLOGY
Method

**DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD** according to Giorgi (2009)

- Phenomenology as philosophy
- Adapted Moore's types of interaction
- Human rights approach to disability
Participants

- Age:
  - 65-74
  - 55-64
  - 45-54
  - 35-44
  - 25-34

- Undegraduate/Certificate (undergrad)
- Graduate

- Multiple disabilities:
  - Mental disability
  - TBI/concussion
  - Learning disability
  - Multiple sclerosis
  - Health condition
  - Asperger's
Crusoe, Elaine, Flora, Isabel, Jennifer, Kirk, Linda, Megan, Paolo, Pete, Peter, Rosemary, Sandra, Study Girl, Walter
SKYPE AND PHONE INTERVIEWS

semi-structured interview guides

**Interviews**
- Natural setting
- At time of participants’ convenience
- 60-80 minutes long
- Conversational
- 15 hours of audio recordings

**Transcripts**
- Verbatim transcripts
- Review
- Member checking
- Denaturalized transcripts
- 136 single-spaced pages of naïve descriptions
ASSUMED PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE:
maintained disciplinary perspective, focused on
the phenomenon, and bracketed

- Read entire transcript
- Read again & determined meaning units
- Transformed meaning units through description
- Described the structure of experience
Delimitations

1. Description not interpretation
2. Generality not generalization
3. Participants came from one institution
4. Participants had current experience

Limitations

SELF-SELECTED PARTICIPANTS

1. No participants with major hearing or visual impairments
2. Participants were older than an average undergraduate or graduate student who study online
Trustworthiness
(Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004)

CREDIBILITY
- Appropriate, recognized research method
- Familiarity with culture of organization
- Examination of previous research to frame findings
- Triangulation
- Member checking
- Iterative questioning
- Saturation
- Negative case analysis
- Peer debriefing/review
- Reflexivity
- Iterative engagement with methodological literature

TRANSFERABILITY
- Sufficient background
- Thick description to allow comparisons

DEPENDABILITY
- Detailed description of methodology to allow for study replication

CONFIRMABILITY
- Detailed description of methodology to allow for examination and scrutiny of results
- Researcher’s disclosure
- Audit trail
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Structure of experiences of interaction for students with disabilities in online university programs

- Having access
- Working harder
- Being supported
- Being connected
- Becoming
So, they've ranged from really awful to really, really amazing... at one end I've had really critical instructors who make me justify every accommodation and why I might use it in an accusatory way that feels like they're accusing me of not being organized or being lazy or procrastinating. And at the other end, I have had instructors who trust me to be able to manage my own situation through the course. And there's been a lot of middle areas. It's been a full spectrum.

Megan
COMPLEX

CONTINUUM
FACILITATORS

1. Knowing yourself
2. Flexibility
   • Time
   • People
   • Processes
   • Infrastructure
   • Course design
   • Funding

BARRIERS

1. Process of accessing accommodation
2. Inconsistencies in getting accommodations
3. A lack of understanding of disability
4. Inadequate responsiveness to inquiries
5. Over-reliance on text
ENVIRONMENT & ATTITUDES

FLEXIBILITY

KNOWING YOURSELF
Once I learned to navigate the University Moodle, I have no problem with it. Now it just feels like my online University home, just as I was going on campus to the brick and mortar university. I know where all the classrooms are.

Jennifer

HAVING ACCESS to

1. Mainstream and educational technologies
2. Accommodations
Every single time before I write an exam, I’m having to talk to someone with no medical training who I don’t know and explain my whole medical history, and it’s just humiliating. It’s really horrible.

Sandra

WORKING HARDER

1. Planning
2. Communicating
3. Organizing
4. Learning new technology
They knew how to walk around the dotted lines and just were able to stay on track with me.

Crusoe

BEING SUPPORTED by
1. Instructors
2. Student support services
3. Students
Four of us worked together on an initial collaborative project, and had some delightful Skype sessions... that really helped me to feel part of the group. We connected and have a bit more of an understanding of the experiences of the people around me.

Paolo

BEING CONNECTED

1. Being isolated
2. Being connected
I go out to the community and speak about my disabilities and how the art therapy and my schooling helped me stay quite healthy, mentally, physically.

Study Girl

BECOMING

1. More self-confident
2. A new professional
3. Healthier, physically and mentally
IMPLICATIONS
In conclusion

**Contributes methodologically rigorous evidence on lived experiences of studying online with disabilities**
continuum, complex, holistic, non-binary

**Expands understanding of experiences of students with disabilities**
Individual → Environment, Technology/Access → Interaction, ASD → Instructors, Administrators, IT

**Identifies barriers and facilitators affecting students' experience**
As experienced by students with disabilities with implications for practice
Implications

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (SWD)
- Know yourself
- Know your rights
- Speak up about your needs
- Register with disability services

INSTRUCTORS AND INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNERS
- Recognize diversity of SWDs
- Design flexible, inclusive environments
- Know the rights of SWDs
- Be available, responsive, & supportive

SERVICE PROVIDERS
- Streamline the process of getting accommodation
- Eliminate repetitions in the process
- Educate instructors about disability & accommodation
- Improve response time

ADMINISTRATORS & POLICY MAKERS
- Streamline the policies
- Minimize the need for individual negotiations of accommodation
- Ensure consistent policy implementation

RESEARCHERS
- Study experiences of younger online SWDs
- Compare experiences of online SWDs at various institutions
Thank you

defalovcic1@Athabasca.edu
@JalovcicDjenana
https://atdistance.wordpress.com/
The study is supported by the Wayne Perry Ed.D. Student Research Award, the Athabasca University Excellence in Research Scholarship Award and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship Program.
Special thanks to all the people who made and released these slide templates and photographs for free.

- Presentation template by SlidesCarnival
- Photographs by Unsplash
- Learn more about slidedocs at duarte.com/slidedocs
Bibliography