

Analysing the experiences of undergraduate physiotherapy students transitioning from conventional to e-learning: A phenomenological study

Laura Eccott¹, Andrea Moulson¹, Dr. Karen Atkinson¹, Dr. Salvatore Livatino², Dr. Jeremy Lewis³ & Ass. Prof. Mindy Cairns¹

¹School of Health and Social Work, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, UK
²School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, UK
³Clinical Therapies, University of Limerick, Ireland/School of Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, UK

BACKGROUND

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted the delivery of learning and teaching with an unexpected and rapid transition to online learning (e-learning) (Department for Education, 2021)

Existing international research has reported negative effects on student learning, particularly for practical skill application (Ng et al., 2021)

E-learning is likely to continue to be integrated in UK physiotherapy education (Chartered Society Physiotherapy, 2022). There needs to be understanding of the potential impact of this

PURPOSE

To explore the experiences of physiotherapy students who transitioned from in-person education to increased e-learning

METHODS

Two online, semi-structured focus groups were conducted in March 2022

Recruitment used teaching sessions and the programme information website to advertise the focus groups

Analysis was Reflexive thematic (Braun & Clarke, 2022) using NVivo 12 (QSR International, 2020)

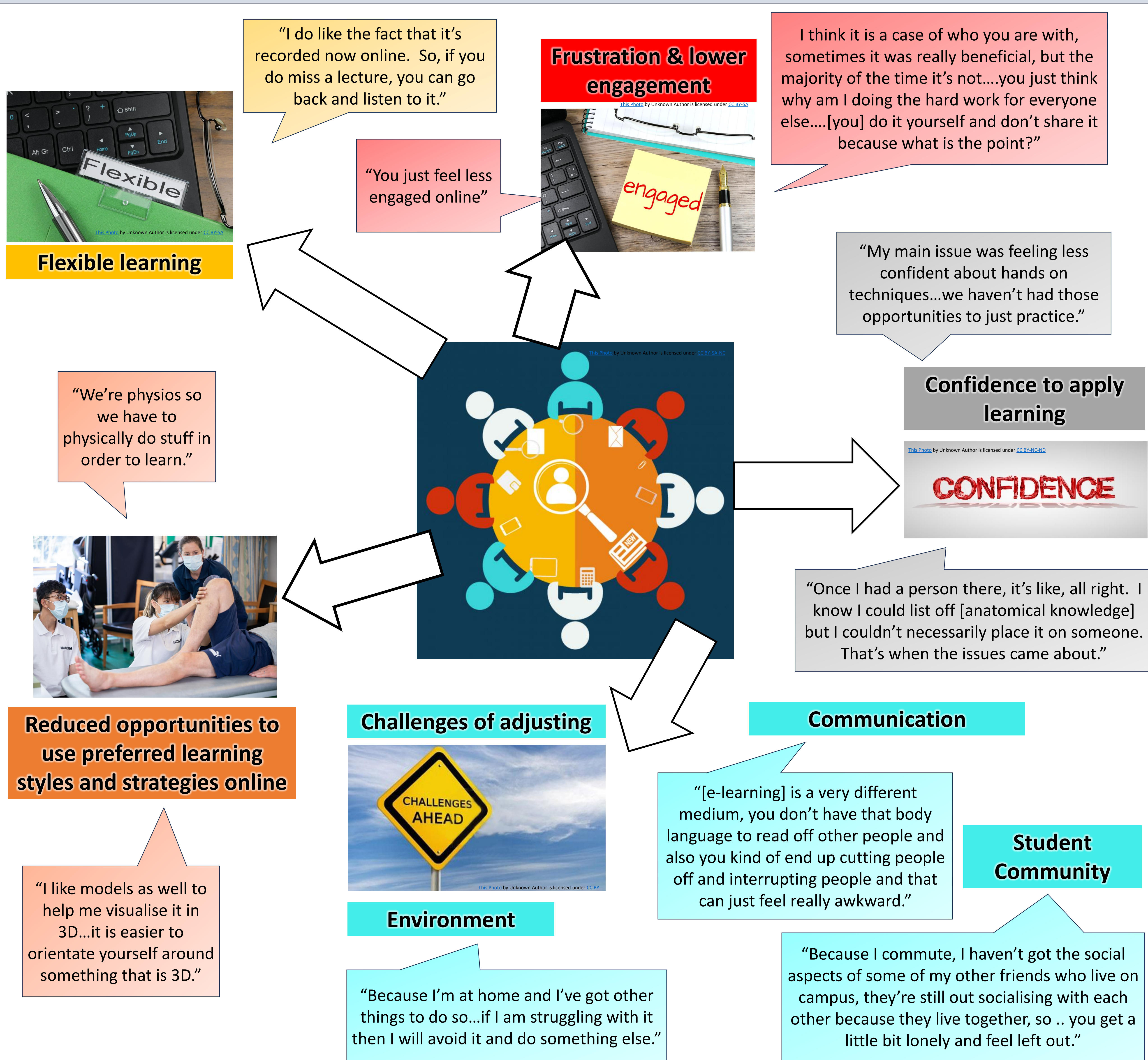
Ethical approval was gained from the University of Hertfordshire: HSK/SF/UH/04705

CONTACT DETAILS: l.eccott2@herts.ac.uk

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Physiotherapy students find e-learning challenging, these challenges negatively impact on students' confidence to apply their knowledge and skills in clinical practice



DISCUSSION

All students felt low levels of confidence in their ability to apply skills, and to a lesser extent their knowledge from e-learning

Anatomy was more challenging to learn and apply compared to when it was taught in-person. This may be because fewer kinaesthetic learning activities were available

Students felt less engaged but, were also frustrated with their peer's reduced engagement

Future cohorts will not need to adjust their learning as e-learning will likely continue

IMPLICATIONS

Physiotherapy programmes need to develop engaging, innovative, and creative online teaching activities that include kinaesthetic learning

E-learning activities must support students to build confidence to transfer knowledge and skills to their patients

Future research on how technology could be integrated into e-learning to enhance the student experience and provide kinaesthetic activities would be of value, particularly for learning anatomy

REFERENCES

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage

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Ng, L., Seow, K. C., MacDonald, L. et al. (2021). eLearning in physical therapy: Lessons learned from transitioning a professional education program to full eLearning during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Physical Therapy*, 101(4) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ptj/pzab082>

QSR International Pty Ltd. (2020) NVivo (released in March 2020), [LINK](#)