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Why is traditional learning more effective than virtual learning?

In current times, technology has advanced rapidly with the production of new devices or upgraded interfaces replacing current ones. Companies and public accommodations are transitioning as well into the digital world; leaving traditional ways behind. Numerous people were adapting and in favor of this change ;however, a couple of them still prefer the manual way of doing tasks. For schools, this was a huge transition. The switch from traditional learning to virtual learning was a difficult process when the pandemic hit the globe in 2020. Although schools didn't have a problem with the switch, most faculty and students did during this time. During post covid, schools had the decision of staying virtual or going back to face-to-face which was slightly a difficult decision due to feedback. While traditional learning has been the norm for centuries, the rise of virtual learning has led to the debate over which is more effective for students. Three factors that contribute to students' academic achievement and skill are academic performance, study habits, and social interaction. Through comparison of both environments, this will determine how traditional learning can still be effective despite the addition of online learning.

Yet online learning has been introduced through covid, this “new way of learning” has been relevant for numerous years. However, due to technological advancements and evolution of the internet, it didn't become popular until the 1990s (Kentnor, 2015). The University of Phoenix was the first to introduce this online concept through an online service called CompuServe. A

couple of years later, the university continued to make more online courses which inspired other universities to make education accessible to other students. In the midst of this advancement, a foundation called the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation developed Asynchronous Learning Networks (ALN) which were for students who aren't able to experience or attend the traditional classroom. While this advancement flourished, the number of enrollment had increased as well. Over 20,000+ students had enrolled into these programs.

Fast forward to 2020 where the globe shut down permanently from Coronavirus. By this time, the school board made the decision of only doing work online for only two weeks. However, when the case numbers increased, schools agreed to stay online for the remainder of the semester and the next following year. In which online learning resurfaced due to emergency. When the numbers decreased and everything opened back up, some students were in favor of staying online while others preferred to go back to school which led to the debate.

In an academic environment, performance usually centers around how well a student puts effort into their assignments and the grade in result of their work. Academic performance doesn't specifically focus on effort and quality, this can be affected by how the material is presented by the instructor which is a key factor in a student's success. This documented comparative study by Lin (2022) showed this process. This study involved business students who are taking the course "Statistics for Business". The course focuses on statistical concepts and applications that's used in business careers. This course also includes mathematical concepts as well. With this subject, numerous students feared and had a lack of confidence. By this, researchers investigated if students gained more by interacting in a traditional classroom or via virtual learning. Within the study, the experiment was divided into seven categories which were: lectures, discussions, homework assignments, classroom exercises, classroom experiments, exams, and office hours.

After gathering information from each experiment and students, the results led to the traditional setting being more successful.

In continuation, there were two categories out of the seven that led the online setting to fail which were homework assignments and classroom experiments. In the online setting, the professor wasn't able to provide much material or help in both compared to the professor who taught in the classroom. For instance, the professor in the traditional setting gave students the opportunity to work with virtual reality to further understand the topics they went over in past lectures. With this type of experience, the students were able to do "hands on" activities which gave a positive insight in their academic performance. However, online, the professor wasn't able to provide that experience for their students. From the data shown in the bar graph, over 93% to 97% of the students agreed that the traditional setting was more organized and prepared than the online setting. Although both settings taught the same course and provided material, there was a bit of restriction within the online setting which caused a lack in the students' performance.

Numerous students have their methods of studying material after the lecture. Within the classroom, some take notes or pictures of the slides or given handouts for studying purposes. On the other hand, within the virtual classroom, most of the lecture is recorded and the presentation is posted. Once they have the notes, they take time to study in preparation for the next lecture or exam. This comes down to which material is best for studying and effective for memory. Digital or Paper? Or in this case, a textbook or computer? In 2019, a comparative analysis, documented by Clinton, was conducted based on these two materials. Given reading assignments, the results from participants who read from screen were more unlikely than the others who read from paper. One cause was the readers had slight trouble remembering specific details from the text they've read. Another cause he stated was possibly mind wandering which the readers got

distracted and lost focus in the process of reading. With reading or in this case studying text given on paper, the student is able to draw conclusions or concrete details and make connections with the points the professor said. By this, the student will further grow understanding of the concepts in the topic. Therefore, paper is best for studying and effective for memory.

