

A REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION? MEANINGFUL ACCESS? FOR WHOM? A CRITIQUE OF ACCOMMODATION APPROACHES IN CANADIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Institutional practices related to providing academic accommodations and access have long been ableist and bureaucratic and remain that way. This paper will focus on these practices in the post-secondary education context. The central question of this paper is: What do meaningful access and reasonable accommodation mean to post-secondary students with disabilities? Proceeding from the premise that students with disabilities do not currently define meaningful access and reasonable accommodations, this paper will argue that accommodations and access as defined within policy are not adequately serving the needs of post-secondary students with disabilities. This paper then highlights the definitions of meaningful access and reasonable accommodations provided by eight students who participated in a recent study. Finally, this paper will highlight the negative and positive encounters with accommodations experienced by many post-secondary students in the province of Ontario who follow the Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities (2018) as a policy that guides educational practices.

BACKGROUND

The Policy on Accessible Education for Students with disabilities (2018) in Ontario, Canada, includes meaningful access and reasonable accommodation. These two terms are situated in a bureaucratic way. This policy implies that institutions are to provide meaningful access to education for students with disabilities to the point of undue hardship. The point of undue hardship shows that meaningful access as a practice and as a term within the policy is politicized. According to the Policy on Accessible Education for Students with disabilities (2018), “the code prescribes three considerations when assessing whether an accommodation would cause undue hardship. [these include] cost, outside funding resources, if any, health and safety requirements, if any” (The Ontario Human Rights Code, 2018, p. 84). The central question of this paper is: What do meaningful access and reasonable accommodation mean to post-secondary students with disabilities?

This paper will discuss how reasonable accommodations and meaningful access as terms included within the policy and institutional practices are bureaucratic and how their current definitions and implementation do not meet the needs of post-secondary students with disabilities and instead place more barriers. This discussion will be illustrated by mapping out definitions of meaningful access and reasonable accommodation highlighted by Dolmage (2017), Titchkosky (2011), Ahmad et al., (2019), and Steele and Nind (2009). Another crucial step that has been taken in this paper is including interviews with post-secondary students with disabilities who participated in the study discussed in this paper. Before mapping out the definitions through the authors and including the students' definitions, this paper will define bureaucracy to set the stage and make later implications about reasonable accommodations and meaningful access. Finally, this paper will highlight the negative and positive encounters with accommodations experienced by many post-secondary students in Ontario.

“Meaningful access” and “reasonable accommodation” were first encountered during the first stage of a research project at the University of Timothy’s. This project was entitled *Disability Studies: What is Going on?* In this project, searches were conducted through the websites of various

departments at the University of Timothy's to find policies related to accommodations, mental health, and health and safety. This project aimed to locate where disability is mentioned on the University of Timothy's website and, if so, how. Finally, how do federal and or provincial policies influence the university's policies? During this time, it was discovered that in these policies, disability is either absent or its existence is medicalized. One of the policies reviewed is a provincial policy in Ontario known as the *Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities (2018)*. The terms "meaningful access" and "reasonable accommodations" were included in this policy. After carefully examining these terms, it was concluded that there is a disconnect between the implied intentions of this policy and the reality experienced by students with disabilities and the meaning embedded within statements within the policy. This discovery began a two-year-long study that questioned: "What do meaningful access and reasonable accommodation mean to post-secondary students with disabilities?" As the examination of the policy was in progress, it resulted in skepticism and what Rankin (2017) refers to as a moment of "disquiet" (Rankin, 2017, p.4). Through this statement, the study moved to its second stage of research, which involved reviewing the literature to locate scholars to trace current conversations about disability and accommodation policy. The third stage in the study was to interview nine university students with disabilities to find out how they define meaningful access and reasonable accommodations and, in doing so, discuss their experiences of the accommodation process. The plan for this project was to recruit nine students, three students per participating campus.

