

Main Project: Enhancing Teaching and Learning through Assessment
Sub-project: Assessing Experiential Learning during Sandwich Placements

Investigator(s): Jakša Kivela, School of Hotel and Tourism Management (HTM) and Patrick Lai, Educational Development Centre (EDC)

Introduction/Background

The concern to develop rigorous techniques of assessment for sandwich placement performance seems to be motivated by a number of considerations. Assessment, as is often argued, helps to give the placement, and the experiential learning which occurs in the placement, due academic weight, and hence the integration of theory and practice would be given a higher priority. Furthermore, assessment of placement performance is occasionally implicitly used as a proxy for the evaluation of the idea of sandwich placements *per se*. It is argued here that none of these motives for assessment is strong enough to justify the disruption to placements that an undue emphasis on assessment may produce, and that the final reason, i.e. that assessment stands proxy for evaluation, is just plain illogical. It can be argued therefore, that the use of assessment is to facilitate genuine, meaningful experiential learning; part of a ‘conversation’ between student and teacher (whether placement tutor or on-placement supervisor), which is aimed at an ongoing negotiation of significant personal objectives and an appraisal of the student’s success in fulfilling them. And, that the summative assessment processes, as a human and social enterprise, involves three phases:

1. the perception of relevant student behaviour;
2. the judgement as to its quality as placement performance, and
3. the communication of this assessment to an audience.

When analysing these processes in detail, it can be deduced that they are fraught with difficulty, and that they certainly ought not to be used to provide the basis for quantitative measure. In addition, these problems are not amenable to technical solution, that is, there is no possible measuring technique, which could magically render the human process of assessment reliable and valid. For the human process is logically prior to the process of erecting a scale of measurement of performance. Yet it is justifiable to require an overall report of placement performance. Hence, it is suggested that a qualitative account including a transcript of activities, and recommends separate certification of placement performance rather than any attempt to incorporate a ‘placement score’ in the calculation of degree class. Hence, it is critical that effort should be put into designing and implementing appropriate placement assessment practices that will facilitate effective evaluation and assessment. This proposed two-year intra-institutional project, aims to enhance the quality of teaching and learning outcomes by investigating and evaluating the current sandwich placement assessment practices, and by way of analysing the results, in recommending more equitable sandwich placement assessment practices. The proposed study will call for a collaborative effort between HKPU departments, which offer sandwich placement programmes. It is also proposed to conduct additional investigative work and seek contributions from other tertiary institutions in Hong Kong SAR.

Funding will be required to support this teaching development project about the current sandwich placement assessment practices in Hong Kong. Select degree sandwich programmes within HKPU and from other tertiary institutions in Hong Kong e.g. the City Polytechnic and Baptist University will be targeted for data collection. Typically, data will include the actual subject syllabi, schemes of work, assessment instruments and procedures, and samples of students’ sandwich assessments. This data will then be content analysed. Arising from data and the review of best practices, detailed recommendations will then be drafted and shared with the relevant Departments (at the HKPU and with other participating institutions), including the Educational Development Centre at the HKPU, so

as to provide for a better framework for the planning and introduction of more equitable and effective placement assessment systems, that would further enhance the quality of teaching and learning in Hong Kong and at the HKPU. In addition, it is planned to disseminate the information to a wider academic community in Hong Kong SAR by staging a series of half-day mini-conferences at the HKPU.

Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this teaching development project is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning by way of investigating, analysing, developing, and implementing (piloting) a more effective sandwich placement assessment methodology and practices, and more effective use of sandwich placement assessment results. Since the assessment of sandwich placements is often an integral part of many of the HKPU's degree programmes, it is essential to better understand what current practices exist and what assessment methodologies are used when assessing students' experiential learning during sandwich placements, specifically focusing on the assessment of student experiential learning outcomes, and how these assessments are being used to influence and improve the quality of learning and teaching at the HKPU. Based on the review of the relevant literature, the analysis of relevant data, and 'best practices' identified, innovative recommendations and development in and support to assessment of experiential learning will be proposed. To achieve this aim, the following specific objectives are proposed:

