MOTIVATION TO ENGAGE: PILOTING ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES TO ENCOURAGE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Anthony Williams¹, Jamie Mackie², Thayaparan Gajendran³ and Graham Brewer⁴

University of Newcastle, Architectural and Built Environment, Callaghan, NSW, 2308, Australia
Email: ¹tony.williams@newcastle.edu.au; ²jamie.mackie@newcastle.edu.au;
⁴thayaparan.gajendran@newcastle.edu.au; ⁵gbrewer@newcastle.edu.au

Abstract
Problem based learning (PBL) requires that the educational experience be student-centred and situated in a real-world context. Further, the motivation to learn is largely driven by the student’s expectation and experience of assessment procedures. It is a challenge to design assessment processes that satisfy the simultaneous requirements of educational certification, quality assurance, problem realism and yet provide realistic outcomes whilst still encouraging creativity and deep learning. This paper reports on the implementation of a trial assessment strategy that seeks to address the challenge in a problem based learning context.

Keywords
Problem based learning, assessment, motivation, self-assessment, reflective practice.

INTRODUCTION

The need to review and evaluate the assessment strategies applied in tertiary courses provides an opportunity to closer align the learning experiences of the students with the stated learning outcomes. Within the curriculum structure of integrated problem based learning (IPBL) the issue of assessment is even more critical as it provides direction and purpose to student learning. In the process of considering the assessment processes in the programme of Construction Management at the University of Newcastle there is potential to make the assessment more meaningful enhancing the practice of reflective practice and self-assessment or evaluation. Following is the report of the implementation of this initiative.

THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT IN PROBLEM BASED LEARNING

Fundamental in the problem based learning philosophy is the recognition of the fact that assessment is the primary contributor to the learning experience of students. Assessment provides the framework for learning as well as the context of what is to be learned. An exploration of problem based learning literature details the existence of a continuum of beliefs with one outlier of the continuum maintaining format and the content of the assessment item must be appropriate to problem based learning (Marks-Muran and Gail Thomas 2000). The other outlier would maintain that assessment format is of less consequence than content (Norman 1991).