Becoming Self-Determined: Improving Self-Determination Skills in College Students with Disabilities

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Presentation agenda

01 Background and Theoretical Framework
  - Larger & Situated Context
  - Role of Researcher

02 Methodology
  - SDCS Innovation
  - Research Questions
  - Data Sources
  - Data Analysis

03 Findings
  - Theoretical Propositions
  - Discussion of Findings
  - Alignment with Theoretical Framework

04 Limitations and Implications
  - Limitations of the study
  - Implications for Future Practice & Research

Background

★ Larger & Situated Context
  - Students with disabilities are entering higher education institutions with little to no transition planning to support them in navigating their new environments. Addressing the disconnect between K-12 Special Education and the transition to the college environment.

★ Problem of Practice
  - College students with disabilities at UNLV are often lacking the skills needed to persist in their new environments. Supporting students in building their goal-setting and self-advocacy skills lead to improved levels of self-determination that will help ease their transition to higher education and beyond.

★ Role of the Researcher
  - Associate Director of UNLV Disability Resource Center
Theoretical Framework & Related Literature

SEIf-Determination for College Success (SDCS) Innovation

SDCS Innovation timeline
Research questions

RQ 1
What happens to students’ self-determination across the Self-Determination for College Success (SDCS) innovation?

RQ 2
What are students’ perceptions of the social benefits and/or drawbacks to innovation participation?

Methods

Qualitative action research
- Research in education setting (Yin, 2013)
- Flexible & cyclical to allow for increased knowledge of issues in current practice (Mertler, 2017)

Participants
- Convenience Sampling (n=4)
- Three freshmen with ADHD
- Three true freshmen & one 2nd year freshman
- Two Las Vegas locals & two out-of-state students
- Three diagnosed in ES & one diagnosed in HS
- One declared major & three still exploring

Setting
- UNLV Disability Resource Center
- All sessions were conducted virtually
- Implemented during Spring 2021 semester for 13 weeks

Data Collection
- Self-Determination Assessment Internet (SDAI; Hoffman et al., 2015)
- Video-recorded Sessions
  - Group n=5
  - Individual n=25
- Semi-structured Interviews n=3
- Researcher Journal
- SD Notebook (Discontinued)
Data Analysis

Initial Phase of Analysis
- In this coding, we them unfold meaning during the iteration to find initial codes from related categories and assumptions used to develop

Second Phase of Analysis
- These codes from Theme Coding & Second Coding to identify frequent or significant codes from the initial phase of analysis and develop into

Third Phase of Analysis
- Used Theoretical Coding to develop five themes from the data analysis. From these themes, theoretical propositions were developed.

Theoretical Propositions

Building Confidence through competence

Student Development throughout the SDCS

Empowerment through self-advocacy

The value of struggle

Student Development throughout the SDCS

Empowerment through self-advocacy

The value of struggle

Student Development throughout the SDCS
Theoretical Propositions

Building Confidence through competence

Empowerment through self-advocacy

The value of struggle

Students were not empowered to make their own decisions
Students recognized their responsibility in guiding their education
Students undertook to value and become stronger self-advocates

Students struggled to understand their disability and uniqueness
Students identified barriers they had experienced during the transition to college
Students appreciated their struggles as learning experiences

The Role of the Coach in Building a community

Community of Supportive Relationships

Relationship building through open, honest dialogue to support students in overcoming barriers
Implement coaching strategies to create an environment of empowerment and guided learning
Strengthened sense of community by interacting with students with similar lived experiences and struggles
Developed meaningful relationships and explored different realms of self-exploration with each other

Coaching & Community Building

Student Development throughout the SDGS

13

14

15
Discussion

- Examined strengths & weaknesses
- Used self-recognition to drive self-reflection skills
- Increased confidence in decision making ability to thrive in new environments
- Created their own community
- Facilitated space to share information
- Adjusted techniques to support student needs
- Created meaningful connections

Coaching on Learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

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<th>Competence</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
<th>Relatedness</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
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<tr>
<td>Improved confidence in decision making</td>
<td>Increased confidence in ability to thrive in new environments</td>
<td>Related through mutual respect</td>
<td>Facilitated growth in social skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bonded through mutual respect</td>
<td>Identified a common thread that created trusting relationships</td>
<td>Created their own community</td>
<td>Enhanced student need for academic encouragement</td>
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Research questions

RQ 1: What happens to students' self-determination across the Self-Determination for College Success (SDCS) innovation?

RQ 2: What are students' perceptions of the social benefits and drawbacks to innovation participation?

Limitations

- Student engagement with DRC
- Spring implementation of the study
Implications for Practice & Research

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<td>DHS and Campus Wide</td>
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<td>R1</td>
<td>Year-long Implementation</td>
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<td>AHEAD &amp; Coaching Community</td>
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<td>steps = SDCS</td>
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<td>R3</td>
<td>Bridging from HS to College</td>
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Future Conversations

- How can we improve collaboration with transition counselors and disability professionals?
- How can we empower disability professionals and administrators to continue discussions that support student retention and access to campus resources?

Questions??

Thank you for your time today. I invite any questions and/or comments you may have about my study.
References


