

Learning with text books in business and management in higher education

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Abstract

This paper reports a study that investigates text book access and use for two cohorts of students studying modules on organisational behaviour and marketing, respectively. Changing student profiles, provoked by widening access agendas and increased numbers of non-UK students suggest that well structured text books may be an important resource for students in the early stages of their higher education. Text books in business and management are developing in the extent to which they offer a total learning experience, with embedded activities, and web sites; many have been refined over several editions, and used with numerous cohorts of students. A questionnaire based survey of 100 undergraduate students collected a profile of student use of two widely used text books. The survey addresses the way in which the students acquire access to recommended texts, and a range of aspects of how the text is used. Students do acquire their own copy of the text book, and use it primarily to help with coursework and revision for examinations. They make notes from the text book, and find definitions, the main text, and case studies to be the most useful elements of the book. They find the amount of information to be too much, and rely on lectures to structure their reading. Implications of the research for tutors, students and authors and publishers are outlined. A more extensive quantitative study would facilitate more precise profiling of differences between years and subjects. Further research of a qualitative nature needs to be conducted in order to achieve a more multidimensional picture of how students use text books, and integrate them with learning through other experiences. In addition, it would be useful to understand how much prior learning approaches, assessment methods and other factors affect the use of text books.

Keywords: Learning; text books; reading development; undergraduate students; business and management courses