



From surviving to thriving

A study of autistic students and the online learning experience.



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stage 1

review literature on

~autistic students
~Higher Education

- education is designed to address the expectations of a predominant (non-autistic) group (Chown & Beavan, 2012; Fabri *et al.*, 2020)
- autistic students face disadvantages due to negative perceptions (Lipson *et al.*, 2020)
- academic staff fail to action student support plans (Hector, 2020)
- significant disparity between achievement of 'non-disabled' and autistic students (Office for Students, 2019)
- fail to achieve potential due to lack of specific support policies for autistic students (Chown *et al.*, 2018)

stage 2

conduct pilot study

collect data from surveys and student narratives
(*S = participant comment)

20 autistic students took part in my pilot study, sharing personal narratives of their experience of learning and support at the Open University.

online forums: "easier to communicate...as I have time to think about my responses" (*S1.08)

"we can use transcripts for videos or audio instead of having to listen" (*S1.03)

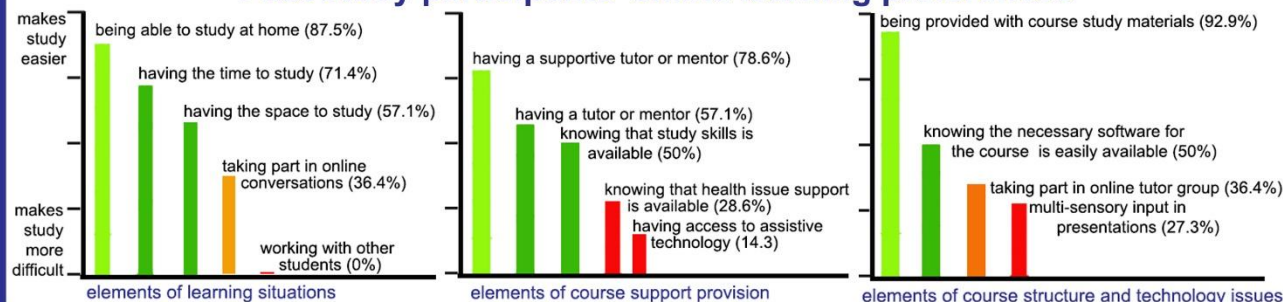
"learning is based on a pace [that I] can set" (*S1.11)

"easier to handle things when I'm at home in a safe environment" (*S1.10)

stage 3

analyse data

Pilot study participants' online learning preferences



Pilot study participants are positive about learning online. They offered insights into their core needs and that opposed current provision.

stage 4

consider findings

stage 5

look to the future

By addressing course structure and support issues raised by the participants, autistic student experiences could move from '*surviving*' to '*thriving*'.

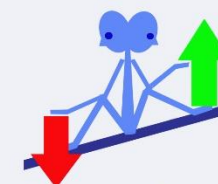
Could online learning be the optimum choice for future autistic students?



stage 6

design for balance

promote positives
personalised practical support + choice



reduce negatives
online interaction + focus on health issues