ESL 263

Draft # 2

Title : “Online Courses’ Limitations Hurt Students”

A study in Chicago High Schools had failing students assigned algebra recovery courses or their classroom counterparts (Dynarski 3). Results showed that online course students learned less than the former (Dynarski 3). It also shows how lack of feedback and motivation from face-to-face time can lead to online courses hurting low-achieving students. Underperformers need motivation and feedback. They don’t know how to look into themselves to find better studying skills. Offline teachers can observe the students’ behavior in classroom sessions to understand why they are failing. The observations can lead to praises and criticisms that motivate and show students what can they do to improve. Office hours can also be used for quick and easy sessions that are tailored to each students. But online platforms deprive them of this ability. They cannot observe the students in action. Also, online courses use discussion forums as the communication tool between students and teachers. Discussion forums however, takes time for teachers to respond. The sheer size of the class that ranges up to thousands can keep them from timely responses. To summarize, online courses’ inability to allow face-to-face time is why they don’t help failing students.

Online courses also hurt low-achieving students through the combination of course design and their lack of self-discipline skills. Many courses’ designs are subject-oriented than being user friendly. My experience with Harvard’s introductory online Computer Science course, CS50 is a prime example. A CS50 lecture video’s length can vary from 60 minutes to 120 minutes. I took the lectures to brush up on my computer science knowledge. However, I found myself constantly distracted after 30 minutes and looking at Netflix videos. I later realized that lecture videos were combined from different lecture times to focus on one subject. An online lecture on web programming would be combined from several different class times, making them longer than students’ attention span. CS50 shows how online course’s subject-oriented design make students more susceptible to distractions. Underachievers’ lack of self-regulation and increased susceptibility to distraction in online courses is combined to distract the low-achieving students from studying. The combination is how they hurt low-achieving students.

Works Cited

Dynarski, Susan. “Online Courses Fail Those Who Need Help.” *New York Times*, 21 Jan. 2018, p.BU3.

Fu, Angela and Wang, Lucy. “Harvard Time is Gone. Here's How to Navigate the New Schedule”, https://www.thecrimson.com/, 2 September 2018