A Note about Terminologies

Throughout this paper, various ways of framing disability will be used. "Students with disabilities" refers to those who prefer to reference their role first as part of their identity. This means these individuals prefer focusing on themselves as students rather than highlighting their disability. "Disabled students" refers to those who view their disability as an identity. The phrase "students with D/disabilities" is used to reference those who sometimes refer to their disability as an identity and other times as a label. Based on engagement in Disability Studies through formal and informal discussions with other accommodation recipients, it is vital to note that accessing accommodations is not barrier-free or "a walk in the park process." This paper aims to illustrate this through the literature and data collected in this study. In the latter part of this paper, particularly in the methodology section, words such as phase and stage will be mentioned. Stage refers to the significant step in the research, and phase refers to a sub-stage within that stage. For instance, the recruitment stage involved two phases. Phase one was sending emails to various departments through which students were found and recruited. The second phase in the recruitment stage was to obtain consent from the research participants to begin interviewing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As previously stated, meaningful access and reasonable accommodation are terms that label institutional practices that are bureaucratic and not defined by the students whom these practices are meant to serve. According to Walker (2012),

[the purpose of the Canadian Human Rights Act] includes the principle that all individuals should have opportunities equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated...without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices (Walker, 2012, p.2).

Furthermore, Slee (2018) writes about inclusive education by saying, "Inclusive education isn't dead; it just smells funny" (Slee, 2018, p.1). This fundamental statement emphasizes the persistent issues of inclusive education despite its existence. Titchkosky (2011) defines bureaucracy as

a rationalized form of power accomplished and enforced through procedural requirements seemingly impervious to the particularity of unique or individual desires. Thus, a bureaucratic structure governs itself and others by using established protocols and procedures – these are usually put into text as rules and regulations implemented by an office in a supposedly predictable fashion (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 8).

Titchkosky (2011) contextualizes bureaucracy within higher education by outlining the accommodation process. The author explains that this process “aims to regularize the management of all members of an organization” (Titchkosky, 2011, p.8). The accommodation process involves the institution facilitating “rule-guided procedures” (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 8). When examining Walker’s (2012) points, Titchkosky (2011) exposes the harmful policy-led practices. Furthermore, Copfer Terreberry (2017) comments on the bureaucracy of access to accommodations by citing Wolsworth (2012), who states, “ Most institutions require students to submit formal documentation of their disability from qualified professionals and disability specialists prior to consideration of various accommodations and supports” (Copfer Terreberry, 2017, p. 10). Dolmage (2017) writes about providing accommodations within higher education, particularly within American higher education. Though Dolmage writes about American policy, his work was still relevant to this study, given some overlaps in the Canadian and American education systems regarding students with disabilities and how they are accommodated within academia. Dolmage (2017) illustrates the definition of bureaucracy outlined by Titchkosky (2011) by explaining that

The “reason” of the medical and legal establishment, then, finally decides upon which accommodations are to be made. What this means in practice is that, in higher education, we witness a large industry of lawyers and HR managers, and administrators paid to determine what exactly can be gotten away with under the rubric of “undue hardship” or the “undue burden” of accommodations (Dolmage, 2017, p. 77).

Similar to reasonable accommodation, meaningful access is also a bureaucratic process. According to Seale and Nind (2009), “access also captures elements of entitlement” (Seale & Nind, 2009, p. 5). (Ahmed et al., 2019) Comment on educational practices in a global context and, in doing so, shed light on the bureaucracy involved in providing meaningful access to education. Where Seale and Nind (2009) discuss the bureaucracy of access to education, Ahmed et al. (2019) comment on the importance of access to education and how it is not currently facilitated, thus making it bureaucratic. Ahmed et al. (2019) highlight that “access to quality education cannot be limited to urban or wealthy students. All students should not only have access to secondary education, their opportunity to learn and achieve success should be equitably distributed” (Ahmed, 2019, et al. p. 557).

Seale and Nind (2009) discuss an element of control and gatekeeping of accommodations and resources within academic institutions, commenting, “access captures elements of entitlement” (Seale & Nind, 2009, p. 5). Speaking against bureaucracy, these authors provide insight into what education should look like. They continue by saying, “Not only must they want it, but they should have it too” (Seale & Nind, 2009, p. 5).

Like Seale and Nind (2009), Ahmed et al. (2019) discuss access to education and the importance of equitable access. Though they speak of it in a secondary education context, their definition was still significant to this study. Ahmed et al. (2019) expose that access to education is currently only given to certain people. Moreover, the quality of education is given based on how wealthy someone is and if someone lives in an urban area because it is assumed that people in urban areas are wealthier than those in rural areas.

It is also assumed that wealth or lack thereof determines meaningful access to education and success in educational pursuits. The authors are against that practice and argue that access should be given to all and distributed equitably. The study's findings will illustrate how access and accommodations are to be distributed equitably and how students' needs should be approached individually.

