

Rethinking Effective Pedagogy: Examining the Role of the Textbook in Classroom Instruction

What's the purpose of a textbook? The instructor's job isn't to read the textbook back to the students, so one assumes they're expected to read it themselves. But how much does it matter which particular textbook they use, or whether they use any? The point, after all, is that they learn the subject matter, which in my field (biology) can be done about equally well with any good text, or even with none. The top students may get more out of selected primary references, review articles, and other outside readings. Agreed, the average student needs firm ground to stand on and a textbook provides that. Its role as a security blanket is not to be denied. But so long as the exams in the course truly test for knowledge of the subject, and are not just an attempt to trip students up on whether they've read certain captions under figures in a particular text or can recall particular facts and phrases from that text, themselves insignificant in the broader view of the subject, the choice of text is somewhat arbitrary.

pete biesemeyer, professor of biology at north country community college, October 5, 2006
Inside Hire Ed accessed 7/11/2008 at <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2006/09/12/wilson>

Background Information

1. The Role of Textbook

In *Content Reading and Literacy* (2005), Alverman and Phelps present three assumptions that textbook users often make. How do these assumptions affect instructor decisions?

- Textbooks will help to structure loosely coupled curricular goals and objectives.
- Students will use their textbooks to learn course content.
- Textbooks will present information in a coherent and unbiased fashion.

2. Problems for Students

- Concept density
- Expository writing
- Differences or disconnects between reader and text

3. Effective Use of Textbooks

- Introduce vocabulary and concepts.
- Build background with experiences or activities.
- Alert students to tricky or very interesting sections of the text.
- Ask questions in advance to increase comprehension on particular content.
- Ask questions after reading to increase general comprehension.
- Use the reading in class: quick writes, discussion, demonstration.

100+ Resources for Teaching Without Textbooks by Laura Milligan
(<http://www.teachingtips.com/blog/2008/06/26/100-resources-for-teaching-without-textbooks/> accessed 8/6/2008)

Understanding How Students Respond to Technology

2. GT Prof: Students Learn Better Via iPod Versus Lecture: This article from Campus Technology cites a Georgia Tech professor who believes that iPods are more effective teaching tools for some students.
5. Students' Evolving Use of Technology: This article considers a study of how college students use and benefit from information technology systems.
7. College Students Score Higher in Classes That Incorporate Instructional Technology Than in Traditional Classes: *ScienceDaily* reports that technology in higher education classes is very beneficial to older students.

Virtual World Tools and Communication

11. Class Home Page Builder: Creating a class home page and website is a great idea for a teacher of any age group. This tool will help you get started.
18. activeCollab: College professors or high school teachers working with small groups on a project can use this project management and collaboration tool to assign and prioritize tasks, send e-mail alerts, manage time tracking, and communicate remotely.

Mobile Tools

19. iPod: iPods are catching on as an effective teaching and learning tool, and professors are even making their lectures available on iTunes so students can download them.
23. Facebook for BlackBerry: If you communicate with your students over Facebook, use this tool to reach them wherever you are.

Library and Reference

25. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition: This Bartleby.com reference has over 90,000 entries that include audio pronunciations, word-root appendixes, usage notes, world history notes and more.

In Class Presentations and Ideas

40. PowerPoint Tutorial: Oregon State University has published this online tutorial to teach instructors how to use PowerPoint.
44. Smithsonian Images: Find beautiful photographs of space, American history, sea life, U.S. presidents, nature and fireworks to add to your presentations from this site.

Web 2.0 Teaching

46. Twitter: Twitter is starting to make a name for itself in the higher education world, as professors can quickly reach their students and students can track down information for research papers and class discussions almost instantly.
47. Top 5 Quiz Generators for Online Educators: All teachers can use these quiz generators to post practice tests and study guides on their class websites or let college students take tests online.
48. Diigo: Diigo is an excellent tool for teachers and students: you can highlight, annotate and bookmark websites and specific content, then organize your material in groups to share with classmates or start a study guide.
49. Zoho Meeting: Distance educators and college instructors can reach their students at any time with Zoho Meeting's Web conferencing capabilities.
50. Edublogs: Teachers and students can create their own blogs on this site, which features support tutorials and allows podcasting, image uploading and videos.
51. Ning: This clever site lets you "create your own social network for anything." You can open it up to your students, your school, or to teachers in your field around the world.

Materials and Books Online

53. TeacherTube: This site connects you to the videos you want, without having to search through all the crap on YouTube.
54. Google Books: Access summaries and even whole texts of classic literature, math books, physics books, philosophy books and more here.
55. The Writer's Block: Chat live with a librarian, find links to college writing centers online, and find online references and more on this site for English and writing teachers.
56. ClassZone: Select your school subject and your state to find online resources for your textbook. If you don't feel like using the textbook, you can just use the test practice, and unit summaries online.

Sites to Bookmark

59. Google Image Search: You can find gorgeous pictures on any subject by using this specialty search engine.
60. Education Search Engines: If you only want to bring up information meant for teachers and students, use these search engines for academic materials and indexes.
61. Podagogy: This blog is "where podcasting meets teaching and learning." You'll get updates on how to podcast, cool iPod learning tools, and more.
62. Web 2.0 Teaching Tools: This blog is designed to give higher education teachers insight into new Internet tools that help them connect with and keep up with their students.

Websites and Online Lesson Plans for Teachers

68. Notemesh: Help your students organize their notes by using this collaborative note taking tool online. Students and teachers can share their notes to create one mega study guide.
73. Notecentric: Notecentric is another online note taking site that lets you share notes with students and encourage collaboration.

Classroom Essentials

76. PBS Resources: PBS encourages teachers to sign up in order to access their digital media educational tools.
79. Empressr: If you're sick of PowerPoint, use this free tool to design "visual storytelling and presentations" online. You can also share your creations with other teachers or distance learners.
80. Writeboard: Writeboard is an excellent tool for all teachers, but college or high school instructors working on projects with their students can use it to store all edit changes, manage project collaboration and share drafts with others.

Miscellaneous Guides and Resources

99. Wiki Becomes Textbook in Boston College Classroom: This *Computer World* article explains how one Boston College professor has started using wikis as a "primary teaching tool," in place of textbooks.