ESL 263

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Online Courses’ Limitations Hurt Students

The lack of face-to-face classroom time in discussions can lead to online courses hurting low-achieving students through the lack of feedback. Underperformers don’t have the self-awareness to think about how to improve their performance. But when they engage in activities with their teachers in the classroom, teachers can observe their behavior. The observations can lead to praises and criticisms that low performing students can use to improve their learning. However, online underachievers do not get this feedback because online courses are centered around self-directed learning. The divide hurts underachievers because online classes are centered around self-directed learning. Since self-directed learning requires self-awareness, it keeps them from asking themselves about their coursework and methodology. As a result, underperformers miss out on how to improve themselves. A study in Chicago high schools highlights the outcome. Online credit recovery courses or their classroom counterparts were assigned to failing students (Dynarski 2). Online students recovered 10 percent less than the former’s students (Rickles 4). Online students’ reduced achievement suggests online courses’ limitations lead to hurting underachievers. Online courses hurt them because their flaws are keeping them from allowing face-to-face discussions with the instructors.

Besides the limiting instructors’ feedback, online courses also hurt low-achieving students since they lack self-regulation skills to stay focused on coursework. These skills are vital to managing distractions in online classes because students can quickly get bored watching lectures from extended periods. The boredom causes them to get sidetracked to web content such as watching YouTube videos or reading Reddit posts. But low-achieving students do not have the grit to stay focused. My experience with Harvard’s introductory online Computer Science course called CS50 is a prime example. A CS50 class can last up to 120 minutes. I took CS50 because I was getting Cs in my traditional college coding classes. However, I found myself constantly distracted after 30 minutes and looking at Netflix videos. Watching Netflix videos meant that it took longer to finish lectures. I learned less, leading to failing all over again. My failing grades in CS50 shows underperformers in online courses are more susceptible to distractions. Since the lack of self-control makes them more vulnerable to getting sidetracked, online courses fail underachievers rather than helping them.

Original Sentences: Students who had failed algebra were randomly assigned either to online or to face-to-face recovery courses. The results were clear: Students in the online algebra courses learned much less than those who worked with a teacher in a classroom.

Works Cited

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

Rickles, Jordan, et al. “The Effect of Online Versus Face-to-Face Credit Recovery in Algebra I on High School Credit Accumulation and Graduation” *UChicago Consortium on School Research,* June 2017