

‘Fostering learning for capability and assessing authentically: my vision for Enterprise Education’

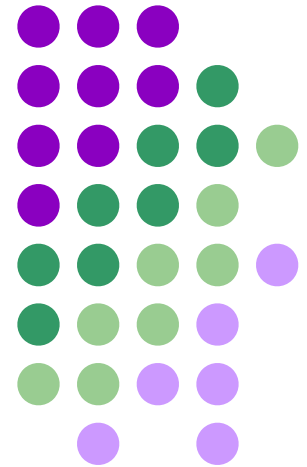
International Entrepreneurship Educators
Conference 2015

2020: A vision for enterprise education

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How can we design, deliver and assess a curriculum that actively encourages student engagement?



We are currently preparing students for careers that we can't envisage in employment contexts that don't yet exist, so setting out to teach a fixed body of knowledge isn't sensible. Students will need to be competent at locating, accessing, evaluating and using source material so instead we must concentrate on helping students, to be flexible, adaptable, creative, empathetic and competent. Drawing on scholarship and experiences of working globally, this keynote proposes ways to prepare students for purposeful and productive futures.



Employability: contextual factors

- Universities want to provide employable graduates;
- Students want to be employable when they graduate;
- Employers want universities to provide relevant and appropriate curricula.

On vocationally-orientated programmes, authentic assignments that relate to real world tasks tend to be highly prized by students and employers alike (QAA, 2014, Wharton, 2003), hence the need for authentic learning experiences and assessment.

Universities want to provide employable graduates: are your students job-ready?



A major initiative, ‘Job Ready’, explored between 2012 and 2014 how universities and businesses could best work together to create opportunities for UK students and graduates to develop their skills. Based upon extensive and in-depth interviews with 50 employers, it captures a snapshot of the 21,000 interactions between businesses and University Alliance universities (University Alliance, 2014).

Within the report, Libby Hackett, Chief Executive of University Alliance, said: “At a time when most of the employment growth in the UK is in [jobs] involving analytical, problem solving and complex communications, it is important that we ensure universities are working closely with employers”.

Four examples of the need for job-readiness



- 1. Annalise Hayward of IBM working with Kingston University said: “We wanted to align with a university that is being strategic and innovative in what it’s doing and looking at ways to grow the employability of their students. This mission fits with our values on innovation”. (University Alliance, *op cit*, 2014).**
- 2. Rhys Williams of GE Aviation working with University of South Wales “For us to maintain our competitive advantage, we need to be finding and nurturing talent to develop a future pipeline of highly skilled employees”.**

Another example of the need for job readiness from the field of engineering



3. David Webber, Business Development Manager for Agustawestland working with Plymouth University, said:

“I expect students to come in highly motivated, energetic and with a very good core base of up-to-date skills in terms of technology, computing and presentation skills. I also expect them to come with an enquiring mind, because all of those skills are immediately applicable to the roles we put them into. After this, it’s the task specific knowledge that we are looking to provide for them. We’re looking for self-starters really.”

A fourth example of the need for job readiness



4. Bill Kelly of British Airways working with University of South Wales said:

“To ensure our long-term prosperity and to ensure that we will be able to provide a competitive maintenance service back to our airline into the future (the next 10, 15, 20 years) we needed to transform our skills and experience. For example, simple things like the way we conduct repairs to the aircraft and the challenges around things like fibre optics, avionics, hydraulics, that’s all moved forwards from a technological standpoint and we really needed to sit back and ask how we prepare our engineers”.

Students want to be employable when they graduate



- Many students (and their families) are making an investment in their personal and professional development by undertaking higher education and so have high expectations of the usefulness and relevance of their programmes and particularly the means by which they are assessed.
- Since so many students regard university study as a career advancement or progression route, they are likely to regard programmes which do not add value to their capabilities and knowledge as perceived by potential employers as a poor investment of their time and energy.
- Authentic learning and assessment have a key role to play in helping students become employable.

Helping students to be flexible, adaptable, creative, empathetic and competent



- This requires a focus on ‘learning by doing’: while subject content and knowledge are essential for competence, students in the digital age need less reliance on ‘learning by heart’ and a greater focus on ‘learning by use’;
- Many argue that creativity can’t be taught, but it can be fostered by providing learning environments in which trying things out without a fear of failure is actively encouraged;
- Similarly lessons in theories about empathy are less likely to be productive than getting students working in groups and finding out for themselves about conflict resolution and collegiality.

Employers want universities to provide relevant and appropriate curricula



- Unfortunately, employers are not always impressed with the work-readiness of new graduates, particularly those who have been taught and assessed in conventional ways.
- Arriving with a sound body of knowledge is, of course, expected, but more than that, graduates need to be able to demonstrate interpersonal skills and social literacy, as well as a commitment to ongoing personal and professional development.
- “In an increasingly globalised world, businesses are looking for excellent graduates with international experience while at the same time attracting lifelong learners with appropriate working experience and state-of-the-art knowledge and skills” (Morgan, 2013).

Designing relevant and appropriate curricula to enhance employability.



- Curriculum design must be an ongoing process rather than a single event, with regular refreshment to keep it up-to-date, context contingent and in line with employers' current needs;
- Curriculum design can be seen as an eight-element process, which is often concurrent rather than cyclical;
- The following diagram illustrates these eight dimensions of activity:

Curriculum Design Essentials

Determining and reviewing subject material: currency, relevance, level

Designing and refining learning outcomes

Considering delivery modes: face-to-face, online, PBL, blended...

Thinking through student support

Designing fit for purpose and authentic assessment methods and approaches

Assuring quality, matching HEI, national and PRSB requirements

Evaluating programmes, strengths and areas for improvement

Enhancing quality, seeking continuous improvement

What is authentic assessment?



