

PIDP: 3260

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Instruct

Author: Yuri Tricys
Date: August 23th, 2025



Reflective Writing One

Introduction

As lifelong learning is more and more essential for the long-term growth and professional development of college students today, the importance of striking an optimal balance between both learning formats over the long haul is more essential than it ever has been.

Moreover, for many modern instructors in professional practices, curriculums include both online and in-person educational materials. Some institutions surely offer flexibility to the instructor, such that he or she may choose to teach some material through strictly online modules and other material in-person. The modern instructor then, should also be prepared to occasionally trade off one format against the other.

Objective

From the perspective above, the following quote, taken from Stephen D. Brookfield's 2015 book "The Skillful Teacher. On Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom" is helpful as it suggests, in reference to Piskurch (2003), a closed access text book, that online learning is faster and improves retention.

"The online environment can also place a greater degree of control into the student's hands over when and how fast learning happens, something Piskurch (2003) argues increases both retention and self-directed learning."

(Brookfield, 2015, P. 171)

One notable question emerging from numerous possible questions relevant to the quote above is how the costs and benefits of one approach might stack up against those of the other.

And from that analysis, any given instructor or student should find it useful at least one time to think through and find a strategic balance between online and in-person learning that fits well with his or her commitments and schedule.

Examining briefly the above line is the objective of this report.

Reflective

On reflection, intuitively we might expect that professional practice driven careers might require proficiency in human interaction that is difficult to obtain or master online. Other careers, that are technically highly complex or require vast amounts of intellectual study may benefit more from online learning environments.

The chart below is meant to provide some suggestions, in terms of how we might view online learning versus learning in-person in the context of various factors, such as an entrepreneurial perspective, and soft-skills development.

The Pros And Cons of Online Versus In-person Learning

Aspect	Online Learning Pros	Online Learning Cons	In-Person Learning Pros	In-Person Learning Cons
Learning Outcomes	Flexible, self-paced learning improves retention	Less effective for hands-on disciplines	Structured guidance and lab access	Fixed schedule may not suit all learning styles
Entrepreneurial Perspective	Diverse courses and instructors supplement skills	Lacks immersive campus experience and networking	Valuable social connections and networking	Can be expensive with no guaranteed ROI
Soft Skills Development	Online platforms facilitate communication and collaboration	Difficult to develop interpersonal skills online	Natural development of interpersonal and teamwork skills	Limited flexibility to practice skills
Research-Intensive Disciplines	Online resources provide access to research and virtual labs	Limited hands-on lab work and experimentation	Access to physical labs and equipment	Requires physical presence, limiting accessibility
Social Connections and Networking	Global networking via online forums and social media	Weaker online connections and harder to form relationships	Face-to-face interactions, mentoring, and trust-building	Smaller social circles, geographic limitations
Time Commitment and Flexibility	Self-paced learning, saving time and balanced commitments	Requires self-discipline, risk of procrastination	Fixed schedules foster routine and accountability	Less flexible for varied schedules
Student Motivation and Engagement	Interactive tools boost engagement for self-motivated learners	Lack of physical presence may reduce motivation	Direct instructor interaction encourages accountability	Less engaging for independent learners
Social Skills Development	Some opportunities via online discussions and projects	Excessive screen time hinders social skills development	Natural setting for nuanced communication and social cues	Potential social anxiety or exclusion
Professional Networking Role	Connects students with industry leaders and peers worldwide	Less chance encounters and spontaneous interaction	Campus events develop strong professional networks	Limited to local or regional context
Accelerated Learning Potential	Self-paced modules allow motivated learners to progress faster	Not all learners thrive without guided pace	Structured curriculum ensures progress together	Pace may be slower and fixed, limiting acceleration

Interpretive

Considering the pros and cons of online versus in-person learning across various professions and factors, several key points emerge. Online learning appears to offer advantages in terms of flexibility, accessibility, and accelerated learning potential. It allows students to engage in self-paced learning, access a wide range of courses and instructors, and interact with global networks. This format seems to be particularly beneficial for professionals seeking to supplement their skills, those in research-intensive disciplines, and individuals who require a flexible schedule.

