



Document Landscape: What Shapes Students' with Disability Experiences in Work-Integrated Learning

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) helps students gain practical knowledge and develop skills needed in the workplace. WIL is often a requirement in fields like healthcare. While more fields are making WIL an option for students, lack of accommodation during WIL can lead students with disabilities to leave WIL unfinished. Yet, the college, university, or WIL sites have legal obligations to provide accommodation. How do colleges, universities, and WIL sites inform students about WIL accommodations? This study explores Canadian documents connected to accommodation during WIL. The aim is to find out how to make these documents more helpful to students with disabilities.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Colleges and universities have many documents about accommodations for students with disabilities in classrooms. However, there are fewer documents about accommodation during work-integrated learning (WIL). Researchers explored both documents that focus on accommodations in classrooms and during WIL to understand better what makes them useful or unhelpful. They found barriers in the form and content of documents. The form had three barriers, and content had two barriers that you can address to make your documents better.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The researchers did a qualitative document analysis (QDA) to find and review documents about accommodation during WIL. Their QDA process had four phases. In phase one, they searched for documents, created guidelines for including documents, and collected data on the documents. The researchers found 43 documents that fit the QDA. During phase two, they made codes and coded the documents. In phase three, they reflected on the coding and created visuals. Finally, in phase four, they reported the findings.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

A total of five findings came from looking at the form and content of documents. Three themes came from the form. First, students were not part of making decisions about the content or form. Second, few documents focused on accommodation in WIL. Finally, the form of a document is vital to its usefulness. There are two themes connected to the content. First, documents make students responsible for barriers to access in WIL, even when the barriers are not under their control. Secondly, most documents need students to disclose their disability to receive accommodation. This need for disclosure suggests the use of the medical model of disability, which focuses on individual accommodation.

WHAT ARE THE RESEARCHERS PROPOSING?

The researchers have four suggestions for improving documents about accommodation during WIL. First, engage students with disabilities in the process of making documents. When disabled students have input on the form and content of the document, it is more likely to meet other student needs. Second, put documents through user testing before sharing them. It is best to have disabled students active in user testing too. Third, make more small documents when there are a lot of details to share. The researchers found long documents with a lot of content are harder to use. Fourth, use universal design or similar design practices when making content and form. These design tools will help you make a document that meets the needs of more people.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

You work at a Health Care Institute: Use the four suggestions when making documents about accessibility and accommodation in WIL.

You work at a College or University: Use the four suggestions when making documents for disabled students.

You write documents: Use the four suggestions when making documents, shifting students with disabilities to your stakeholders.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

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KEYWORDS

Nursing, Students with disabilities, Clinical placement, Work-Integrated learning, Accommodation, Practice-Based education, Practicum, Disability, Qualitative review

CITATION

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