- We often assess what is easy to assess, or proxies of what has been learned, rather than the learning itself.
- A valid assessment is one that has close relevance to the criteria, which are in turn constructively aligned to the stated learning outcomes of a programme.
- Effective assessment is highly relevant to ensuring that graduates can demonstrate the knowledge, behaviours, qualities and attributes that were described in the course outline or programme specification.
- Assignments that require students to write about something, rather than *be* or *do* something, may not be fit-for-purpose.

Adapted from Chapter 7 of Brown, S., *Assessment, learning and Teaching: global perspectives*, Palgrave (2015)

The key assessment issues: how can we:



- **Devise and manage fit-for-purpose assessment that validly and reliably captures students achievement?**
- **Ensure that students learn the theory they need to practise and develop the practices they need to be effective in their chosen fields of work and research?**
- **Ensure that programme or institutional assessment strategies are pedagogically sound, and are manageable for both staff and students?**

To achieve authentic assessment we need to ensure that:



- We take a proactive approach to assessment design, interrogating and clarifying purposes, applications, approaches and methods, agency and timing;
- The theory that students learn is quickly and effectively translated into practice, so students can make the connections for themselves;
- We use up-to-date means to manage the assessment process, including Electronic Management of Assessment;
- We systematically and progressively foster assessment literacy and an understanding of acceptable academic conduct.



We need also to:

- Review carefully both innovative and traditional assessment formats to ensure students are assessed appropriately;
- Periodically review the feedback we get on assessment from students, quality assurance colleagues and peers to make sure we redress problems and continuously improve;
- Review curriculum design essentials to ensure assessment is constructively aligned with learning outcomes (Biggs and Tang, 2007).

Assessment literacy: students do better if they can:



- **Make sense of key terms such as criteria, weightings, and level;**
- **Encounter a variety of assessment methods (e.g. presentations, portfolios, posters, assessed web participation, practicals, vivas etc) and get practice in using them;**
- **Be strategic in their behaviours, putting more work into aspects of an assignment with high weightings, interrogating criteria to find out what is really required and so on;**
- **Gain clarity on how the assessment regulations work in their HEI, including issues concerning submission, resubmission, pass marks, condonement etc.**

What are the benefits of authentic assessment for students, staff and other stakeholders?



- Students undertaking authentic assessments tend to be more fully engaged in learning and hence tend to achieve more highly because they see the sense of what they are doing;
- University teachers are able to use realistic and live contexts within which to frame assessment tasks, which help to make theoretical elements of the course come to life;
- Employers value students who can quickly engage in real-life tasks immediately on employment, having practices relevant skills and competences through their assignments.

Authentic assessment happens when:



- We directly examine student performance on worthy intellectual tasks;
 - Students are required to be effective performers with acquired knowledge.
 - We can make valid inferences about the student's performance from the assignments presented for assessment
- (after Wiggins, 1990)



Authentic assignments:

- present the student with the full array of tasks that mirror the priorities and challenges found in the best [teaching] activities
- attend to whether the student can craft polished, thorough and justifiable answers, performances or products.
- Involve students coping with potentially ill-structured challenges and roles, with incomplete information, that help them rehearse for the complex ambiguities of adult and professional life.
(after Wiggins *op cit*)

Authentic assessment:

8 questions on 'why is assessment being undertaken at this point in time?'



1. Is it to help students know how they are doing?
2. Can it enable students to get the measure of their achievement or help them consolidate their learning?
3. Is it to offer students formative guidance on the remediation of errors while they still have time to improve matters?
4. Is it a summative assignment, designed to make a judgment about whether a student is fit to practise in a practice setting, or to determine whether professional requirements have been satisfied sufficiently to achieve professional accreditation?



And the last four questions

- 5. Can this particular assignment help to motivate students so they better engage with their learning?**
- 6. Does it provide them with opportunities to relate theory and practice?**
- 7. Are there opportunities through this assignment for students to demonstrate their employability?**
- 8. What particular ‘threshold concepts’ and ‘troublesome knowledge’ do students struggle with, and how can we help them better come to terms with them?**

Adapted from Chapter 7 of Brown, S., *Assessment, learning and Teaching: global perspectives*, Palgrave (2015)



Inauthentic assessment is when:

- proxies for assessment of competence performance are undertaken rather than performative elements themselves;
- the tasks being undertaken by students have little intrinsic value in themselves in terms of advancing students learning;
- theory is prioritised to the detriment of practical applications;
- activities lack currency to contemporary practical contexts.

What are the barriers to the uses of authentic assessment?



- Inertia factors mean that many colleagues would prefer to stick to ‘tried and tested methods’ they are used to;
- Organising traditional exams, multiple-choice questions and essays requires less effort to set up than assignments which include the development of case study material and the establishment of authentic practice setting environments in university buildings;
- Authentic assessment tasks may involve additional costs.

A manifesto for authentic curriculum design and assessment:

It must be:



- Action-orientated, with students learning by doing;
- Underpinned by relevant evidence-based scholarship;
- Coherent, constructively aligned and challenging
- Enhancing of learning and involving students' action;
- Inclusive in its approaches, so it doesn't disadvantage students with special educational needs and disabilities;



Authentic assessment must be:

- Nuanced, clearly articulated and transparent in the way that decisions are reached on assessment grades;
- Timely in its execution while being tactical in its purpose
- Truly representative of student effort;
- Maximising of student effort and time on task while remaining manageable and viable in terms of its organisation for the staff doing it,

This is tough to achieve, but if we can do it, the benefits for all are substantial!

These and other slides will be available on my website at <http://sally-brown.net>



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