My Story: A Found Poem Reflecting the Voice of Women Studying in Open Education Programs in Turkey

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Our work builds on the project My Story (Bozkurt & Büyük, 2018), which explored the experiences of students enrolled in Anadolu University Open Education Faculty programs. In the project, students were asked to share their stories leading to open and distance learning (ODL) via an online survey. 2700 stories were collected from students studying in higher education programs from a distance. Out of these stories, 70 stories that could inspire other students were curated in an edited book (2018). These narratives demonstrate that, given the right conditions, ODL can be an agent for social justice, as it has the power to break down barriers to education and, consequently, democratize societies.

In this work, we highlight the voices of 16 women in the edited book using found poetry (Patrick, 2016; Prendergast, 2006) as a methodological and pedagogical tool. The approach is useful to show common threads in the narratives, in particular, the oppression of women in traditional and patriarchal communities. The women in the selected stories have had remarkably similar experiences in their struggle for education, characterized by a never-ending fight for education, strong desire for equal opportunity, and dedication to study amongst childcare, housekeeping and other domestic duties. As the audience hear the struggles and aspirations of the women in their journey to education, what lessons can be drawn for ODL in general, what connections can be made with women in other contexts, and what actions can be taken globally in open education to help women in their shared struggles?

Session content

Alternative short format – digital storytelling

The session will begin with a brief introduction to the project. We will then play a found poem online. Participants will view direct quotes on screen with a voice over. We will also provide a handout for participants with the poem and more information on the project and methodology. A Twitter hashtag will elicit participant reactions to the constructed poem together with questions and comments.

References

