The Impact of the Internet on Education and Training in Professional Psychology

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Description
Editor’s Note: This is one of a number of essays we will be publishing in coming issues which are brief portions of the longer essays to be published in our tenth anniversary volume, After Internet Time, forthcoming in fall 2011. That volume will be fully peer reviewed. These essays have not yet been peer reviewed, but all are by experts in the fields which they discuss.

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The Impact of the Internet on Education and Training in Professional Psychology

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By Lauren Wiswall

A Berglund Center Tenth Anniversary Essay
Pacific University
School of Professional Psychology

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Introduction
Over the past decade, the total number of internet users increased by an estimated 399.3%, from roughly 321 million to 2 billion people worldwide [1]. Rapid technological growth has presented both new opportunities—as well as challenges—to innovators and educators in the field of professional psychology. Technological advances have stimulated new methods of pedagogy and new models of education and learning. However, there is controversy over whether advances in technology translate into advances in learning. Educators and institutions in professional psychology are challenged to consider the impact of technological advancements in training and education. Electronic methods of pedagogy are reviewed first, followed by recent trends in e-learning and distance education programs, and lastly, implications for the field of professional psychology.

Electronic Pedagogy
The term e-learning refers to learning via electronic methods and models and pedagogy. Theoretical support for e-learning comes from research in behaviorism, cognitive theory, and constructivism [2]. In education, levels of e-learning integration can range from traditional, low-tech lectures to primarily electronically mediated courses [3]. Today, traditional lecture-based courses often have supplemental websites and may even require access to electronic resources,
electronic submission of assignments, and participation in online discussions. In contrast, internet-based courses might include live teleconferencing and in-person meetings and training experiences. E-learning tools are also used for training and assessment purposes. E-learning programs have been designed to adjust difficulty levels, ensure learning benchmarks are graded in complexity, and provide relatively objective, individualized feedback [4].

Distributed education models rely on electronic forms of pedagogy, enabling them to transcend location barriers and create new opportunities [5]. Electronically mediated courses may be suitable for acquiring and evaluating content knowledge, but the transfer of professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes may rely more on the dynamic interaction between student and advisor [3]. Similarly, Hare states, “actually acquiring the necessary skills for psychiatric practice will always require considerable experience with real patients” [6].

To challenge this assumption, Worrall and Fruzzetti developed an Internet-based training system for dialectical behavior therapy and tested it with peer-supervisors [7]. The program was designed to help students identify effective therapy interventions and guide peer evaluation and feedback. The students were able to watch, rate, and view feedback on mock therapy sessions over the Internet. The researchers propose that similar programs could be implemented in real-world settings to provide training therapists with supervisory feedback.

**E-Learning and Traditional Pedagogy**

Although advances in technology have paved the way for electronic forms of pedagogy, the relative value of e-learning compared to traditional pedagogy remains unclear. Therefore, researchers have recently turned their attention to the study of human-computer interaction. Several studies have examined the effects of learner control, but results have been mixed [8]. Still, at least two moderating variables – trainee self-regulation and training satisfaction – appear to play important roles in e-learning [9] [10].

Bell and Kozlowski developed and tested a program designed to enhance self-regulatory processes [4]. The program, *adaptive guidance*, provided trainees with information to help them invest cognitive resources wisely. The researchers observed a significant change among trainee study and practice, self-regulation, knowledge, and performance when the training program was employed.

**Implications**

In 2001, an APA task force assembled to address the issue of distance education and training in Professional Psychology, including new developments, best practices, program accreditation, and graduate licensure and recognition [3]. Both traditional programs and distance programs are expected to meet the same accreditation standards. However, distance education programs are introducing new challenges to the assessment of compliance. The APA task force identified several areas that need to be addressed by accreditation reviews and procedures in professional psychology distance learning programs: access to online materials; competence of faculty in
technology and distance pedagogy, mentoring, and supervision; student and faculty support; evaluation and assessment of students and practicum sites; institutional context and commitment; facilities and finance; library and learning resources. There is currently only one professional psychology program accredited by the APA using a distributed education model (Fielding Graduate University) [3].