Objectives

1. To investigate and analyse the current experiential learning assessment practices and methods used in degree programmes within the HKPU and in other tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. (Select degree sandwich programmes will be selected at a latter date e.g. School of Hotel and Tourism Management; School of Nursing; School of Design; Department of Management; Department of Building Services Engineering; Department of land Surveying and Geo-Informatics; Department of Shipping and Transport.) These include the assessment approaches, pedagogical methodology, implementation procedures, appropriateness to experiential learning objectives, 'fitness of purpose' to students' learning outcomes, and problems/difficulties encountered by students, placement tutors, and on-placement supervisors;
2. To review the relevant literature to identify best practices in sandwich assessment;
3. To explore and analyse by way of in-depth interviews with sandwich placement students, their placement tutors, and with their on-placement supervisors, the impacts of current sandwich placement assessment practices on students' learning outcomes, development of syllabi, learning and teaching practices;
4. To develop a sandwich placement assessment model that could be used HKPU-wide that would further enhance and support the University's on-going quality assurance and improvement of teaching mission.
5. To pilot the proposed sandwich placement assessment model and facilitate learning and teaching development activities by way of intra-institutional workshops and seminars;

Activities

1. Search and document current practices, including search of relevant literature – Objectives 1 and 2
2. Interview relevant entities – Objectives 1, 2 and 3

3. Interview students – Objectives, 1, 2 and 3
4. Develop appropriate model and pilot the model – Objective 4 and 5
5. Facilitate learning and teaching development activities by way of intra-institutional workshops and seminars – Objective 5

Schedule of Activities

Expected duration of this project (in years and months) 24 months

Proposed commencement: January, 2004.

Estimated completion: January, 2005

Please state below the major deliverables at various stages of the implementation of the project (Max 1/2 page).

The project will be implemented in 2 stages, each with the following deliverables:

Stage 1 – Investigation – generation of relevant data – analysis (Jan. 2004 – Sep 2004)

- a. Investigating and constructing a data base of placement programmes and placement assessment types used - (at this stage the programmes are unknown because the author has not approached the relevant departments, however, degree programmes at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management will be participating in this project, and other earmarked departments include: School of Nursing; School of Design; Department of Management; Department of Building Services Engineering; Department of land Surveying and Geo-Informatics; Department of Shipping and Transport);
- b. Analysis and evaluation (against the review of literature and ‘best-practice’ the current placement assessment practices;
- c. In depth interviews about the quality and effectiveness of current the placement assessment practices (sandwich placement students, placement supervisors, and placement tutors);
- d. Analysis and evaluation (against the review of literature and ‘best-practice’ the current placement assessment practices as perceived by placement students, placement supervisors, and placement tutors; and
- e. Prepare a preliminary findings report and stage the first Intra-faulty seminar at the HKPU

Stage 2 – Implementation of assessment initiatives (Sept. 2004 – Jan 2005)

- a. Development of sandwich placement assessment model;
- b. Implementation (piloting) of the proposed sandwich placement assessment model at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management;
- c. Evaluation of the piloted sandwich placement assessment model;
- d. Conducting dissemination/sharing of findings vis-à-vis intra-institutional workshops and seminars;
- e. Reporting and evaluation of the overall project efforts; and
- f. Writing up of final report

Evaluation

The project outcomes will be evaluated through the following means:

1. From participating Departments highlighted above;
2. From EDC;
3. Students assessment outcomes;
4. Feedback from participants of staff development activities;
5. Feedback from conference/journal publications.

Dissemination of Results

The outcomes of the project will be disseminated through the following means:

1. At least two workshop/seminar activities will be presented to academic staff at HKPU;
2. Dissemination and distribution of findings to interested parties at HKPU and other institutions of higher education in Hong Kong SAR; and
3. Local and overseas conference attendance, paper presentation and journal publications.

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