

If, as an educator, you have been approached to create an online course, Judith Boettcher and Rita-Marie Conrad's "The Online Teaching Survival Guide: Simple and Practical Pedagogical Tips" is a great resource. The book opens with the definition of pedagogy by Basil Bernstein and sets the stage for how to view pedagogy as it pertains to online learning. Three elements of the definition are highlighted. According to Bernstein, the definition focuses around the first element which is the learner. The learner requires someone or something to guide the learner, which is the second element. Lastly the definition ends with "the acquisition of conduct, knowledge, or practice by the learner."

The authors go on to discuss the standard course details which include a timeframe of usually six to fifteen weeks. It should have a set of expectations for the learner that will be realized at the end of the course. It concludes with an assessment to see if the student has actually learned the desired curriculum. They provide the structure of an online course as seen from both the student and instructor. They conclude with the estimated percentage of time that an instructor should dedicate to the online course. After an initial investment of time, the course should not require more than 25% of the instructor's time.

The authors go on to point out the distinct qualities of an online course. Five aspects are given and the first listed is the shifting of the instructor role. The shift makes the instructor more of a coach or mentor than the traditional role. The second aspect is the asynchronous nature of the meetings for online courses. The communication and collaboration now take on a different form with online courses. Closely related is the third component of online courses which is the fact that learners are more active. Online learners cannot be passive about the learning process and must read assignments in order to contribute. They can no longer rely on the traditional lecturer to save them from not reading the assigned material. The final two concepts deal with flexibility of resources and spaces and the final characteristic is continuous assessment, which

serves as a barometer for gauging the effectiveness of the tools and activities offered in the course.

The heart of this guide is centered around a well structured plan that involves four stages of a course. Each stage takes into account four important facets. These facets are the learner, the faculty-mentor, content-knowledge and the environment. “Phase One: Course Beginnings - Starting Off on the Right Foot”, begins with the introductions. This phase stresses the importance of getting to know the learner and making sure the learner knows about the expectations, how the tools for learning will be used, and requires a thorough understanding of the course syllabus. The faculty-mentor needs to establish that the mentor is available to guide and provide expertise. It is the responsibility of this individual to make course expectations clear and to make the learners comfortable with relying on the mentor for guidance. Content and knowledge in this phase are acquired by the learners as a result of the mentor’s initial introduction to the course and the available resources. In terms of the environment, the tools and learning dynamics are all in place to help the learner start off on the right foot.

In phase two, “Early Middle-Keeping the Ball Rolling”, the expectations are that the learner has now settled into a rhythm and is comfortable with the tools and collaboration opportunities afforded by this course. The faculty-mentor is still providing support and guidance and promoting collaboration. Learners are beginning to explore and engage with each other in terms of their own experiences as a way of contributing to the learning process. The environment at this point, sees the community settling into the routine as more group participation is promoted.

Phase three, “Late Middle - Letting Go of the Power”, should find the learner more engaged and able to deal with more complex issues. The learner is taking the core concepts and applying them to personal experiences and perhaps making stronger assertions based on

the newly acquired knowledge. The faculty-mentor remains as a guide but does more to support the learners as leaders in providing insight and command over projects and reading material.

Technology plays a stronger role in terms of content and knowledge as learners use other tools to present to the class. The environment has changed in terms of and increase in activity and involvement with learners as they gain proficiency with the available technologies.

The final phase, "Closing Weeks - Pruning, Reflecting and Wrapping Up", is the culmination of all the positive learning experiences. The authors point out that the goal for this last phase is, "for the learner to complete a positive learning experience and identify the knowledge and skills they have developed from the course-experiences while supporting the community's goals to accomplish their own personalized, customized learning tasks." There is individual growth as well as an increased understanding provided by the group dynamic.

Beyond the four phases described in this book, the authors give anyone interested in creating an online course, insightful tips and best practices for every phase mentioned as well as ten important principles that will help anyone develop online coursework.

This book truly read like a manual with the necessary foundational concepts to help anyone understand online teaching at the basic level. If ever a book fit the definition of survival guide it would be this book. If there is any doubt about the approach used in this book, the direction and approach is based on sound learning theories. The authors point out that the advice and tips given in this survival guide are "grounded in learning theory and principles." Major contributions are credited to Lev Vygotsky and his Theory of Social Development, John Dewey's Experiential Learning, Jean Piaget's Genetic Epistemology and Jerome Bruner's Constructivism. These are only a few who influenced the writing in this manual and even more theories are included.

Online teaching is the future and statistics show a consistent increase in this type of instruction. Anyone who is responsible for incorporating online courses as a practical alternative to standard course offerings would benefit greatly from this survival guide. Judith Boettcher and Rita-Marie Conrad provide a solid working model for instruction and guide you every step of the way.