

LIVED EXPERIENCES AND CONCERNS OF INDIVIDUALIZED DEGREE STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, CURRICULUM, AND PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

For half a century, the fundamental attraction of an individualized degree was that it offered learners the opportunity to assume responsibility and authority over their own educational journey. Over the years, the highly sought-after degree has shown, among others, that when learners assume this increased level of agency over their degree, they are building confidence in becoming self-directed learners and in taking leadership over their learning. Furthermore, having increased agency over their educational journey is shown to give learners a sense of well-being and accomplishment that they would not be able to get from following a pre-determined educational pathway.

However, some learners in this major have for years expressed concerns about how their individualized degree would be externally perceived: would it be insufficiently valued, or perceived as inferior by employers, compared to how a traditional degree might be valued or perceived? Hence, the current study sheds light on the perceived value of the individualized degree. To gain a wholistic understanding of the experiences of current students and alumni, the current study covered a host of variables, including employers' perceived value of the individualized degree, degree and employability, societal perceived value of the individualized degree, and alumni overall satisfaction with their individualized degree. Data were obtained from 158 current students and 281 alumni of the major. The findings of this research hold significant implications for curriculum development, pedagogy, recruitment, and other policies.

Keywords: *Individualized, degree, perceived, concerns, employability.*
