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Name: Brad

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Online Courses’ Features Hurt Students

The lack of face-to-face 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. These self-directed learning environments do not have room for teachers’ feedback and require students’ self-awareness to overcome that shortcoming. Low-performing students lack this self-awareness, so they miss out on possible improvements. A study in Chicago high schools highlights the outcome. Study had failing students take algebra credit recovery classes either in online or in-class (Dynarski 2). Online students recovered 10 percent less than the former’s students when assessed(Rickles 4). Online students’ reduced credit recovery suggests online courses’ designs lead to hurting underachievers. Online courses hurt them because their design is self-learning based, creating a lack of face-to-face discussions with their teachers.

In addition to the limited 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 easily get bored watching lectures from extended periods of time. The boredom causes them to get sidetracked to web content such as watching YouTube Videos or reading reddit posts. Many low-achieving students does 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