According to Ahmed et al. (2019), access is “the politicization of who gets what” (Ahmed et al., 2019, p.557). Regarding this study, Seale and Nind (2009) confront that reality and conclude that access for students with disabilities is not easily granted as policy implies. Instead, it is bureaucratic. Understanding this politicization and contextualizing the words of Seale et al. (2009) lead to questioning the true intentions of policy and who policy favours. To understand policy and institutional intentions clearly, this research has taken a critical step toward understanding the negative and positive impacts of current accommodation practices within the University of Timothy’s on students with disabilities pursuing their education.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

During the fourth stage of this study, online interviews were conducted with students with disabilities/D/disabled students at the University of Timothy’s. These interviews were conducted through the Zoom Conferencing Platform, given that this study took place during the global pandemic. Restrictions were placed on in-person interactions.

Research Criteria

Students in this study are accommodation recipients registered with the Accessibility Services Office. The only requirement for participation in this study was that students must have one year or more experience receiving accommodations. This allows students to provide in-depth responses to the interview questions. This study is framed on the belief that to advocate for policy change involving accommodations for students with disabilities, their voices and opinions must be the center of this change process. The guiding principle in this argument is a statement that has been used as a slogan in several movements throughout history. Charlton (1993) “Nothing about us without us” (Charlton, 1993, p.3). One of the key takeaways from the participants in this master’s research project is that access and accommodations are interconnected.

Data Collection and Analysis

This research has centred on the experiences of post-secondary students with disabilities based on the belief that they “lead storied lives” (Clandinin & Connelley, 1990, p. 2). As Bynes (2017) writes, one quality that sets Narrative Inquiry apart from other methodologies is that it relies on “meaning making” (Bynes, 2017, p. 49). This allows the researcher to make meaning and draw conclusions from ordinary conversations. These conversations can be scattered and unorganized, but Narrative Inquiry allows for organizing the discussions, making them whole. This approach was applied in this study, where individual questions were asked during the interviews, which were then used to write complete narratives. After careful examination, Narrative Inquiry was selected as a methodology for this study, given that it focuses on individuals “living storied lives” (Clandinin & Connelley, 1990, p. 44). This methodology enables the researcher to analyze the data as it is told and make it into a story. Another reason that Narrative Inquiry (Clandinin & Connelley, 1990) was chosen for this study is because it enabled the researcher to center and narrate the experiences of the participants involved. This methodology contributed to this research project because it included restorying (Thomas, 2016) as a method of analysis under the umbrella of Narrative Inquiry.

The data collected during interviews were analyzed using Thomas's (2016) restorying to highlight participants' experiences within academia and discuss their experiences when accessing accommodations. Some of the highlighted narratives were policy-related, which supported the writing of a policy narrative. Moreover, using restorying (Thomas, 2016), data analysis began by retelling the overall education experience of participants, which led to selecting parts of their responses that could influence policy, which supported the writing of a policy narrative.

Recruitment

The third stage of the study began with recruiting participants in June 2022. This process involved composing a list of on-campus organizations and advocacy groups that existed to advocate for the rights to accessibility for students with disabilities at the University of Timothy's. Examples include The Center for Global Disability Studies, Student Barrier-Free Access, and several student groups within academic departments. After composing the contact list, emails with the recruitment flyer and a written invitation were written while compiling the various pieces for the ethics application. After the email was sent, participants began to express interest. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the study sought to recruit nine students for this study, three students per participating campus. The final number of participants was eight selected students due to the time constraints of one month to complete data collection and move forward to analysis.

Consent

The second recruitment phase was to obtain consent from students interested in participating in the study. Some participants preferred to provide consent through written means, while others preferred verbal consent. The verbal consent process involved reading the study description and terms and conditions of participation and verbally confirming that consent was given before proceeding. Verbal consent was tracked using a chart that included the student's name and the interview date, noting that the form of consent was verbal. With the written consent process, electronic forms were created and sent through DocuSign, allowing participants to provide electronic signatures that were then delivered electronically. This approach was taken given the circumstances of the global pandemic (Covid-19) that impacted this entire study, including the recruitment phase and continued to impact especially the lives of people with disabilities, Disabled people, disabled people/ D/disabled people, which resulted in interviews being conducted virtually.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES WITH ACCOMMODATIONS

At the beginning of the interview, Christine experienced difficulties recalling helpful accommodations, given that Christine was among "the least consulted" (Simon, 2022, 0:09-0:10). After some guidance, Christine mentioned having an FM system as an assistive device that she gave her professors to wear so she could hear them during lectures. Other helpful accommodations included note-takers and exam accommodations, extra time on tests and exams, and a laptop to take notes.