A question faced by graduates of non-accredited distance programs in professional psychology today is whether they will have difficulty obtaining licensure and work. Policies and procedures of many distance education programs are tailored to meet accreditation standards. However, it remains to be seen whether distance education programs will meet accreditation standards and acceptance by licensing boards in professional psychology. As the APA task force states:

“Concern is raised that as professional psychology moves toward greater recognition, acceptance, and expanded scope of practice, barriers may be encountered if it adopts approaches to professional preparation that are out of the mainstream and may erode the perception of quality and rigor of the profession.”

A survey of accredited doctoral training programs indicated that currently accredited training programs report using the Internet for e-mail, web pages, and online access to articles. However, the implementation of electronic pedagogical methods was limited. Most accredited training programs have not integrated e-learning or other forms distance education. Other health care professions use distance education programs for continuing education and certifications beyond the entry-credenitalied level. Distance programs for post-graduate training and certifications assume that foundational knowledge, skills, and professional values have already been acquired, providing base upon which to build and integrate new knowledge, as is seen with post-doctoral psychopharmacology degrees in psychology [3].

**Conclusion**

Technological advances have led us to face a paradigm shift in terms of pedagogical methods, models, and theories. In the future, innovators will need to prudently consider the implications of integrating electronic forms of pedagogy into professional training and education as the substitution of e-learning methods and distance education can come at a cost to other forms of learning and pedagogy.

**Endnotes**

[1] internetworldstats.com


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12 THOUGHTS ON “THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNET ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY”

**Cichopek**

on **January 30, 2014 at 7:09 AM** said:

moncler piumini

**nigeria**

on **January 30, 2014 at 11:34 AM** said:

Take a 10-minute break during by the hour that you just study. Create a schedule that a
single could stay with it.

nigeria

on January 30, 2014 at 1:55 PM said:

It's like you read my mind! You glimpse to know a lot about this, like you wrote the book in it or something. I believe which you can do with some pics to drive the message household a bit, but instead of that, that is excellent blog. A very good read. I am going to definitely be back.

Antoine Phillippi

on January 30, 2014 at 6:13 PM said:

This is really fascinating, You are an overly professional blogger. I have joined your rss feed and sit up for looking for extra of your great post. Additionally, I have shared your site in my social networks!

Wroclaw

on February 1, 2014 at 2:15 AM said:

good work, i enjoy reading your post. Retain the nice work.

social network

on February 3, 2014 at 1:51 AM said:

One extra method in favor of promoting your web site is posting comments on numerous directories inside your blog link.
temat
on February 3, 2014 at 1:54 AM said:

My husband and i ended up becoming fulfilled as soon as Chris could conclude his search in the ideas he was given in your site. It is now and once again perplexing to just most likely be handing out secrets and ways that quite a few some other men and women might were selling. So we recognize we now have got the writer to enjoy due to that. Individuals illustrations you have made, the simple web site menu, the friendships you will aid to produce it’s everything about this content is wonderful, that may be definitely particularly essential. Thanks for the whole thing!

dating
on February 4, 2014 at 10:19 AM said:

One extra technique in favor of promotion your web site is posting comments on several directories inside your blog link.

nigeria entertainment news
on February 4, 2014 at 10:30 AM said:

“Great, thanks for sharing this article post.Appreciate it Again and again. Terrific.”

nigeria entertainment news
on February 4, 2014 at 10:40 AM said:

Hurrah, that may be what I was seeking for, what a information! supply the following at this website, thanks admin of this website.

Nigeria social network
on February 5, 2014 at 12:16 AM said:
Hey extremely cool net site!! Guy .. Beautiful .. Superb .. I am going to bookmark your blog and consume the feeds also…I am satisfied to discover so numerous exciting facts here inside the post, we’d like develop additional ways in this regard, thanks for sharing.

. . . . .

cork board ideas

on February 5, 2014 at 12:55 PM said:

I blog frequently and I genuinely appreciate your information. This article has really peaked my interest. I’m going to book mark your site and keep checking for new details about once a week. I subscribed to your RSS feed too.