Working at Problems: PBL In Media Practice Education

Roy Hanney (Chichester University)
and
Prof. Maggi Savin-Baden (Coventry University)
Can we ask ourselves:

- What do we do?
- How do we do it?
- Why do we do it?
Is there a way of conceptualising Media Practice?

• That retains at its heart the development of skills in ‘critical thinking’;

• That embeds learning within a workplace context;

• That enables us to manage and evaluate success in relation to process;

• That produces ‘Job Ready’ graduates with appropriate intellectual capabilities and occupational competencies?
Problem-based Learning

PBL was popularized in the 1960s as a result of research by Barrows into the reasoning abilities of medical students...

...research stemmed from a desire to help medical students develop the ability to relate their knowledge to the problems with which the patients presented...

...something they found that few medical students could do well.
PBL can be thought of:

“Both a curriculum and a process. The curriculum consists of carefully selected and designed problems that demand from the learner acquisition of critical knowledge, problem solving proficiency, self-directed learning strategies, and team participation skills. The process replicates the commonly used systemic approach to resolving problems or meeting challenges that are encountered in life and career“ (Barrows & Kelson 1993)
Problem-based Learning

• Organises curricular content around problem scenarios rather than subjects or disciplines

• Students work in groups or teams to manage these situations but are not expected to acquire a predetermined series of ‘right answers’

• Students are expected to engage with the complex situation presented to them and decide what information *they* need to learn and what skills *they* need to gain, in order to manage the situation effectively
Problem-based Learning

• Thus students use intuition to solve set problems in a manner that ‘mirrors play activity’ (Stephenson 2003:88) and so has the benefit of being fun, while involving a significant degree of exploratory or experiential learning.

• One of the varieties of approach discussed by Savin-Baden includes instances where students may meet with a client in some form of simulated format that allows for a brief to be given and students to engage in a free discussion or enquiry with that client to establish the nature of the brief/problem (Savin-Baden 2004:5)
Problem-based Learning

• “The things we need to learn before we do them, we learn by doing them” (Aristotle)

• Isn’t this how we learn in the industry – ‘on the job’?

• Isn’t this also at the heart of Media Practice Education?
Problem-based Learning

• Many of us already use some form of PBL in what we currently do;

• In fact it is highly likely that you are already using PBL in some ‘hybrid’ form or another;
The Problem of Projects

• Many theorists and practitioners regard project based learning as synonymous with PBL;

• Research and reflection suggests that in fact this is not the case!
The Problem of Projects

What is a project?
The Problem of Projects

• The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK):
  - A project is a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product or service.
The Problem of Projects

• The Project Manager's Desk Reference:

  - A project is a one-time, multitask job that has clearly defined starting and ending dates, a specific scope of work to be performed, a budget, and a specified level of performance to be achieved.
The Problem of Projects

• Definition of a project;
  
  – 1. A project is temporary.
  
  – 2. A project is unique.
  
  – 3. A project is the result of a multi-task job that performs something specific (i.e. a goal). It is thus progressively elaborated.
The Problem of Projects

• PRINCE2;

• Conceptual Framework for Small Projects (from Bentley 2005);

• Two phases of a small project:
  - Innovation Phase;
  - Implementation Phase.
### PRINCE2 Process Model for Small Projects

#### Small Scale Projects Process Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **SU – Setting up the Project** | (who) Project Supervisor, Client & Project Team;  
(how) Use of questionnaire to structure an initial meeting in response to initial trigger from client and investigate through questioning;  
(what) A draft Project Definition is produced and agreed by Client, Project Supervisor & Project Team. | |
| **IP – Initiating the Project** | (who) Project Team meet to develop creative proposal in response to the Project Definition;  
(how) Group working and creative problem solving;  
(what) A Project Initiation Document (PID) is produced including the Project Definition, Project Proposal, & Project Plan. | |
| **DP2 – Authorising the Project** | (who) Project Team, Client & Project Supervisor;  
(how) Project Team pitches proposal to a panel and is given feedback (and/or green/red light);  
(what) Pitching Documents and Multimedia, Client and Project Supervisor sign off PID. | |
| **DP3 – Stage Authorisation** | (who) Project Team, Client & Project Supervisor;  
(how) Project monitoring, change management and review;  
(what) Stage Document is produced and signed off. | |
| **Implementation Phase** | (who): Project Team, Client & Project Supervisor (may include additional professional mentoring);  
(how) Mentoring through dialogue and feedback during process of the project through tutorials, client contact, contact with mentors and the maintenance of effective channels of communication;  
(what) Formative feedback and skills development (capabilities, competences, occupational skills, transferable skills). | |
| **DP4 – Giving Ad Hoc Advice** | (who) Project Team, Client & Project Supervisor;  
(how) Client evaluation, tutor assessment, peer assessment, critical reflection, exhibition, publication or distribution;  
(what) Project artifact(s) and/or event, student’s critical commentary and client evaluation. | |

