COMPARING ONLINE VS. FACE-TO-FACE GRADUATE STUDENT OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE IN CSD: A RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW

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BACKGROUND

- In today’s technology driven world, many college students have the option to take courses via online modalities.
- More than 25% of students in higher education are enrolled as online students (Allen & Seaman, 2010).
- Online courses can potentially provide the same standard of education as a face-to-face education (Bowen, Chingos, Lack, & Nygren, 2013).
- Previous research into student performance in online versus face-to-face courses has suggested that face-to-face students perform better (Edmonds, 2006; Young & Duncan, 2014).
- Keramidas (2012) stated that students in online courses who receive synchronous interactive web conferencing outperform students who received asynchronous, text-based instruction.
- Creation of learning communities and having a controlled learning pace can impact student achievement and retention (Fontenot, Mathsen, Carley, & Stuart, 2013), potentially mitigating the benefits commonly associated with face-to-face instruction over online environments.

METHODS

Participants
- Three cohorts of face-to-face CSD graduate students (n=54)
- Two cohorts of online CSD graduate students (n=36)

Data Collection
- All graduate CSD courses were included in the data selection
- De-identified gradebooks were reviewed
- Quantitative analysis of final papers, exams, individual assignments, and final grades completed

Data Analysis
- Means calculated to compare overall online vs. face-to-face outcomes among CSD graduate students

RESULTS

- Nine graduate courses have been compared across the online and face-to-face modalities thus far.
- Semester grades varied from less than 1% - 2.41% in nine graduate courses in CSD, across a variety of course types (disorders courses, methods courses, etc.).
- Only one course showed a statistically significant difference (p<0.001) between online and face-to-face offerings: CSD 721/722 (online, two separate courses) compared to CSD 732 (face-to-face combination course).

DISCUSSION

- Preliminary results indicate minimal differences in student performance between the online and face-to-face graduate programs at UWEIC.
- These differences may be due the time of year that the course was offered to either cohort:
  - For example, CSD 716 and 750 are offered as two separate courses during the Fall and Summer semesters for the face-to-face cohorts, while the same courses are combined and offered to online students during the Summer semester (CSD 710).
- Summer courses tend to be shorter in length and denser compared to work load than a semester-long course.
- The largest discrepancy noted was in the CSD courses 721 and 722 (Winterim courses offered to online students) and CSD 732 (same course offered to face-to-face students in the Fall) with a difference of 2.41%.
- Some course dyads showed minor variations in the assignments given, but both cohorts had identical learner outcomes and expectations from instructors.
- The average for final grades across CSD courses was above 90% in both the online and face-to-face cohorts, revealing that both cohorts demonstrate success and mastery in their studies.
- The minimal discrepancy of final grades and overall successful student outcomes suggest equivalence between the graduate online and face-to-face cohorts. This supports the claim that online courses can potentially provide the same standard of education as a face-to-face education (Bowen, Chingos, Lack, & Nygren, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

- The results indicate equivalence between online and face-to-face programs pertaining to student performance.
- No major discrepancies in performance were noted in individual courses.
- Future studies may examine:
  - Qualitative comparisons of the instructor’s performance and support pertaining to instruction in an online vs. face-to-face classroom.
  - Comparisons of student perceptions of online vs. face-to-face courses.
  - Exploration of the learners themselves, specifically self-regulation behaviors and demographics of online students compared to face-to-face graduate cohorts.