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Book Review: Teaching in a Digital Age: Guidelines for Designing Teaching and Learning—Third Edition

Author: Anthony William (Tony) Bates (Tony Bates Associates Ltd., 2022, 1045 pages), ISBN: 978-0-9952692-7-9 (e-book).
<https://pressbooks.pub/teachinginadigitalagev3m/>

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A Short Description to the Book

Teaching in a Digital Age is a book written by Anthony William (Tony) Bates and is licensed under a Creative Commons CC BY-NC license. The first edition was published in April 2015, the second edition was published in 2019, and the third edition of the book was released on 18 August 2022.

The author of the book is a prominent contemporary scholar in the field of technology-enhanced learning. *Teaching in the Digital Age*, one of his most important books, has received considerable attention around the world. Most educational designers and instructors in the field of digital learning use the book as a practical guide in the educational design of digital environments, and it is an authoritative source in the field of online teaching. The book introduces the principles for effective teaching in an online environment, providing instruction and guidance for instructors on online teaching and learning. It presents good practice guidelines for redesigning teaching and enables teachers and instructors to develop the knowledge and skills they need in a digital age. This valuable collection has been translated into different languages around the world—including versions available in Spanish, Vietnamese, French, Persian, Chinese, Turkish, Portuguese, and Japanese—and is available on the BCcampus website in Canada as an open access text.

Relationship and Importance to the Field of Distributed/ Hybrid Learning

In line with the importance of the book, coaches and professors today face new challenges in the field of education and must use new educational technologies in teaching. The size of classrooms has increased; students of different ages enter the education system and are often working while studying. The expectations of students and teachers have completely changed from each other and students must have digital skills; also, educators must respond to all these changing needs and use new educational technologies in their teaching to create more flexibility in the educational system.

To manage new classes in the digital age, educators must be aware of the theories and principles of educational design to use these principles in the redesign of modern classes. Teachers should know that

the nature of knowledge has changed in the new era. Because of this change, educators need different perspectives in teaching. They must be able to train learners with new skills in the digital age. They have to decide when to use face-to-face, blended, or fully online teaching and what teaching methods are best in technology-based environments. Instructors are expected to know the possibilities of teaching through the use of massive open online courses (MOOCs), open educational resources, and open textbooks.

In general, *Teaching in a Digital Age* is considered a comprehensive book and a basic guide for teachers. It instructs them on the principles of effective teaching in the digital age, providing a practical framework for educators to make decisions on the best teaching methods.

The Book's Structure

The book consists of 15 chapters, each concluding with key “takeaways” and a complete set of references. Most chapter sections end with an activity, and there are also scenarios throughout the book. These are semi-fictional, most of them based on an actual example.

Chapter 1 is a foundation for other chapters and deals with the basic topics of education in the digital age. In particular, it explains the key knowledge and skills that students need in the digital age, arguing that technology plays a decisive role in today's teaching process.

Chapters 2 to 4 emphasize the theoretical principles and foundations of teaching and learning and their applications in the digital age. Chapter 2 discusses the relationship between views on the nature of knowledge and the way we decide to teach. Chapter 3 describes several different methods of teaching used in school- and campus-based teaching and discusses the general strengths and weaknesses of campus-based methods. Chapter 4 describes key approaches to the design of online teaching and learning and analyzes the ADDIE model, online collaborative learning, competency-based learning, and communities of practice for teaching in a digital age.

