Current Trends and the Future of Learning

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TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Massification of higher education
• Largely driven by low-income (and less prepared) students

Increasing per-student cost of instruction (Johnstone 2009)
• Many theories abound – Baumol cost disease, technology, change in programs, cost of research

Increasing public scrutiny and accountability
• Fewer tax revenues and direct subsidies
• Voter models

The result: SHIFTING COSTS INCREASINGLY TOWARD STUDENTS
• IMPLICATIONS FOR INEQUALITY: INCREASING COSTS FOR STUDENTS AND SUPPLY SIDE CONSTRAINTS (THE RISE OF FOR-PROFITS)
The Promise of Online Education?

- **Online/distance courses may lower per-student costs**
- **Changes in material/infrastructure costs and economies of scale may reduce costs**
- **True savings might come from reduction in faculty**

**Three questions:**

1. **Are material/infrastructure costs lower?**
2. **Do changes in faculty/student ratios affect outcomes?**
3. **Are the quality of online outcomes similar?**
Evidences to Date

• **One Randomized Controlled Trial Focusing on Costs/Impacts of Online Education.**
  • Bowen, Chingos, Lack, Nygren, 2014 – No detectable difference between hybrid and traditional courses
  • Random assignment at 6 public institutions
  • Costs were lower in hybrid courses
  • Some issues on take-up and scalability

• **Evidence from For-Profit Colleges on Impacts of Courses**
  • Bettinger et. al. 2015 – Outcomes are systematically lower in online courses
  • Faculty play less of a role
  • Students face greater responsibility
    • Procrastinators
Finding #1. Online courses have lower quality.
Finding #2. Students Have More Responsibility in Online Courses.
Finding #3. Professors Matter Less in Online Courses
Going Back to the Trends

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Problem confronting Brazil is the quality and supply of higher education opportunities for low-income students
• Issues for inequality in terms of cost/affordability/payoffs
• Issues for inequality in terms of quality
  • Forcing the most unprepared students into situations where they bear the highest responsibility for their educational outcomes
  • Compounding existing problems.