Beurteilung einer Dozentin in einer telematischen Kommunikationssituation

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One of the most obvious differences between teletutoring and on-campus seminars is the missing possibility of a face-to-face interaction between students and the tutor or among students. In virtual seminars, mainly text based communication software is employed for maintaining communication. Therefore, the degree to which a communication partner may be perceived as somebody with personal characteristics (as somebody being socially present) is rather low.

In a virtual seminar of nine weeks we investigated how students' assessments of a tutor change if she is perceived in varying degrees of social presence. The tutor's social presence was varied in four levels: 1) The tutor communicated only text-based with each tutee. 2) The tutor communicated text-based; the text, however, was accompanied by a picture of the tutor corresponding to the respective communication content. 3) The tutor communicated auditorily and text-based. 4) The tutor communicated auditorily and text-based; besides, pictures of the tutor were shown.

During the investigation students received four learning units each covering learning material of a lecture of four hours. Within two weeks students were to finish one learning unit. Activities such as the asynchronous communication between student and tutor, the students' filling in of tests on the learning contents, reading additional texts, and informing about the seminar took place on the net. Every second week and in a final questionnaire students were to assess the tutor's didactic qualifications, knowledge on the subject and consideration for the students. Furthermore, in a final assessment students were to compare the virtual learning situation with an on-campus seminar. It was investigated whether students' assessments differ in the four experimental groups and at different points in time.

The statistical analyses showed an influence of time. With progressing time the tutor was assessed less extremely (positive or negative). The variation of social presence had no influence on students' assessments of the tutor. In the final assessment, however, students in the setting with a tutor's low social presence thought they would have learned better and faster in an on-campus course.

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