Similarly to Christine, Sarah mentioned positive experiences with accessing accommodations and what accommodations were helpful. Extensions on assignments are a helpful accommodation as they allow work to be completed and for Sarah to demonstrate learning like Christine and Sarah. Martin found examination accommodations helpful. One unique accommodation Martin was given during tests and examinations was permission to bring "his favourite picture" to keep calm. Another response to the helpful accommodation question that was found significant to this study was one provided by Elvis, who called sound-cancelling headphones and an ADHD coach a "breath of

fresh air.” Andrea discussed having extra time on tests and examinations and a quiet writing space. Andrea’s impressions, particularly in college, were, “I say jump, they say how high?” The discussion with Ana also focused on accommodations similar to those mentioned by the other participants. The conversation with Ana, a Ph.D. student, was particularly unique. A unique accommodation Ana mentioned was being permitted to be late. Ana’s words were thought-provoking, highlighting, “It was suddenly okay for me to be late because it was written on my accommodation form.” This then led to the final two discussions that covered helpful accommodations. First, the question, “Tell me about an experience where the accommodations you were given were helpful,” was posed to Jasmine. Her helpful accommodations were also the general accommodations, such as extra time and extensions. Finally, in this research, Jackie outlined her helpful accommodations. Aside from mentioning the standard accommodations of the previous participants above, Jackie stated that all the accommodations in higher education were helpful. It was only the lack of accommodations during the early school years resulted in her dropping out of high school.

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES WITH ACCOMMODATIONS

Christine was asked to discuss negative experiences with accommodations. However, her response was surprisingly positive, although what was being discussed was a negative experience. Christine explained that accessing accommodations was easier after the pandemic that began in March 2020. Before the pandemic, the only issues that Christine had with accommodations were having to remind professors to turn on captions for digital content, such as in-class videos and having to show professors and teaching assistants how to turn the FM system on and off multiple times, having to look for tutors and only given the funding without guidance on how to manage it. One of her negative experiences was with examination. Christine talked about being infected with Covid-19, which caused a delay in being able to complete her examination. After Christine recovered, she was notified by her professor and the Accessibility Advisor that she could take the examination by typing on a computer. The professor and advisor asked Christine to provide a signed doctor’s note to access this accommodation. This process involved going to the family practitioner when it was challenging to be seen by a doctor. Christine mentioned getting a doctor’s note and giving it to the Accessibility Advisor, yet she was still expected to work on the examination by free handwriting.

Although extensions on assignments are commonly found helpful by post-secondary students with disabilities as a requested accommodation, they can cause inconvenience to the students when students have to request an extension each time it is required. Like Christine, Sarah shared that this was an inconvenient practice applied by higher education institutions. Sarah struggled to complete her work during the pandemic and was required to constantly ask for extensions because the work was not completed by the expected deadline. This added task created more barriers. Like Sarah, Elvis also commented on adding tasks to access an accommodation. He recalled an experience in a course where the professor changed frequently. Elvis had to disclose and explain his accommodation to a new person every time. Jackie outlined an experience with an accommodation that was needed. However, the institution gave this accommodation based on what was found convenient for them, when Jackie requested to work on an examination in a quiet space and was instead put in a room with other accommodation recipients.

