

### Online Instruction versus Face to Face Classrooms

The decision regarding whether online instruction or face to face classrooms is best can be based upon many factors. Technology will slowly, but surely become ever more interwoven into the fabric of academic life. Online education seems to be gaining a firm foothold in higher education, however, I do not believe that it will ever replace traditional face to face learning. Face to face classroom instruction not only provides more interaction between teachers and fellow classmates, but it also improves both the essential written and verbal communication needed in the work place. I favor face to face learning rather than online courses because I am one of the many students that requires a more active role of learning as well as the guidance from professors throughout the beginning of my college education. Several aspects of traditional face to face classrooms tend to outweigh online instruction, therefore, face to face classes are best.

While it is true that online instruction and face to face classroom learning environments differ, but not as significantly from a professor's perspective compared to a student's perspective. As for the student's perspective, some of the challenges that they had to overcome in an online course are the change from face to face verbal interactions involving body language to online written interactions, the reliance on technology in the online environment, and the lack of self-discipline. Technology is not necessarily having a negative impact on education, but I believe the advantages of face to face are more beneficial to the student's learning outcome than in an online

environment. Face to face classroom environments include learning to listen to other perspectives and to look at things in a new way, which is essentially the main purpose of going to college besides vastly increasing knowledge. Online environments also include the online interaction between students through blogs and it can improve written communication skills, although traditional classroom environments can improve both written and verbal communication skills needed in the future work force. Each type of instruction has its own flaws and neither are perfect for any given student. Kristin Olsen, California Assembly Member, explains her stance on the issue under discussion. "In classroom instruction should remain the traditional option of learning, but our students should continue using the available resources of technology in the classroom and expand online to make it equal for other students." I agree with Olsen because despite the fact that I am arguing against online instruction; I still believe in the equal opportunity for each and every student, whether or not they favor face to face classroom more than online instruction.

Granting that a large percentage of students continue to prefer face to face classes, one factor that may have an influence on preference could be the personality types of the students. A student's personality type relates to the learning style and the comfort level in either online or face to face classes. In a current study of how personality type correlates with the preference of classes, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and a Likert-type questionnaire asked the students why they preferred one teaching manner over the other. The results revealed that a significant majority of

introverts preferred online classes and extraverts preferred face to face classes. The article in *Internet and Higher Education* by Harrington and Loffredo claims,

“Overall, students who preferred online classes indicated that their ranked ordered preference was because of convenience, the enjoyment of computer technology, and a desire for innovation whereas those who preferred face to face classes reported they were influenced by the class structure appealing to their need to learn through listening and by their desire to better gauge the emotional reactions of others in the class.” (Harrington, Loffredo 89)

I believe that the personality type of the student reveals a whole new perspective. I, myself, am considered an extravert because I am a student that is outgoing and talkative who requires the sense of connection in face to face classrooms between the professor and me. My learning style also involves aural, visual, and kinesthetic that are equally met in the traditional face to face environment.

In addition to the student's learning styles, one of the most important aspects of traditional face to face and online classes is the students' learning outcomes. The learning outcomes of the students is considered one of the most important because it measures the amount of information that is retained, exam grades, and so on. Lisa Kirtman, an associate professor at California State University Fullerton, assessed that “In analyzing the results from exams, a significant difference was found between traditional and online students in learning. The mean scores and the t-test indicated that, based on midterm grades, the traditional students scored higher on the midterm exam.” (Kirtman 108) As you can see, the traditional students tended to perform better

on the midterm exams because of the information that was retained over the semester and positive benefits of face to face classroom environments. Traditional classes include positive benefits for the students such as study group opportunities, material reinforced through questions and answer sessions, and the connection between the professor and students. However, each student is different, which can affect how they perform in either the online or the face to face courses.

Despite the advantages, personality types, and learning outcomes that come into perspective with face to face classrooms, another aspect that should be taken into consideration is how employers view online education compared to traditional education. Online education can greatly improve a student's written communication skills, although traditional education can improve both the essential written *and* verbal communication skills that are needed in the future work force. Some employers view online education and traditional education equally credible but to others, there can be an issue of trust or a lack of reputation and familiarity. Brandon Mendelson, a former business owner, says he wouldn't consider an applicant with only online education because he believes that students only get a fraction of the learning experience online. "I want someone with the full commitment...so actually going to the school gives a candidate an edge in my book," he says. (qtd. in Zuppek) Many employers like Mendelson are searching for students that have made the full commitment to their education, which is met with traditional face to face education. Not only does face to face classrooms offer full commitment, but they also include more information that is

retained, honesty, written/verbal communication skills, and possibly a better chance of being hired after graduation.

Therefore, there are many influential factors that may sway a student's decision of whether online instruction or face to face classrooms is best. Face to face classes have aspects that outweigh online instruction such as higher learning outcomes, better chances of job opportunities, improvement of both written/verbal communication skills, more face to face and social interaction, and direct communication with professors and fellow classmates. Thus, in my opinion as a current college student, face to face classes are better than online instruction because I must have the essential face to face interaction and discussion, direct communication with my professor, and all of my learning styles are met in the traditional classroom setting, which improve my overall performance.