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# Online, Face-To-Face Or Both? Which Mode Of Gatekeeper Training Is More Engaging And Effective?

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### Abstract

Gatekeeper training (GKT) equips university resident assistants (RAs) with the knowledge and skills to identify and respond to students with mental health problems. Prior studies have focused on either face-to-face or online mode of GKT but none have examined a blended approach. By comparing the face-to-face, online and blended training modes (including flipped approach), the present study seeks to assess their different training impacts, the extent to which the trainees engage in the training, and their preferred training activities.

A mixed methods approach was adopted. Two hundred and fourteen RAs at a Macau university were divided into four groups, each taking part in a GKT using training-as-usual (face-to-face), online, blended (face-to-face followed by online) or flipped (online followed by face-to-face) condition. The intervention was based on the Blended Learning framework of Yeung (2020). Both quantitative data (a survey on perceived knowledge and efficacy, and a pre- and a post-training skills test) and qualitative interview data were analysed.

All the four conditions exhibited positive training impacts. The training-as-usual participants showed improvement in perceived knowledge and efficacy ( $p < .05$ ), but not in the skills test; the online, blended and flipped participants showed greater improvement in in all areas ( $p < .05$ ). Certain active learning activities, such as online dramatised videos and role play exercise, were more welcomed.

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The study concludes that the traditional face-to-face mode shows a pseudo-positive training result. The blended and flipped modes are more engaging and effective for new RAs, while the online mode is beneficial for returning RAs. The current study provides insights and future directions for designing, operating, assessing, and researching training activities for RAs.

**Keywords:** Blended Learning, Flipped Classroom, Technology-enhanced teaching and learning, Curricular design/redesign, Assessment, Online learning, Assessment, Gatekeeper's training, Psychological counselling