

Introduction them to
have the desired
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Introduction

Contemporary educational institutions have incorporated the use of technology in their pedagogy. This has attracted immense research from education scholars, who seek to establish the effectiveness of the use of technology tools like laptops and the internet in the classroom. It has thus been established that the use of laptops in classroom by both students and their instructor has counterproductive effects with the down-side being weightier than the benefits.

Despite this fact, a number of educational institutions still allow students to use their laptops in taking class notes. This has led to the decline in the average performance of students since the use of laptops in class is more likely to make students get fewer benefits from class work. This paper is an exploration of both the benefits and the shortfalls of using laptops in a classroom environment.

Advantages of using of laptops in class

The use of laptops in class has a number of advantages. Research has shown that with the use of laptops in class, students are normally highly motivated. This is because students like technology like laptops and the internet. This is an advantage because students will have the zeal to attend classes and participate in classroom activities.

Studies, therefore, showed that, in classrooms where laptops and the internet are used in instructing the students, student attendance of classes was better than the attendance of classes in which there were no laptops. Research has also shown that the use of laptops helps students to maintain

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their levels of performance since it is unlikely for the students to lose motivation in class work (Carrie, 2008). This is as contrasted with a classroom with no laptops, in which student performances tend to fluctuate.

Another importance of using laptops in class is that in some situations, laptops offer the best means for instructions. For instance, in a classroom where an inquiry process is needed by the instructor, laptops would be most appropriate. The use of laptops has also been credited with improving the extent to which students are equipped with project-based skills (Yvonne, 2004). It is also important to note that in some courses/majors, the use of laptops and computers in general cannot be avoided. For instance, it is virtually impossible for a Computer Science class to be conducted without using laptops in classroom. Therefore, even if some theory classes may be conducted without the use of laptops in this case, practical classes must embrace the use of laptops in order for them to have the desired effect on the students.

Thus as much as laptops may affect student performance in some cases, in other cases their use is mandatory. However, a number of other studies have shown proved that the use of laptops in class is disadvantageous.

Disadvantages of using of laptops in class

Both instructors and students encounter a number of problems in the classroom when they decide to attend classes with their laptops. One of the problems that come with attending classes with a laptop is lack of concentration in class. This is obviously expected since the student will be, at times, too engaged with the laptop that it will be impossible for him/her to

concentrate. One of the activities that will possibly make students lose concentration is browsing of information on the internet. However, it is easy for the instructor to spot students who engage in surfing the internet since the students will most likely concentrate on the laptop screen, without using the keyboard. A good way to ensure that students do not lose concentration as they surf the internet is to walk around the class while teaching.

Students may also lose concentration in class if they get engaged in instant messaging on the internet. This is normally a big problem since the instructor will be unable to detect it as the students will appear as if they are taking notes. Moving from one point in the class to another, behind the students, and checking the applications that the students are using will make the instructor help most of his/her students to concentrate (Timmer, 2009). It is also of essence that the instructor makes a tactful request to the students when he/she notices that they are chatting on the internet.

This will make the students fear disobeying the instructor. Another issue that comes with using laptops in classroom is the issue of legitimacy or credibility of web sites that the instructor uses with students in class. Some of the websites that an instructor may decide to use in class for discussion purposes may not be scholarly sources. Despite this fact, the students may become so enthusiastic about the web sites that they treat them as scholarly sources, and thus they spend too much time in them (Carrie, 2008). This may ultimately affect their overall performance. If an instructor is not careful with the way he/she uses laptops in his/her pedagogy, the instructor may overly depend on the laptops. This is disastrous since a class in which every exercise is done using laptops will not have a holistic approach to learning.

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This lack of a holistic result in such teaching will be as a result of insufficient time for other classroom activities like group discussions, and possibly role playing in skits (Hampton, 2004).

The use of laptops connected to the internet also poses a great challenge to instructors who are not technology-savvy. In order for such instructors to be effective, it is of essence that the instructors also take classes on how to effectively use technology. This may take too much of their time that it may affect the time that the instructor spends with his/her students.

The performance of the students may, in turn, be affected negatively.

Discussion

More and more educational institutions are using laptops and the internet in their classroom. This has led to popularity of educational research skewed towards the use of technology in class. Virtually all the studies conducted on this subject show that the use of laptops in class has counterproductive effects on the students using the laptops. As much as it motivates them to attend classes, maintaining a high level of student presence during classes, which may in turn translate to better and more steady grades, it also poses a number of threats to the academic welfare of the students using the laptops in the classroom (McLain, 2009). From the discussion above, it is evident that the benefits of using laptops and the internet in the classroom are less than the treats that the use of laptops in class poses to the academic welfare of students. Despite this, many instructors are still allowing their students to enter classes with their laptops that are connected to the internet. It is of great essence that instructors analyze the benefits and shortfalls of allowing

students to use laptops in their classrooms and take the necessary actions to preserve the academic welfare of the students.

For instance, in a situation where some of the tasks that the instructor wants to illustrate to students require the use of computers, the instructor may decide to allow the students to enter the classroom with their laptops.

However, the instructor should be very alert to monitor how the students are using their laptops. On the other hand, if the students want to just use the laptops in taking notes, it is advisable for the instructor to deny them the chance to enter the classroom with their laptops. This is due to the aforementioned shortfalls of attending classrooms with laptops. In the same way, instructors should avoid coming to class with laptops unless it is extremely important to do so. This is because, like the students, the instructor may also lose concentration as he/she teaches. For instance, the instructor may forget to close some interactive programs/applications which may require his/her attention while in the classroom.

For instance, if the instructor was using an instant messaging application before coming to class, and he/she forgets to close the application, a message may be sent while he/she is in class. This may make him/her stop what he/she was doing to read the message, and thus class activities will be substantially interrupted. Additionally, the instructor may also be tempted to use the internet while in classroom (Cole, 2007). For instance, while teaching, he/she may miss a point and be tempted to look for it on the internet while in class. The instructor may also be tempted to surf the internet when students are busy working on assignments.

This will limit his/her ability to help them when they get stuck. Laptops should thus be used by students and instructors outside the classroom even if they use them for academic purposes. The only exception to this is if the materials being covered in class require the use of computers for the students to better understand what is being taught.

Conclusion

As evidenced in the discussion above, there is a great need for educational institutions to establish the extent to which they can allow students to productively use their laptops in classrooms. This is because an alarming number of these institutions operate in total or partial disregard of the dangers that are posed by allowing students to take class notes using their laptops. In spite of the advantages that may accrue due to this practice, academic institutions should consider the fact that the advantages are fewer and less serious than the disadvantages of the same. Students may also go to an extent of extending their addictions to the classroom.

Some may be addicted to online chatting, others may be addicted to music, and there may even be others addicted to pornography. The availability of the facilities to view these things in the classroom could have a devastating effect on the performance of the students, which could make an educational institution unpopular. In cases where laptops must be used, like in Computer Science practical classes, instructors should be very alert. This will ensure that students are effectively monitored during such classroom sessions.

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