Andrea’s experience of unhelpful accommodation was a significant one. Andrea talked about asking to record lectures in graduate school, and the request was denied. Instead, she was offered either a note-taker or the option of meeting with professors during office hours to review lecture material. Andrea did not find this helpful as an auditory learner. As a doctoral student, Ana’s

case is unique, and the standard accommodations were inadequate for this level of education. Where the others commented on a specific accommodation that was unhelpful to them, Ana made a significant point about the lack of awareness and understanding amongst professors about why an accommodation is needed. Lastly, Martin talked about having difficulty with a specific assignment and not having all the materials required to complete this assignment, in addition to confronting the situation of undergoing surgery. During this critical period, Martin needed support from the professor in the form of a concrete example of the assignment completed in previous years. Instead, like Andrea and Jackie's experiences, Martin was given an alternative option of meeting with the professor virtually to discuss the assignment. This was inconvenient because Martin was recovering from surgery and unable to attend this meeting, even virtually. Finally, Jasmine's experience was another significant experience to draw on in this research. Jasmine talked about requesting to change a classroom for a course, given that it was located far from the main campus, and due to Jasmine's medical condition, this location was inconvenient. This request was denied, claiming this was a difficult change. Furthermore, the approach in which the Accessibility Office responded was deeply ableist, stating that Jasmine may "just be too tired and should slow down when making her way to the classroom location, or could also miss class if needed."

HOW DO STUDENTS DEFINE MEANINGFUL ACCESS AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION?

According to Simon (2022), "Students and teachers are the most impacted by policy and curriculum, but ironically, they're the least consulted" (Simon, 2022, 0:05-0:10). This study has taken Simon's words into perspective to address this issue in seeking the input of students on meaningful access and reasonable accommodations. As mentioned earlier, this research aims to critique and think critically about how accommodations and access are facilitated and deemed meaningful and reasonable, yet they are highly bureaucratic. Throughout the interview with Christine, some responses elicited how meaningful access and reasonable accommodation are bureaucratic. According to Christine,

Meaningful access means just me being able to do my work. I do all my assignments and participate in class without worrying about whether I will get my accommodations.

Christine was also asked to discuss what a reasonable accommodation means. According to Christine,

A reasonable accommodation is dictated and given by the Accessibility Services, who asks the student, "Is this the accommodation you need?"

In Christine's definition of meaningful access, examples were given to illustrate how the accommodation process was bureaucratic and was immensely influenced by policy. It delivered the message that it is critical to continue to critique current policy and move beyond bureaucracy in institutional practices involving the provision of accommodations and meaningful access to education. Sarah also defined a reasonable accommodation as,

an accommodation that is individualized based on the person's individual needs.

Sarah's response to what reasonable accommodation means to her follows a pattern similar to Catherine's response of communicating the importance of individualism. What was found distinct in the first two participants is, in Christine's definition of reasonable accommodation, there is more focus on the accommodation that enables the student to reach their potential. Christine also more directly points to the current accommodation model being one that causes the students to be uncertain whether their needs will be met through the accommodations they are provided. This current model takes away from the student learning given that they have to navigate the logistics of seeking accommodations that continue to be bureaucratic and limited. Sarah's definition

of meaningful access was thought-provoking and again follows the pattern of individualism that Christine's definition discussed. Another aspect that Sarah's definition highlights is the importance of consulting the student to ensure that it is "individualized based on the person's individual needs."

Sarah defines meaningful access as,

Something that enables a disabled person to make something a part of their lives sustainably.

By highlighting sustainability as a significant component of meaningful access, Sarah provides essential recommendations for policymakers. Through such a component, policymakers are called to action to make changes to the current system, given that it does not allow for learning to be made part of a disabled person's life sustainably.

Martin, a history major at the University of Timothy's, was interviewed following the same pattern as the two previous interviews, beginning with the interviewees' and interviewer's introductions to achieve familiarity and gain entrance into one's world as per Narrative Inquiry. After discussing helpful and unhelpful accommodations, Martin discussed what meaningful access and reasonable accommodation mean to him. According to Martin, a reasonable accommodation is,

What adjustments can be made to keep the integrity of the academic standards but allow the student to participate in the course in a way that does not compromise their health?

The definition of reasonable accommodation provided by Martin aligns with the previous definitions provided by Christine and Sarah. All the definitions highlight the importance of individualized accommodation, which enables the student to learn and thrive, and Martin adds another vital component to a reasonable accommodation. He points out that "a reasonable accommodation "does not compromise a student's health."

From participants' responses, this paper also aims to show that reasonable accommodations and meaningful access are interconnected, which means one leads to the other. With this in mind, this research now highlights Martin's definition of meaningful access. Martin defines meaningful access as

being given the tools and flexibility to provide meaningful work/participation in courses that can be adjusted to a student's difficulties. Meaningful access to me means feeling welcomed and included in the classroom and when I am made to feel that I have the same potential as everyone else.

