

# Can Distant Learning Method be a Useful Substitute to Frontal Learning among Undergraduate Students? (Poster)

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## Abstract

The Internet and a new generation of educational computer programs have turned computer- aided learning to a quality and dynamic learning method, which lacks any constraints of time or place (Stephenson, 2001). This alternative learning method makes use of a variety of technologies, independent learning methodologies, on-line co-operations and guided instruction (Swan, 2001). Synchronous computerized communication enables fast responses, lectures, demonstrations or ever real-time frontal lessons (Beyth- Marom, Saporta & Caspi, 2005).

The Open University's "Ofek" project is a recent example of this synchronous tutorial. In this project, the teacher is video- photographed in the University studio, and the on- line lesson is transmitted through a satellite and broadcasted to a class and/ or to the students' homes. The students are able to respond to tutor's comments, or to ask questions using the phone or a chat room. In addition, the lessons are recorded and placed at the internet, so the students can watch them. There are about 45 on-line courses in the Open University.

The study examined students' satisfaction in fully on-line distant course in comparison to those who take only frontal course. The research included 53 students, aging 24 to 59 (mean= 33.67, S.D= 8.37), who take at least one advanced "Ofek" on-line class. All students are in an advanced stage of their studies in the field of social studies. The students were asked to fill out a position questionnaire via the e- mail (Dewhurst, Macleod and Norris, 2000). The questionnaire included 27 items ranging from "fully agree" (5) to "completely disagree" (1). Questionnaire's reliability was = .70. In addition, 10 question concerning "Ofek" tutorial were composed, ranging from "agree" (1) to "disagree" (0).

**Results:** Independent *t*-test analyses suggested that students would rather prefer studying through "Ofek",  $t(49) = 3.81$ ;  $p < 0.01$ . Regarding frontal tutorials, students pointed out that the quality of teaching is not standardized and they were stress about succeeding in taking notes. Nonetheless, in frontal teaching they feel they get more chances to ask questions. Students noted that "Ofek" facilitated learning at one's own rate, and the learning flexibility at a convenient time and place. Students with less then average grades prefer frontal lectures inasmuch as "Ofek" tutorials.

In sum, it appears that most undergraduate students in advanced courses prefer studying with distance learning method, and perceived it as a better alternative to frontal- learning method; however, students (57%) do not wish to study all courses via "Ofek". More research is needed in additional courses

and with a wider range to the sample in order to examine students' learning style, expectations and satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Undergraduate students, distant learning method, frontal learning method.

## References

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