Chapters 5 to 9 help teachers make the right decisions in choosing media and educational technologies in the teaching process. Chapter 5 has a special focus on the concept of MOOCs and explains its applications in higher education. Chapter 6 describes the main components of an effective learning environment for implementing teaching and learning in the digital age. Chapter 7 emphasizes understanding the nature and role of media and technologies in education. Bates believes that media are different in terms of form, symbol systems, and cultural values, arguing that there are generally six common media in education: face-to-face teaching, text, graphics, audio, video, and computing (animation, simulation, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence). Chapter 8 includes pedagogical differences between media and provides a framework of analysis for determining appropriate pedagogical roles for different media. Bates believes that text, audio, video, computing, and social media all have unique educational affordances for teaching and learning, and that the choice or combination of media depends on the overall teaching philosophy. Chapter 9 examines emerging technologies such as social media, artificial intelligence, virtual/augmented reality, and serious/educational games. Bates believes that these new technologies can improve student motivation and teach tasks that would otherwise be difficult.

The main purpose of chapter 10 is to provide a framework for making effective decisions about the choice and use of media for teaching and learning. The framework used is the SECTIONS model, which stands for students, ease of use, costs, teaching functions, interaction, organizational issues, networking, and security and privacy.

Chapter 11 focuses on modes of delivery and helps teachers to determine the most appropriate mode of delivery for any course or program, emphasizing that there is a continuum of technology-based learning, from “pure” face-to-face teaching to fully online programs.

Chapter 12 examines the potential implications of recent developments in open content, open publishing, open data, and open research. Bates believes that the increasing availability of OER, open textbooks, open research, and open data means that in future almost all academic content will be freely accessible over the Internet.

Chapters 13 to 14 focus on quality in teaching and suggest nine pragmatic steps for designing and delivering quality teaching in a highly digital teaching context. Chapter 14 very briefly examines the policy and operational support needed from schools, colleges, and universities to ensure relevant and high-quality teaching in a digital age. Finally, chapter 15 provides a summary of the main issues the book attempts to address.

Highlights of the New Edition

A distinctive feature of the third edition of *Teaching in the Digital Age* is its discussion of the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning. Bates believes that the arrival of the virus and the closure of universities and schools accelerated the approach of using new educational technologies such as synchronous and asynchronous tools in teaching and learning. COVID-19 provided many lessons to universities and schools in the field of online learning and teaching – the author believes that the presentation of these experiences needs a separate chapter and he tried to express all these experiences in chapter 1.8.

In general, the third edition is distinguished from previous editions by addressing new issues such as successes and failures arising from the emergency pivot to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, open pedagogy, micro-credentials, the difference between synchronous and asynchronous learning, and emerging technologies to enhance learning and teaching. All changes to the first edition made for the second edition are in green text, and the changes for this third edition are in blue text, so the reader can follow the changes more easily.

One of the features of this e-book is how easy it is to use: the reader can access the content list by referring to the taskbar on the left side of this book on the BC campus website and entering that chapter by clicking on the desired section and topic. Perhaps such features are less common in e-books because most are limited to a PDF version of the book on the website. Another distinctive and unique feature of this e-book is access to its translations in other languages.

Conclusion

This book has many audiences, but primarily targets teachers and professors who face various challenges in teaching in the digital age. Today, the shape of classrooms has changed fundamentally: the number of students has increased, the age group of students has changed, and most students are employed. Educational technology is one of the main components of teaching, and teaching methods have changed. In addition, the knowledge component has become the main part of job. Learners are looking for knowledge-based specialized programs, and curricula must respond to the needs of the labour market.

This book tries to provide appropriate answers and solutions for the challenges teachers face in new classes. Moreover, as a guidebook on choosing the best teaching methods and use of technology in the digital age, it provides teachers with the necessary instructions. One of the prominent features of this book is its openness as a source. Bates has provided examples of concepts and ideas in the field of technology-enhanced learning, using a combination of text, photos, and videos with hyperlinks to present these, making them very clear and relevant. The structure of the book also has a logical order and sequence. And the overall presentation of the book also includes attractive images, pictures, photos, and videos to help the reader understand the whole subject in context. Finally, the references in the book are up-to-date. Bates has presented international experience in the field of e-learning in England, Canada, and around the world. In general, this book is a must for every teacher, especially in the fields of blended, online, and hybrid learning .

