

New Ways of Learning: Perception and Experiences of Online Doctoral Students



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Background of the Problem

- ❧ Change in doctoral student demographics
- ❧ Shift in doctoral students learning habit.



Problem



- ❧ Lack of clarity and insight related to the advantages and obstacles faced by the new non traditional doctoral students (Erichsen, Bolliger, & Halupa, 2014; Koole, 2013).



Purpose Statement



- ❧ This meta-data analysis provides an integrated body of knowledge on the concerns, and perceived benefits of pursuing a doctoral program online.
- ❧ The review covers research for five years, 2011-2015.



Research Questions



What are the perceptions and experiences of online doctoral learners?

- ❧ What are the advantages of being an online doctoral learner?
- ❧ What obstacles do online doctoral learners face?



Method



☞ Meta-data analysis, formally analyzes and compares primary data to develop a body of knowledge on a specific phenomenon (Paterson, Thornes, Canam, & Jillings, 2011).



Meta-ethnography approach



Noblit and Hare (1988) identify seven phases in their meta-ethnography approach:

- ❧ Phase 1: Getting started;
- ❧ Phase 2: Deciding what is relevant;
- ❧ Phase 3: Reading the studies;
- ❧ Phase 4: Determining how studies are related;
- ❧ Phase 5: Translating studies into one another;
- ❧ Phase 6: Synthesizing translations; and
- ❧ Phase 7: Expressing the synthesis

STEPS
on our Journey

Demographics of Participants

Authors	Sample Size	Country of Study	Ethnicities	Discipline
Andrew (2012)	3	Australia	2 New Zealand 1 Tasmania	PhD Candidates
Bolliger & Halupa (2012)	84	USA	61% Caucasian	Health and Education
Fahlman (2011)	8 Female 5 Male	Canada	Not Provided	Education
Gardner & Gopaul (2012)	3 Female 7 Male	USA	Not Provided	Diverse Disciplines
Kumar, Johnson, & Hardemon (2013)	9	USA	Not Provided	Not Provided
Provident, Salls, Dolhi, Schreiber, Matilla, & Eckerl (2015)	113	USA	Not Provided	Occupational Therapy
Santicola (2013)	7 Female 2 Male	USA	3 African American 6 Caucasian	Education
Smyth, Houghton, Cooney, & Casey (2012)	48 Female 3 Male	Ireland	Not Provided	Nursing
West, Gokalp, Pena, Fischer, & Grupton (2011)	103	USA	38% Caucasian, 23% Hispanic/Latino, 13% African American, 20% Asian American/ Pacific Islander, 3% Hawaiian, 1% Native American, 2% Other	Education





Data Analysis Summary

Author	Data Analysis Method
Andrew (2012)	Thematic data analysis grounded in the literature review of the five questions.
Bolliger & Halupa (2012)	Open coding for qualitative data.
Fahlman (2011)	Stories gathered and used to illustrate experiences.
Gardner & Gopaul (2012)	Constant comparative method using Glaser's (1978) steps.
Kumar, Johnson, & Hardemon (2013)	Data coded using inductive analysis with a constant comparative analysis utilized to identify similarities and differences across interviews.
Provident, Salls, Dolhi, Schreiber, Matilla, & Eckel (2015)	The Person-Environment-Occupation Model (Law et al., 1996) was used for first level categorizing reflections. Using predetermined codes, reflections were independently judged by five faculty members.
Santicola (2013)	In vivo coding using emphasized words.
Smyth, Houghton, Cooney, & Casey (2012)	Thematic data analysis.
West, Gokalp, Pena, Fischer, & Grupton (2011)	Qualitative analysis of both open ended questions and focus groups identified themes. Descriptive and correlation analysis explored the extent to which the themes emerged in the open ended questions and focus groups.



Advantages

- ❧ Family Support
- ❧ Able to work full time and complete degree

Obstacles

- ❧ Time Management
- ❧ Communication with mentors

Themes



- Support
- Time Management
- Anxiety
- Satisfaction
- Sacrifices

Theme- Support



- ❧ Positive Support
 - ❧ Peers/ Cohorts
 - ❧ Faculty/ Chairs
 - ❧ Professional Job

- ❧ Lack of Support

Theme- Time Management

- ∞ Balancing Multiple Roles
- ∞ Completing Coursework/ Dissertation
- ∞ Invasiveness

Theme- Anxiety



❧ Causes of Anxiety

❧ Lowering Anxiety

❧ Faculty/ Chairs

❧ Peers/Cohorts

Theme- Satisfaction



Personal

- Flexible

- Stay at Home

- Continue Professional Job

Academic

- Cohort

- Faculty Feedback

Theme- Sacrifices



☞ Relationships

☞ Balancing Life Commitments



- ❧ The analysis provides an overview of the areas of concern and perceived advantages of pursuing a doctoral program online.
- ❧ Research regarding online doctoral students requires more attention. One recommendation is that larger studies be completed that include diverse student population and disciplines.



Discussion Questions

☞ How can the results of our study change what occurs in online doctoral programs?

☞ What are examples of Best Practices around the five themes?



- ❧ Erichsen, E. A., Bolliger, D. U., & Halupa, C. (2014). *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(2), 321-338.
- ❧ Noblit, G. W. & Hare, R. D. (1988). Meta-ethnography: Synthesizing qualitative studies. *Qualitative Research methods Series*. [Google Book version]. Retrieved from, <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/meta-ethnography/book2416#preview>
- ❧ Paterson, B. L., Thorne, S. E. & Canam, C. (2001). *Methods in Nursing Research: Meta-study of qualitative health research* : SAGE Publications Ltd doi: 10.4135/9781412985017

List of Studies Examined



- ❧ Andrew, M. (2012), " Supervising doctorates at a distance: three trans-Tasman stories", *Quality Assurance in Education*, 20(1), 42-53.
- ❧ Bolliger, D. U. & Halupa, C. (2012). Student perceptions of satisfaction and anxiety in an online doctoral program. *Distance Education*. 33(1), 81-98.
- ❧ Fahlman, D. (2011). Stories from the first cohort in doctor of education in distance education. *Journal of Distance Education (Online)*, 25(1), 1-8.
- ❧ Gardner, S. K. and Gopaul, B. (2012). The Part-Time Doctoral Student Experience. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 7, p. 63-78.
- ❧ Kumar, S., Johnson, M., & Hardemon, T. (2013). Dissertations at a distance: Students' perceptions of online mentoring in a doctoral program. *Journal of Distance Education (Online)*, 27(1), 1-11.
- ❧ Provident, I., Salls, J., Dolhi, C., Schreiber, J., Mattila, A., & Eckel, E. (2015). Design of an Online Curriculum Promoting Transformative Learning in Post Professional Doctoral Students. *Online Learning*, 19(3), 128-143.
- ❧ Santicola, L. (2013). Pressing on: Persistence through A doctoral cohort program in education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (Online)*, 6(2), 253-n/a.
- ❧ Smyth, S., Houghton, C., Cooney, A. & Casey, D. (2012). Students' experiences of blended learning across a range of postgraduate programmes. *Nurse Education Today*, 32(4), 464-468. Doi:10.1016/j.nedt. 2011.05.014
- ❧ West, I. J., Gokalp, G., Peña, E. V., Fischer, L., & Gupton, J. (2011). Exploring effective support practices for doctoral students' degree completion. *College Student Journal*, 45(2), 310-323.