

## **Book Review**

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Boettcher, J. V., & Conrad, R. M. (2016). *The Online Teaching Survival Guide: Simple and Practical Pedagogical Tips*. John Wiley & Sons.

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The book, *The Online Teaching Survival Guide: Simple and Practical Pedagogical Tips* by Judith V. Boettcher and Rita-Marie Conrad is an in-depth manual that is user-friendly and informative, particularly as online teaching becomes more popular. The book is very relevant now in the midst of a pandemic, but even after the end of the pandemic online learning is likely to stay (Paudel, 2021). The guide addresses the concerns of teachers to the fullest and explains why online programs do not give as much assistance to their instructors as in-person programs. The guide also demonstrates the perspective of students on in-person and virtual learning, and subsequently, the advantages and drawbacks of each. The book also speaks to why teaching virtually is different than in-person and what attitudes teachers should adopt and exemplify to their students. All of this is in addition to the multitude of teaching strategies presented in the book and enumerated in great detail. The guide is a huge help for online teachers, no matter their field and experience level.

### **Objective**

This guide is a valuable addition to the increasing information and interest in the online learning movement. For many students, online learning is the only option for students in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, for students from lower-income areas or intending to study abroad but can not, online learning is becoming more and more popular. While there is much evidence in the field that online learning is challenging for students and teachers, and even that students tend to perform better in person, the reality is that in-person learning is not always an option for students. The result is a lack of information in terms of how to normalize and maximize online learning for students that need it. *The Online Teaching Survival Guide: Simple and Practical Pedagogical Tips* does exactly that and approaches teaching online, not as a different method of teaching like one would do in person, but rather as its own discipline in which not all of the methods of in-person learning will be effective. The guide offers a more practical stance on much of the information students and teachers already know.

The book also recognizes what few studies and reports on online learning do: teachers provide an important mentor and social role for students that can help in their learning environment. The book sheds light on this subject and adds more information and coaching on an aspect of teaching that is often overlooked in terms of online classes. The guide compliments knowledge about online learning from a more practical standpoint that will not only give teachers the facts about the differences between online and in-person learning but something they can do about it. As an online teacher myself, I am often faced with the challenges of online teaching and being presented with what the issues are. I have not been given a body of knowledge like this book that approaches the matter from the perspective of how to rebuild

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teaching from the ground up for a better online teaching experience for both the students and the teacher.

## Discussion

The authors found a good way emphasizing that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work in online classes, just as it does not work in person. The guide does an excellent job of laying out different ways to aid students in their learning through recorded lectures, virtual quizzes, and ways to properly space out learning. The book provides guidance by acknowledging that teachers will have to work in different ways than they would in-person but offers methods to give teachers the power to restructure their lessons. The guide offers charts and lists to help organize the ideas presented such as the ten core learning principles (Table 1), which according to Karalis and Raikou (2020) are applicable and contemporary pedagogical principles, especially during COVID-19. The book also provides a lot of background on the origins and factual validity of the theories and methods presented in the guide. For example, it dives into the pioneers of different learning concepts and their impact on the education field.

**Table 1**

*Ten Core Learning Principles (Boettcher & Rita-Marie Conrad, 2016)*

Principles	Characteristics of each principle
Principle 1	Every structured learning experience has four elements, with the learner at the center.
Principle 2	Learners bring their own personalized and customized knowledge, skills, and attitudes to the experience.
Principle 3	Faculty mentors are the directors of the learning experience.
Principle 4	All learners do not need to learn all course content; all learners do need to learn the core concepts.
Principle 5	Every learning experience includes the environment or context in which the learner interacts.
Principle 6	Every learner has a zone of proximal development that defines the space that a learner is ready to develop into useful knowledge.
Principle 7	Concepts are not words but organized and interconnected knowledge clusters.
Principle 8	Different instruction is required for different learning outcomes.
Principle 9	Everything else being equal, more time on task equals more learning
Principle 10	We shape our tools, and our tools shape us.

There are recommended schedules of learning to maximize the effectiveness of online learning for you, the teacher, and the students. The book also provides best practices for various

aspects of online learning, which make it easy to aim for goals and achieve them that coincide with these schedules. The best practice topics range from social presence to forming a supportive community to resources for customized work. All of these aspects of the book make it easy to follow and read.

The book does have its shortcoming however. It can get dense at times and the book does explain many positive and practical aspects of online education, but it often fails to reassure teachers that they can handle these issues. The book can be easy to follow in small chunks, but after a while, it can get difficult to read a lot at once and retain the information, because of this, sometimes the information can seem overwhelming. The *Online Teaching Survival Guide: Simple and Practical Pedagogical Tips* supports and enumerates other literature on the field of online learning well and raises some excellent questions in addition to its solutions. Tynan et al. (2015) published a paper on some of the challenges that face both learners and teachers that highlighted a lot of the topics discussed in *Online Teaching Survival Guide: Simple and Practical Pedagogical Tips*. They found that one of the most challenging things for students and teachers alike, which was confirmed by this guide, is maintaining a reasonable schedule for the workload. Tynan et al. (2015) conducted a survey that identified that time concerns were prevalent among both teachers and students in virtual courses. Their recommendations to solve that issue are emphasized in the guide in more detail. Scheduling is important and so is maintaining the motivation to create lessons or turn in work on time. As an online teacher, I can attest to how difficult it is to transition from teaching in-person and being excited and inspired by students to having limited interactions with them. These pieces make the connection that students and teachers must form a working relationship in the classroom to be successful both ways.

*The formal definition of the zone is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016, p. 14).*

Another relevant way that *Online Teaching Survival Guide: Simple and Practical Pedagogical Tips* works in conjunction with the existing research is that it confirms the importance of technological literacy. Technological literacy is something teachers who have to switch to online learning may find challenging (Hashim, 2018). The guide works to confirm and legitimize the research done on the field of online learning. The research says that online learning can be challenging, but that does not mean it is impossible or a bad method of attaining education. However, in these studies and in the *Online Teaching Survival Guide* there is a heavy emphasis on the importance of being proficient with technology.

Similarly, just as one cannot teach without learning how to use the whiteboard, you cannot teach without knowing how to use your computer or device to its fullest extent to help your students grow. In concurrence with the studies done on the subjects and current attitudes toward online learning, the guide ties together a lot of the issues and solutions that arise in online learning. The majority of online programs emphasize that teachers and students can succeed in online classrooms and courses with the appropriate measures taken, and *Online Teaching Survival Guide: Simple and Practical Pedagogical Tips* reinforces that by offering exact plans on the subject. These works that are coming out are really illuminating a field that has been slowly growing over the years and tackle the issues presented by online learning in a complimentary way. These studies and the *Online Teaching Survival Guide* highlight the importance of teachers being able to get help, because without teachers feeling comfortable with teaching online, our students are not set up to succeed.

## Conclusion

This book is a huge step in the right direction to give more resources to teachers who are either choosing or by necessity must teach online. There is so much emerging support in this field for teachers but there is also much to be desired in this field as far as support for both teachers and students are concerned. The fact that this book does exist and is so in-depth and thorough points to the future of online learning and the recognition of online learning as a valid choice for both teachers and students. As an online teacher, I recommend this book for educating oneself as a teacher as to how to become successful and effective at teaching online. I would also recommend looking into popular student opinions of online learning and what they need most. This book is a considerable instrument to restructure and refresh your attitudes and material for education with enthusiasm in order to best help your students and yourself.

## Disclosure Statement

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## Notes on Contributor

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