However, in-person learning also presents distinct advantages, particularly in areas such as hands-on training, soft skills development, and social connections. In-person learning offers students the opportunity for structured guidance, lab access, and direct instructor interaction, which are essential for developing interpersonal skills and nuanced communication. Face-to-face interactions and campus

events also facilitate invaluable social connections, professional networks, and trust-building. This format may be more suitable for professionals who require hands-on training, those seeking to develop strong social networks, and individuals who benefit from structured guidance and accountability.

Ultimately the choice between programs that are heavier on online or in-person depends on individual preferences, learning styles, and professional goals. While online learning provides flexibility and accessibility, in-person learning offers the benefits of hands-on training, social connections, and nuanced communication. As professionals navigate the complexities of their chosen fields, it is essential to weigh the pros and cons of each learning format and determine the approach that best suits their needs.

Having said that, even those careers that appear to benefit the most from online learning will depend on social networks for hiring, funding, and career growth. Wise learners should proceed with online learning while carefully adjusting social practices to compensate for changes in development of social networks.

"Those contacts are just invaluable. If you're going to quote me, it's not what you learned in the classroom, it's who you met there. The network is powerful, and it just grows every year as graduates go out to become leaders in their industries." ~ Kevin O'Leary

(Ivey Business Review, 2022)

Decisional

When advising and teaching students in a college setting, instructors can acknowledge the varying benefits and drawbacks of online and in-person learning formats. As a prospective teacher, I'm certainly going to consider the following recommendations:

1. **Evaluate student learning styles and goals:** Assess individual students' needs, learning styles, and professional objectives to determine the most suitable learning format. Some students may thrive in online environments, while others may benefit from in-person instruction.
2. **Implement hybrid learning models:** Combine online and in-person learning elements to create a hybrid model that leverages the strengths of both formats. This approach can offer flexibility while maintaining opportunities for face-to-face interaction and socialization.
3. **Foster online communities and networks:** For online courses, create virtual spaces for students to connect, collaborate, and engage in discussions. This can help compensate for the lack of in-person socialization and facilitate the development of professional networks.
4. **Emphasize soft skills development:** Incorporate activities and exercises that focus on developing essential soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and time management, into both online and in-person courses.
5. **Provide guidance on social network development:** Offer students advice and strategies on how to establish and maintain professional networks, both online and in-person. This can include tips on attending industry events, joining professional organizations, and leveraging social media platforms.

6. **Monitor student progress and adjust instruction:** Continuously assess student performance and adjust teaching methods accordingly. Be prepared to adapt instruction to meet the evolving needs of students in both online and in-person settings.
7. **Encourage self-directed learning:** Empower students to take ownership of their learning by providing resources and support for self-directed learning. This can include online tutorials, workshops, and mentorship programs.
8. **Stay up-to-date with industry trends and best practices:** Engage in ongoing professional development to stay current with the latest advancements in online and in-person learning. This will enable you to provide students with the most effective and relevant instruction.

Acknowledging the pros and cons of online and in-person learning and adapting your teaching approach accordingly, can help in creating an inclusive and effective learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, weighing the pros and cons of online and in-person learning is crucial in determining the most effective approach for students in various professions and fields. While online learning offers flexibility, accessibility, and accelerated learning potential, in-person learning provides hands-on training, social connections, and nuanced communication. By considering individual learning styles, professional goals, and the needs of specific disciplines, instructors and learners can make informed decisions about the best learning format for their needs.

Ultimately, the key to success lies in striking a balance between the benefits of online and in-person learning. By combining the strengths of both formats, fostering online communities, emphasizing soft skills development, and providing guidance on social network development, instructors can create inclusive and effective learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, it is essential to stay adaptable, acknowledge the pros and cons of each learning format, and prioritize student-centered approaches to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

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AI Models Used In This Report: The ideas, structure, writing, and editing in this paper were performed by the author. Various AI models were used to research, collect, and verify data, format arguments, and grammatically structure content. Models used include: Qwen 2.5 235b a22b. Meta Llama 3.1 405b Instruct. MistralAI Devstral Small 2505. Sonar Large. GPT-5. Google Gemma 3 27b