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The state of appraisal education: Face to face education vs. online education

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I ended up in appraisal education not long after I became an appraiser. In college, I thought seriously about and came perilously close to getting education credentials, then looked at the market for teachers back then, made the decision not to go there, and never looked back.

By a happy twist of fate, I ended up getting chosen to teach for a local appraisal organization early in my career. With sweaty, shaking hands, I got through the initial training and classes and have never had regrets since.

In my teaching around the country over some years for many different groups, I have met so many interesting and remarkable people who make up our appraisal communities, i.e., those who are appraisers, those who would be appraisers, and also those who have no interest in being appraisers but are interested in the appraisal process and profession. I have met those with a great passion for appraising (which translates into passion for other things) and those who are frankly skeptical and distrustful, believing the process is mostly hocus pocus, circular reasoning or worse. It's been a wonderful challenge and a great source of pride to convince both rank beginners and entrenched skeptics that there is an underlying rationality, if not a certain beauty, even an elegance, to the process and the concepts underlying it.

I have been involved with on line educational offerings over a number of years. I just completed an online course. By the end of the class and its endless procession of section quizzes, I was ecstatic to see it to completion end and happy to receive my certificate and my continuing education credits. Taking the class and experiencing the sterility and linearity of the online environment prompted this article. Consider that, as an instructor, I might be viewed as having a bias: but, it might also be said I have a unique vantage point too.

In the post digital age, with increased demands on our time and a competitive professional environment, there are fewer face to face educational opportunities. Online education, distance learning, e-learning, even correspondence courses (yes, remember those, if you can!) are all ways to describe non-classroom learning. Web based asynchronous distance education is the currently favored delivery system for much professional continuing education.

I don't really have anything against this type of education; in fact, I am enthusiastic about any kind of education that effectively imparts useful information and improves the knowledge of students. I am not much in favor of tedious education that only seeks to meet minimum requirements, provides unimaginative but cheap ways to gain professional re-accreditation and does little create enthusiasm or provide useful learning to students.

When I talk to colleagues and students, most bemoan on line education for all the reasons noted above and others. Many brighten up when talking about the warm experiences they had in a classroom with a good instructor and class and note that a day like that can't be duplicated in a

month of online classes.

I believe strongly in face to face education but realized that on line education is here to stay. So far, online education delivery has met minimum requirements but has not met expectations. There are hopeful signs that this will change but too many students taking on line courses are taking their experience and generalizing that all education is like that.

There is, in an environment of diminishing expectations, the opportunity to participate and shape educational experiences in live class room settings. This represents a great opportunity and challenge for teachers and students. Until online education can duplicate the face to face experience or supplant it, there is simply no meaningful alternative.

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