

UNDERSTANDING FLEXIBILITY IN ONLINE ED: LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Djenana Jalovcic, EdD



28TH ICDE WORLD ONLINE LEARNING CONFERENCE, DUBLIN, IRELAND, 3-7 NOVEMBER 2019

WHY

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- growing numbers in online higher education •
- inclusive education • human rights • accessibility •
- technologies • diversity • inclusion •

WHY

FLEXIBILITY

- described by students as a key facilitator of learning •
- anywhere • anytime • from accessible places • at own pace •

**What does flexibility mean
for students with disabilities
in online university program?**

Descriptive phenomenology

Amedeo Giorgi (2009)

Experiences of interaction

For students with disabilities in online university programs

Flexibility

A key **facilitator** of their learning that allowed them to **make choices** that worked best for them!

AMPLIFYING VOICES

- Crusoe • Elaine • Flora • Isabel •
- Jennifer • Kirk • Linda • Megan •
- Paolo • Pete • Peter • Rosemary •
- Sandra • Study Girl • Walter •

Program	F	M	Total
Undergraduate programs	4	4	8 (1 F & 1 M did not register with ASD)
Certificate programs	1		1
Graduate programs	4	2	6 (1 F completed BA online)
Total	9	6	15

Average age of participants: 48

Average age of students in Master's programs: 56

Average age of students in Bachelor's programs: 40

Disabilities: Multiple sclerosis, Asperger's, learning disabilities, mental health disorders, multiple disabilities, health condition, traumatic brain injury, concussions

Participants

Flexibility



You literally work at your own pace
and make school go around your
schedule and your lifestyle, period.

Isabel



I can stay within the safety of my
apartment.

Study Girl



Being able to study anywhere. With the world generally connected by the internet anywhere you are except for if you're up in Timbuktu, I like that

Kirk

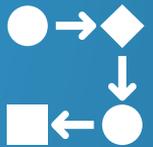


All students don't learn in the same way... if you have one evaluation method the students that don't learn that way aren't going to do as well as the other ones... there needs to be multiple options for presenting information for an evaluation method.

Peter

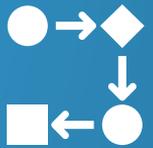


Everybody thinks digital textbooks and digital compilations of articles are a great idea because it saves paper, but I need to print them out on paper, anyways, just to be able to sort and deal with the information.



Megan

Everybody thinks digital textbooks and digital compilations of articles are a great idea because it saves paper, but I need to print them out on paper, anyways, just to be able to sort and deal with the information.



Megan

If you wanted to see the **course material package** to make that decision about whether you take that course, you have to order it. And it's **very cumbersome** process to do that because you have to do that through the **library**. Then once you've reviewed the course, you have to put in a request with the **Disabilities Department** to have the materials requested for you. And part of the issue is even if you're registered as a student with disability, you have to **do this each and every time** that you take a course. So, you have to fill out their necessary paperwork, their processes, and then it goes to the **Assistive Technology Department**, and then they review it. And then, even though I e-mail them back and forth, they tend to do everything in piecemeal because it's almost like every course that they have, they don't necessarily have all the printed materials. There has to be an assistant assigned, and then she has to go through the course package and she has to go through everything to print off everything and/or to put it on a CD. So, it's kind of like a one off. If I apply for a course, then they have to go through the whole course and then they have to print off all the materials. They have to go **to their budgets to get the books**, they have to always ask the same questions, "Did you get a grant for any of the finances for the printing?" And when I say no, then their **Department** has to get it approved through their internal processes in order to give me the materials. Sometimes they say that they weren't able to get materials, and then I have to turn around and I have to e-mail **the Manager of the Disabilities Department** to say, 'I'm having this roadblock. Could you please deal with this issue?' because it's too frustrating for me as a student to try to deal with a department who's telling me that they can't print off materials because of their budgetary constraints. That's the other thing. It's sometimes two to four months ahead of time, and if I don't give them that 60-days notice, that means that I don't necessarily start my course when I want to start the course. Sometimes it has to be pushed back. They're working on that deadline of the months that I want to start my course on.



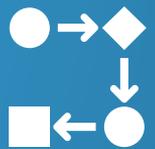
I have difficulty reading a book. Being able to physically manipulate it. [When the textbook arrived] my first thought was, 'Oh, I'd better contact somebody about the textbook' However, the textbook arrived with a note saying, 'And on the course website, you will find an E-book version and a PDF version.' So, that's going to be fully addressed.

Paolo



She organized a grant for me... But [the vendor] still want me to pay all of the money for all of the stuff upfront, which is a problem, and then they're only going to reimburse 75 percent, so I'm still out of pocket about \$1,000 for it.

Isabel



Obviously, policy needs to be followed but it comes down to whether or not a faculty member or an administrator is willing to approve a creative solution that follows the policy but still resolves the issue and to work with the student.

Peter





DESIGN 4 FLEXIBILITY

Create flexible courses, processes, infrastructure and policies to ensure accessible and inclusive opportunities for all.

Thank you!

djenana.jalovcic@gmail.com

@JalovcicDjenana

<https://atdistance.wordpress.com/>

CREDITS

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- ◇ Presentation template by [SlidesCarnival](#) and [You Exec](#)
- ◇ Photographs by [Unsplash](#) and [Pixabay](#)

A blurred background image showing a person's arm with a bracelet and a laptop on a desk. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent blue rectangle.

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

Acknowledgement