

Use of Student 'Consultancy to Industry' Projects to achieve Authentic Assessment and Problem-based Learning in an Undergraduate Business Degree

Claire M. Gardiner
Faculty of Business
Queensland University of Technology
Australia

Authentic assessment has been promoted as a key ingredient in good teaching and assessment practice in higher education, incorporating problem-based learning, testing of higher order skills, and problem based learning beyond the classroom. It may foster problem based learning that will be valued for its currency, relevance and practicality by the learners and future employers, fostering employability. So, learning activities and assessment tasks can progress beyond recall and reproduction, to more complex challenges involving evaluation and meta-cognitive skills (MacLennan, 2004; Neuman, Marks & Gamorran, 1996). Applied learning has been associated with the development of connections between the theoretical and cognitive, application of knowledge in practice, improved transferability of skills between university and the workplace, and engagement with business and the community (Rae, 2007). This paper reports the initial findings from student 'consultancy to industry' projects within an undergraduate business degree in an Australian university. Data were gathered over four years from student surveys and employer feedback. Analysis indicates that the project-based learning is seen to be relevant to the degree and subject matter, add value and extend students' technical and discipline learning outcomes. Further, 'consultancy to industry' projects should be appropriately designed, well organised, properly managed and add value for the industry partner. The development of pedagogy and practice in relation to 'consultancy to industry' projects to enhance outcomes for: (a) students' learning, (b) industry partners, and (c) project design and management are discussed.

Keywords: authentic assessment, student industry projects, undergraduate business projects