Getting To Know You: When Formative Assessment Meets Instructional Technology


Don’t let the title fool you. You need not use a particular type of ‘clicker’ to find practical value in *Teaching with Classroom Response Systems: Creating Active Learning Environments*. As the author states, it is the intention of the book to be used as a resource, offering practical advice and lessons learned for engaging students by way of clickers and other hand-held devices. Particularly relevant in an era where ever-occurring text messaging on ubiquitous smart phones is *de rigour* on the higher education landscape, the book is primarily for those who are new to using clickers (and similar devices such as smart phones) to elicit student response.

Offering concrete perspectives for educators and faculty developers in higher education, the content in the book is presented as a series of questions and answers instructors using this technology are likely to ask. The teaching methods described therein are real-life case studies from instructors who are using these approaches are widely generalizable and relatively independent of discipline or subject matter area.

Focusing on the many teaching choices instructors face when using hand-held technologies, the book offers informed and intentional reflection from practitioners already immersed in this innovative practice. Because the focus is more on teaching – and less on the technical minutiae of setting up and administering a system – the author drills down to the fundamental uses of clickers and mobile devices as a means for engaging in and assessing student learning.

The author shares descriptions of examples of clicker questions and offers a variety of learning activities as illustrative case studies drawn from undergraduate and professional learning settings. Using the power of peer and collegial experience as a basis for case studies, the content of the book is presented through several frameworks, including hierarchical question types, types of student responses, techniques for structuring class activity and discussion, and strategies for assessment. Arising from structured interviews with over fifty professors, the author provides concrete examples of clicker use, which will no doubt inspire the reader to consider using these techniques in his/her own classroom.
Building on the umbrella concept of peer instruction, both pragmatic advice and lessons learned from using clicker technology as a means for promoting and encouraging student engagement is presented.

Emphasizing active learning, the book is divided into many topical areas and opens with suggestions for engaging students in the learning process through small group discussions, illustrating the concept of peer instruction. Building around clicker use, the book then focuses on tailoring one’s instruction in order to capitalize on on-the-spot decision-making, the ability to provide timely feedback, and the benefit of facilitating graded quizzes and tests.

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