

RESOURCE BASED LEARNING REVISITED

by Sue Spence

Resource based learning will be a familiar methodology to most teachers. A wide range of resources are used to deliver course content and research assignments feature prominently in subjects such as science, and society and environment. A shift in learning theory and the increasing impact of the Internet and multi-media has led educators to re-visit the RBL methodology.

Shift in learning theory

Jamie McKenzie compares 'smokestack schools' with schools of the Information Age, where teachers have moved from imparting meaning, to enabling students to make meaning.

- Methodology has shifted from Teacher-centred to Student-centred
- The teacher role has moved from Transmitter to Facilitator
- The emphasis has switched from Resource Based Teaching to Resource Based Learning
- The focus has shifted from Content to Competencies or transferable Skills
- Assessment focus has shifted from solely Product to include Process

The shift in learning theory is seen in DETE's promotion of the explicit teaching of Key Competencies.

Impact of Internet and multi-media

1. Increased need for information skills

There is a social justice imperative - the need to empower the information poor - as without these skills in an Information Age, students are definitely disadvantaged. We provide support for students with literacy problems - we need to also consider information literacy.

Nowadays whenever we set research assignments for students we assume that students will be using technology - such as the Internet or CD-ROMs, as well as the traditional sources. There is often a further underlying assumption that students know how to effectively use technologies like the Internet.

In reality the explicit teaching of information skills is even more essential now that students can very quickly find thousands of sites when searching on the Internet. Where we used to show students how to use an encyclopedia index, we now also need to teach CD-ROM navigation skills and search strategies for the web. Where we taught notetaking and citation skills, we now also need to cover electronic note-taking and bibliographic record keeping. Online help for these 'mechanical' skills is available on our school intranet or as print brochures in the Resource Centre.

While Information Technology can make locating information easier and quicker, the skills of finding the **right** information have become even more important. When using the Internet for RBL students need guidance in the defining stage to set them on the right path. Teacher librarians can assist in this by providing **Pathfinders** - in print and online. Students then need assistance in selecting relevant and accurate material. Students do tend to think that if something is published on the net, it must be worthwhile, truthful and accurate. The evaluation of web sites is a vital skill for true information literacy. Again help on this is available to staff and students via the intranet or brochures, or best of all through the teacher-librarians! The impact of the Internet and multimedia has been to place additional demands on the teacher to ensure that students not only have the mechanical skills to use these tools, but also the higher order thinking skills to select and evaluate information from electronic sources. The use of [weboquests](#) is at the leading edge of the new RBL.

2. The new plagiarism

The Internet has also introduced cybercheating - [plagiarism](#) is so much easier now. How we set up assignments has a crucial role in [preventing plagiarism](#) - we need to position the student so that they have to interpret information rather than merely replicate it. The teacher librarians are happy to help you to re-shape some of your existing assignments in order to reduce the risk of plagiarism, as well as integrate technology and key competencies.

3. But.....

Those same tools and sources have widened, deepened and enlivened the resources available for teachers and learners to use as part of RBL. Students are usually more engaged in their learning when using the internet or CD-ROMs. It is upto us to ensure that students become skilled as well as enthusiastic users of such resources.



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