The next interview was with Elvis, who followed a pattern similar to the earlier participants. According to Elvis, a reasonable accommodation is,

Walking into an academic institution and expressing the desire to be a student and the institution makes it possible by providing you with what you need and removing barriers.

As stated earlier in this section, reasonable accommodation and meaningful access are interconnected. When and if students are provided with the accommodation they need, they will achieve meaningful access to their education. This research continues to explore this as Elvis outlines what meaningful access means to them. According to Elvis, meaningful access is,

When the provision of accommodations is unquestionable because the institution should already be prepared and use a universal design approach.

Another definition that was vital and returns to the importance of treating accommodations as individual to each student is a definition provided by Andrea, who states that,

A reasonable accommodation depends on each individual circumstance.

As Andrea began to define meaningful access, the beginning of that response led to reflection on Simon (2022), who notes that "students and teachers are the most impacted by policy and curriculum, but ironically they're the least consulted."(Simon, 2022, 0:05-0:10). When Andrea was asked what meaningful access means to her, she expressed that such a question was complicated

and asked if she could return to this question later in the interview. This illustrates how Andrea was amongst the least consulted. Such a question was difficult for her because when she was consulted, it must be a new occurrence. After stating that she has never heard of the term meaningful access, Andrea defines meaningful access as,

When I am being given what I need.

Ana's interview was unique and highlighted the importance of being attentive to the standardization of accommodations and how they can be narrow and inadequate in meeting the needs of students pursuing doctoral degree programs with very different requirements. According to Ana,

A reasonable accommodation is letting the student define their academic experience on their own. A reasonable accommodation is less about setting up the student to perform and more about setting the student up to learn.

In line with reasonable accommodation, Ana defines meaningful access as,

Being able to succeed in an academic setting without personal harm or sacrifice being required.

The final interviewees who provided their insight on the meaning of meaningful access and reasonable accommodation were Jasmine and Jackie. According to Jasmine, reasonable accommodations

Are ones that both meet the student's needs and academic requirements.

Jasmine defined meaningful access as

Access that allows you to be successful and not go through hardship to ask for an accommodation multiple times.

Finally, Jackie's definition of reasonable accommodation was found significant in this study and one that policymakers and those working to provide students with accommodations must remember. Jackie defined a reasonable accommodation as,

An accommodation that I need and not what the institution has to offer me.

When Jackie was asked how she defined meaningful access, Jackie responded that meaningful access was,

Access that works for me, not what their vision of access is.

As this section has shown, the way meaningful access and reasonable accommodations are currently defined needs to align with the needs of individual students. These terms need to be officially defined by policy and to be determined under the point of undue hardship.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

In this paper, bureaucratic definitions of meaningful access and reasonable accommodation were outlined, as well as what these terms mean to students and the positive and negative encounters students had with accommodations. One of the messages that arose was that more work needs to be done to achieve the fundamental goals of meaningful access and reasonable accommodation. This paper showed that current definitions of meaningful access and reasonable accommodations do not meet the needs of students with disabilities. Therefore, when viewing the current definitions of these terms, one must ask whom these definitions are serving. Concluding this study with the realization that more work is needed means that this has elicited implications for educators, administrators, and policymakers. How meaningful access and reasonable accommodations are defined is bureaucratic, and such definitions do not take in the perspectives of students with disabilities. In this study, students focused mainly on the role of educators within the classroom. Educators need to prioritize checking in with students to determine what students need and how their experiences and learning

can translate to more meaningful ones within the classroom. In doing so, students' experiences will become more favourable within the classroom and the institution. Moreover, it must be noted that current definitions of meaningful access and reasonable accommodations serve the institution by taking power over students, controlling what accommodations they have access to, and determining the quality of education these students receive. Bureaucracy leads to an education they often do not deem as meaningful. To shift away from bureaucracy, educators and those involved in providing accommodations must attend to students' voices to ensure that students receive individualized accommodations.

DISCUSSION

The discussions in this paper include several vital points, including the discussion on equitable access. Throughout scholarship in disability studies, it can be argued that people mix equity and equality and either interpret them the same way or use them interchangeably. Titchkosky (2011) defines access in a way that has helped make sense of what participants have said about accommodations and access being connected because accommodations lead to access. "Access, in this sense, is an interpretive relation between bodies. In this conception, we can explore how people wonder about and act within social space and discover how we are enmeshed in the activity of making people and places meaningful to one another" (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 20). The unfortunate reality is that society is constructed based on what Mingus (2010) calls the myth of independence. Mingus outlines her perception of independence and how it is a myth.

