

## Секция 1. Сетевые технологии в образовании

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ONLINE TEACHING CHALLENGES

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New technologies, most likely, shape education more than other environmental features, including political, economical, natural, and social factors. Someone may say that LCD projectors in classrooms have substituted motion-picture ones. Similarly, PowerPoint Presentations have alternated overhead transparencies. Nevertheless, the most discerning visionaries could not see such great opportunities twenty or even ten years ago when it comes to computer-enhanced learning.

According to the United States Department of Education ([www.ed.gov/search](http://www.ed.gov/search)), nearly four million students participate in on-line learning at American colleges in 2007. More and more institutions employ new technologies such as ePortfolios, web communities, and web-based multimedia.

My personal experience proves those trends. On the one hand, I am an adjunct professor at Westchester Community College of the State University of New York. On the other hand, I am a student of Delta College in Michigan. Yes, since I am not able to be in two geographical regions at the same time, I take courses online.

Being both a professor and student, I can compare and contrast computer-enhanced schooling from the opposite sides, from the instructor's side and from the student's one. Making several steps forward, I need to say that online learning could assist the course to succeed. However, some skills are needed to fulfill this mission.

In the 2007 fall semester, I implemented online features in two traditional courses I taught at Westchester Community College. Those courses were International Business and International Marketing. In addition to face-to-face sessions, the students have been offered the basic course information, assignments, quizzes, projects, and PowerPoint presentations online.

Overall, the course members declared that the web helped them to accomplish the projects and assignments, most of which were written ones. Several students printed the presentation handouts before the classroom sessions and used them during the lectures. All students passed the quizzes online. No one student expressed his or her preferences to take paper and pencil quizzes instead of electronic versions.

Online opportunities allowed creating some kind of learning environment. Actually, the students were required to assess their peer works. Both works and assessments were posted online. To avoid any unwelcome harm, the students' works were electronically published under assumed names. The publicly-open web pages browsed just comments; the grades were accepted and counted invisibly. Nonetheless, the web sorted the works from the best assignments down to the poorest ones.

The most unexpected result of those actions was a significant improvement of students' works. After the assessment experience, the students created their new works more responsibly than their initial assignments. Originally, the students as-

sumed that just the instructor would grade their works. Later, the students must have taken into consideration their peers.

In the meanwhile, a number of students were underprepared to participate in the coursework because of their low writing capacities. Indeed, writing was the biggest challenge for students who comprehended the course material, were able to apply and or evaluate, but could not express their knowledge.

Westchester Community College offers a special course, Professional and Technical Writing, which could be helpful for such students. During that course "students work on writing projects designed to simulate real-world challenges. Writing tasks may include text for online media, presentations, proposals, instructions, and resumes. Students can expect valuable feedback on their writing, with emphasis placed upon communicating to readers, being clear and concise, as well as effective document design" ([www.sunywcc.edu/search](http://www.sunywcc.edu/search)) . Nonetheless, that writing class is neither a pre- nor co-requisite for neither the International Business nor International Marketing courses.

Surprisingly enough, I took a similar course, Technical Communication, at Delta College. In my view, that online course was extremely useful for my writing skills. What is more, I do not believe that a similar face-to-face class would work so nicely to build my communication capacity.

Of course, no one may eliminate personal physical appearance, voice attractiveness or even mutual chemistry. However, the students have to be competent in representing themselves in writing. Modern employers expect new labor force to be trained to employ written presentations, memos and resumes. Indisputably, previous or current writing experience unquestionably assists students to accomplish assignments in the courses, which require written efforts. Just in online courses, the students are not lured to use their oral communication skills. The students have better chances to improve their writing capabilities, learning online rather than taking face-to-face classes.

At least one student in my Michigan online course was a disabled person without opportunities to come to the campus. Basically, that student had a choice to take online classes or not to study at the college at all. Ten years ago, he, most likely, would have just stayed at home without any education. New technologies in the secondary education had opened new horizons for such category of potential students.

I cannot say that online learning is better than a standard, classroom-based one. Despite of wide spread of home theaters, people still go to the cinemas. Home theaters are more convenient. Standard cinemas are more impressive, being supported by expensive equipment. Similarly, online schooling gives flexibility. Classroom-based learning enhanced by multimedia offers extraordinary studying experience for regular students, who are able to attend the campus sessions.

Nevertheless, a combination of two opportunities, face-to-face classes and online ones, could give great advantages to students, fitting their individual situations and commitment to learn in the most efficient way. The biggest disadvantage of two-in-one courses is that they are much harder to teach in comparison with either traditional and distance courses. Life is life. Each advantage brings some disadvantage into the account.