

E-Learning vs. Traditional Teaching Methods

Chris Blackmore

Sheffield University, UK

Emmy van Deurzen

Sheffield University, UK

Digby Tantam

Sheffield University, UK

INTRODUCTION

We have conducted a series of action research projects on elearning in recent years, funded by grants from the European Commission. The SEPT project (Tantam, 2001) showed that access to psychotherapy for those who are in most need is restricted in many European countries. Accessibility factors played a part in this, and the SEPTIMUS project was designed to widen accessibility to psychotherapy by increasing access to training for students who live in geographically isolated areas, who have family/work commitments or who have a disability. SEPTIMUS is a 1-year psychotherapy training program blending theoretical instruction and tutoring delivered by elearning methods with supervision, therapy and practical experience delivered face to face and local to one of the 16 participating training centers, located in one of eight European countries. The project was coordinated from the United Kingdom (UK), and the training program was available to students in Austria, Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania and UK. The impact of the training was evaluation by means of student self-assessments, participation, time spent on-site, tutor-marked assignments, tutor feedback, supervisor reports and student feedback. One hundred fifty-six students have completed the course, and we recruited an additional 61 students taking comparable but traditional face-to-face courses in three of our participating training institutes to act as educational controls. In this article, we present the results of a comparison between the elearning students and these educational controls.

BACKGROUND

There is increasing evidence to show that cognitive measures such as performance, learning and achievement

in eLearning classes compare favorably with those applied to traditional “face-to-face” classes (Carr, 2000; Russell, 1999; Schoech, 2000; Sonner, 1999; Spooner, Jordan, Algozzine, & Spooner, 1999). Distance students seem to learn as much as students receiving traditional face-to-face instruction so long as three conditions are met:

- the method and technologies used are appropriate to the instructional tasks
- there is student-to-student interaction
- there is regular and appropriate tutor-to-student feedback. (Moore & Thompson, Quigley, Clark, & Goff, 1990)

Woodford, Rokutani, Gressard and Berg (2001) state that achievement on various tests administered by course tutors tends to be higher for distant as opposed to traditional students (Sounder, 1993). However, traditional teaching is usually perceived as being better organized and more clearly presented than distance education (Egan, Sebastian, & Welch, 1991). Paradoxically, the organization and reflection needed to effectively teach at a distance often improves an instructor’s traditional teaching (Woodford et al., 2001).

The findings with regard to perceptions and satisfaction levels of elearning instructors and students are more variable (Bower, 2001; Hara & Kling, 1999; Stocks & Freddolino, 1998). Martin and Rainey (1993) suggest that no significant difference in positive attitudes toward course material is apparent between distant and traditional education.

This article examines the issues with respect to SEPTIMUS, a new psychotherapy training program, and concludes that in fact both student performance and student satisfaction were higher in an elearning psychotherapy program compared with a traditional face-to-face program.

MAIN THRUST

To measure student satisfaction and performance for the elearning course, each student was required to complete a 32-item questionnaire (submissable online) upon completing one of the three units of study. The questionnaire asked them to detail their levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the program and the amount of time they spent on the different components. One hundred fifty-six students from across the eight project countries returned data.

To make a comparison between elearning and face-to-face learning, students in three countries (Romania, Ireland and UK) who had completed a psychotherapy training course by traditional classroom teaching methods were recruited. Sixty-one students were given a 32-item questionnaire asking for feedback on traditional teaching methods for psychotherapy. This questionnaire was equivalent to the one given to the 156 SEPTIMUS elearners, but adapted to take account of the different mode of delivery of learning materials. For example, elearners were asked, “How much do you think the course material helped you to understand this area?,” whereas face-to-face learners were asked, “How much has looking at course texts helped you to understand this area?” The data from the two groups of students was collated and analyzed.

RESULTS

Students were required either to give a score of 1 to 5 on the Likert scale, or to give durations in hours/minutes. Examples of the Likert scale categories were as follows:

“How much has the tutor helped you to understand existential and human issues?”

1 - Not at all; 2- A little; 3 - Medium; 4 - Quite a lot; 5 - Very much

“How well do you think that you understand the role of psychotherapy in exploring ‘existential and human issues’?”

1 - Not at all; 2 - A little; 3 - Medium; 4 - Quite well; 5 - Very well

The answers from the 32 questions were grouped into various categories, and these were statistically analyzed as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

When comparing the elearners (n=156) with traditional learners (n=61), the results were as follows:

SATISFACTION LEVELS

- There is strong statistical evidence of greater satisfaction of elearning students with regard to the course material (sig = .000) and tutor (sig = .000).
- The data does not provide enough evidence of different levels of satisfaction between the two groups with regard to understanding of the topic (sig = .404) or the discussion forums (sig = .695)

TIME

- There is strong statistical evidence of elearning students spending more time on course material (sig = .695).
- The data does not provide enough evidence of different amounts of time being spent between the two groups with regard to the tutors (sig = 0.356).
- The data does not provide enough evidence of different amounts of time being spent between the

Table 1. Student feedback data comparing satisfaction levels between SEPTIMUS (2002-2004) and comparable face-to-face psychotherapy training courses (2003-2004)

	Means for face-to-face learning methods (n=61)	Standard deviation	Means for eLearning methods (n=156)	Standard deviation	Mann-Whitney sig
Understanding of topic (1-5)	3.72	0.72	3.82	0.68	MW= 8515.500, Z= -8.835, sig= .404
Satisfaction with course materials (1-5)	2.63	0.93	3.82	0.74	MW= 2764.000, Z= -8.116, sig= .000
Satisfaction with tutor (1-5)	3.13	0.84	3.66	0.97	MW= 4378.500, Z= -3.747, sig= .000
Satisfaction with class discussions/ discussion forums (1-5)	2.92	1.73	3.17	1.08	MW= 8831.5, Z= -.393, sig= .695

3 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/learning-traditional-teaching-methods/18066

Related Content

The Effect of Experience-Based Tangible User Interface on Cognitive Load in Design Education

Zahid Islam (2020). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality* (pp. 1-13).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-effect-of-experience-based-tangible-user-interface-on-cognitive-load-in-design-education/283062

Best Practices for Effective Virtual Teams

D. Sandy Staples, Ian K. Wong and Ann Frances Cameron (2008). *Virtual Technologies: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 129-137).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/best-practices-effective-virtual-teams/30914

The Effect of Augmented and Virtual Reality Interfaces in the Creative Design Process

Tilanka Chandrasekera and So-Yeon Yoon (2018). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality* (pp. 1-13).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-effect-of-augmented-and-virtual-reality-interfaces-in-the-creative-design-process/203064

Smart Classroom-Based Innovative Solution Toward Uninterrupted Education: Perspective

Sudhir K. Routray and Sasmita Mohanty (2022). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality* (pp. 1-14).

www.irma-international.org/article/smart-classroom-based-innovative-solution-toward-uninterrupted-education/306689

Impact of Rising Interest Rates and Inflation on Financial Behavior: An Insight Through Structural Equation Modelling Approach

Khushi Jain, B. Anjaly, Shiba Prasad Mohanty and Santosh Gopalkrishnan (2025). *Immersive Technology for the Gig Economy: Transformative Business Practices* (pp. 253-272).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/impact-of-rising-interest-rates-and-inflation-on-financial-behavior/382697