It is from being disabled that I have learned about the dangerous and privileged "myth of independence" and embraced the power of interdependence. The myth of independence is that somehow, we can and should be able to do everything on our own without any help from anyone. This requires such a high level of privilege; even then, it is still a myth. Whose oppression and exploitation must exist for your independence (Mingus, 2010).

Here, Mingus addresses the myth of independence by pointing out that there is no such thing as a fully independent person. Mingus (2010) also highlights the neoliberal thinking held by society that believes that independence is only a level achieved by those with "high-level privilege." To contextualize this with the practice of meaningful access to education, the two points made by Mingus (2010) are that the reason that people with disabilities/D/disabled people are currently not consistently achieving meaningful access to education is not because of their disability or inability to succeed, it is because of this misconception that leads to the belief that people with disabilities/ D/ disabled people are not able to achieve meaningful access to education due to disability. Because of this inequity and what Mingus (2010) calls a "high level of privilege" as being "able," there are still limitations and disabled people must rely on something or someone. The participants' experiences in this research illustrate the findings of authors such as Dolmage (2017) and Titchkosky (2011), explaining the complexity of access and accommodation practices within higher education. These participants experience the bureaucracy Dolmage (2017) and Titchkosky (2011) discussed on the ground.

CONCLUSION

As this paper has shown, it is crucial to be critical when stating that post-secondary institutions are providing access to education that is meaningful and reasonable accommodations. As demonstrated through literature and the interviews, reasonable accommodations and meaningful access are not currently defined by the students receiving reasonable accommodations and meaningful access. The literature outlined in this paper has shown that meaningful access and reasonable accommodation are bureaucratized practices where the institution acts as the gatekeeper

and controls the provision of accommodations that a “specific” office provides. Drawing from the data collected, this paper has argued that post-secondary institutions need to include students’ perspectives when determining what is a reasonable accommodation and what makes meaningful access. This paper has concluded that current approaches to providing reasonable accommodations and meaningful access are inadequate because they do not take in the perspectives of students with disabilities, and, more importantly, the current policy is doing the opposite of what it implies it is doing.

Therefore, institutions need to change their current practices and create more student-oriented practices to establish reasonable accommodations deemed reasonable by students with disabilities and create an environment that fosters meaningful access to education and meaningful learning. This research has concluded that policy should be rewritten to include student perspectives on meaningful access and reasonable accommodations so that they will be the ones to define these terms. When this happens, policy will be accurate. In closing, it is vital to note two critical points; one is the point that this paper began with, which was that before jumping to conclusions that the statements made in policy about meaningful access and reasonable accommodation are favourable terms, it is necessary to think critically and view the practices that are coming out of them. In conclusion, Rankin (2017) guides the essential critical thinking by further noting “you need to get from “contradictions,” “tensions,” or “unease ” – to interrogating what is going on. You need to train yourself to see how informants’ everyday life is being organized through an institution’s ruling practices” (Rankin, 2017, p. 4 & 5).

These words by Rankin (2017) are robust and deliver a strong message. The author reiterates the main point in this paper that there is a need to take a step back and think about the meaning of words and, in this case, policy statements and true intentions before concluding that they are positive based on the claims of policy officials and those abiding by policy. It is necessary to be careful before believing that meaningful access and reasonable accommodations are positive practices. As noted in this paper, getting meaningful access to education and reasonable accommodation is “not a walk in the park.” These practices are bureaucratized and monitored by gatekeepers within institutions such as higher education institutions. One can argue that Rankin (2017) provides a formula for success that needs to be implemented by educators, policymakers, advocates, and even students who can apply this critical thinking before concluding that all policies have good intentions and serve the needs of “all” citizens. It is vital to be aware of the fact that students with disabilities are amongst the most historically marginalized people within society as a whole and within the education system. A question policymakers and educators need to consider is: What can we do better, and how can we build a better education system for students with disabilities in the future? In seeking to respond to this question, policymakers and educators working in education institutions need to step outside their roles’ hierarchical and discriminatory demands and restructure their roles to enable them to take in the perspectives of the students whom they serve.

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