In order to fully understand the content that's given, retention plays an important role in a student's learning process. However, there can be factors that may cause them to lose focus or to drop out. In a research study, documented by Sorensen & Donovan (2017), examined what factors cause students to drop out of online programs and impacts of their retention. A couple of factors they listed were emergencies, taking a break from school, financial problems, and others. Also within the study, they interviewed students to gather information. A couple of students during the interview said they weren't receiving any motivation or support from their instructors or they didn't have enough to sustain them to continue their education. Others stated it was the lack of interaction from their professors. In a traditional setting, it is able to accommodate those needs. With motivation and support, there are peers that can reach out to help others as well as the professor. As for financial needs, there are programs that can help the peers get back on track with their education.

In a traditional classroom, the environment consists of a desk, a specific number of peers, and a teacher or teachers. Within a virtual environment, it consists of a bed or desk, a device, and the student themselves. How are these students able to interact in these environments? According to Robinson (2020), she stated that having less communication with peers and instructors are the greatest difficulties of examining online and passing their course. The students she interviewed shared their experiences on what it's like to socialize via screen. One stated that they don't get an opportunity to socialize with their peers on zoom. On zoom there is a feature called

'Breakrooms' where the instructor puts a maximum number of students to work together on assignments. However, it's difficult to connect with peers when they don't talk.

Yes, this situation happens within the traditional classroom; however, students have the option to work with the people they are comfortable with without being forced. Another feature that zoom has is a private chat feature in which they can chat with other peers or the instructor. Though it does separate the student and the other person from the main chat, there are questions that the student may want to ask verbally; however, they can't do that due to everyone being there. This also brings a sense of isolation to the student since they aren't around anyone and makes them feel less welcomed. By this, it might lower their social skills. Though everyone is present, there's nothing like having them around you. Therefore, traditional learning can help improve social skills with peer engagement and interaction.

Although traditional learning is still effective for the three factors, what about the students who aren't able to handle traditional learning? Online provides flexibility, in which the student is able to work whenever they choose to. Community College of Aurora (n.d.) argued that students have no other option and they are forced to work around their schedules within a traditional setting due to a fixed schedule. They also stated that online can provide networking opportunities. Students can reach out to others from other nations and collaborate on projects. Another point they stated is that online can give students access to expertise. Some courses may not be available in traditional settings. It also gives one who was unable to finish their study another opportunity to complete their degree.

In some cases, traditional learning may not be for everyone due to some limitations. Those limitations include: commuting purposes, personal experiences, family, and many others. How does virtual learning work for people with these limits? It does provide flexibility to where

the students are able work on their own at their convenience. According to Emerson (2020), she listed three modes of online learning which are: asynchronous, synchronous, and blended.

Asynchronous is where peers read or listen to the lecture and complete assignments at their own convenience. Synchronous encounters video conferencing platforms such as zoom or google meets to socialize with the professor and peers in real-time. Last but not least, blended is a combination of both asynchronous and synchronous to where everything can be accessible to the student. As Emerson stated, online provides a rich opportunity for this mode of learning and students can learn new information independently and collaborate with everyone.

Indeed online learning provides flexibility and other benefits to students that aren't able to fit traditional learning into their schedule due to some limitations they have. However, there are challenges and negative impacts that come with this learning mode that traditional doesn't have. Some students may feel a lack of motivation since there is no engagement or the material may be difficult to understand. As for mental health, students often feel antisocial, lonely, isolated, and frustrated (Palmier, 2020). Being behind the screen for a maximum amount of hours can negatively affect concentration. Technical issues are also common such as glitches, wifi connections, and platform crashes. By this, the student would miss out on important information about an assignment. Environments also have an impact as well. With a bunch of distractions happening in the background, it's possible that the student's attention span can be cut short from the lecture and cause them to lose focus. With communication, it is difficult for the student to get feedback from their professor especially when it's an urgent situation. The student will have to constantly check their emails to see if the professor responded, which could take a couple of hours or a day.

In conclusion, technology has impacted today's society with everyone making the transition to the digital world, leaving traditional ways behind. For schools, this was a huge transition during covid; however, after covid, schools had the decision of staying online or returning which was a difficult choice in the making. Three factors that contribute to a student's success are academic performance, study habits, and social interaction. Through comparison of both learning environments, traditional was more efficient in these factors. Although online has its benefits, it also has challenges and impacts that can negatively affect students. Which comes a question: is online learning supposed to be what it claimed it to be for students?

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