Mapping PBL onto Project-led Learning
### Problem-based – vs – Project-based Learning Comparison Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project-Based Learning</th>
<th>Problem-Based Learning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome requires students to produce some kind of artefact for assessment</td>
<td>Outcome is <em>open ended</em> and not necessarily subject to assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment by a ‘crit’ or some other form of connoisseur assessment</td>
<td><em>Peer or self assessment</em> is used, by reflection on action or other student centred approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tutor supervises</td>
<td>The tutor <em>facilitates</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are required to produce a solution or strategy that solves the problem</td>
<td>Solving the problem may be part of the process however the focus is on the process of <em>problem management</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutor led curriculum within the life span of the project</td>
<td><em>Students determine</em> the kind of learning they wish to undertake perhaps utilising allocated resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students come together in groups for the period of the project</td>
<td>Students form <em>learning teams</em> for the duration of the course and may undertake many problem-based scenarios together (thus they have to work through difficulties)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are given structured projects that are linked to pre-determined outcomes</td>
<td><em>Real-Life problems</em> may be set in advance but outcomes are not pre-determined</td>
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PBL Models

Different models of problem-based learning affect the kind of learning opportunities on offer to students.
PBL Models

**Model 1:** Problem-based learning for epistemological competence;

**Model 11:** Problem-based learning for professional action;

**Model 111:** Problem-based learning for interdisciplinary understanding;

**Model 1V:** Problem-based learning for transdisciplinary learning;

**Model V:** Problem-based learning for critical contestability.

Model 1: Problem-based learning for epistemological competence

- Model I is characterized by a view of knowledge that is essentially propositional.

- Students are expected to become competent in applying knowledge in the context of solving, and possibly managing, problems.

- Problem-based learning is therefore used as a means of helping students to learn content.
Model II: Problem-based learning for professional action

- This model has, as its overarching concept, the notion of ‘know-how’.

- Learning centres on what it will enable students to be able to do.

- Limit of this model is its tendency to focus upon skills acquisition with the assumption that these can necessarily be transferred to the world e.g. clinical skills laboratories.
Model III: Problem-based learning for interdisciplinary understanding

- Here staff attempt to develop in their students a form of understanding that is interdisciplinary.

- The student understands that disciplines taught as discrete entities do overlap, but that she must make the necessary connections for herself.

- The connections students make are in the relationships between the disciplines.
Model IV: Problem-based learning for transdisciplinary learning

- Students to recognize that disciplinary boundaries exist but also illusory, that they have been erected.

- Staff encourage students to integrate learning into their deepest level of understanding across discipline boundaries, knowing that the boundaries are somewhat arbitrary.
Model V: Problem-based learning for critical contestability

- Students here examine the underlying structures and belief systems implicit within a discipline or profession itself.

- PBL of this sort enables students to develop a critical position from which to interpret the practice of others, to (re)develop their own critical perspectives and thence to critique them.
Mapping PBL onto Project-led Learning

Our research and reflection suggests that there is not a direct fit between the PBL models proposed by Savin-Baden and that of a Project.

There is over time!
• The Two Phases of Small Projects

• Phase One (Innovation): Critical, creative, questioning, brainstorming, ideas generation, problem solving, characterised by group working, non –hierarchical (PBL Model V);

• Phase Two (Implementation): Process led, doing, practical, goal orientated, knowledge with action, characterised by team working, hierarchical (PBL Model II).
Project-led PBL

• A new model (PL-PBL);

• Corresponds to the two phases of a Project;

• Utilises Model V and Model II from Savin-Baden.
Project-led PBL

Constellation 3 Project-led problem-based learning.

This constellation emerged from work undertaken with media practice educators in the UK. It is a model that becomes apparent from an exploration of the relationship between the use of 'live' project work in media practice and problem-based learning. The study began initially because of realisation of a conflict between the kinds of work-based learning that were being expected by external organisations which were skill-based and the kinds of project-based learning occurring in universities and proposes a model for work related learning that meets the needs of students, employers and educators. The study (Savin-Baden and Hanney, 2007) highlighted the need for a new model of problem-based learning that reflected the values of problems-based learning whilst also recognizes the value of 'Live Projects' or simulated work-related learning based on "real world data". In practice this constellation focuses on students acquiring skills for practice in the context of a project that is work-related, such as producing a media artefact and that may involve a ‘live’ client brief. Thus it transcends constellations 2 and 4 by utilising project management tools to structure PBL exercise, where the technical knowledge and skills to be gained are clearly delineated by the tutor; but learning derived from utilising opportunities, resources and experience in the workplace is led by the participating students.

London: Routledge
Project-led PBL

- The creative critical phase is fixed by the Project Initiation Document (PID) which outlines the project plan or implementation phase i.e. what they will do and what they will deliver (project outputs);

- The PID is a process document and allows us to interrogate the students intentions;

- The PID sets out the quality criteria for the project and is a benchmark for assessment.
PL-PBL Process

- Can be delivered over a period of weeks or during one day;
- Can include pitching panels with industry experts;
- PID can be included as an assessment document;
- An early PID submission deadline front loads student endeavour and engages them in planning for success.
Week 1: project definition (business response to the trigger)

- Client
- Background
- Aims
- Objectives
- Business Benefits
- Constraints
- Main Project Outputs
- Delivery
Project Initiation Document (PID)

Week 2: project proposal (creative response to trigger)

• Title
• Premise
• Outline or Narrative Summary
• Notes on Style, Form and Approach
Project Initiation Document (PID)

Week 3: project plan (procedural response to trigger)

- Work Breakdown Structure
- Schedule
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Resources
- Budget
- Monitoring
- Risks and Opportunities
Project Initiation Document (PID)

Learning Needs Statement

Please outline the learning your group will need to undertake in order to gain the skills and knowledge to deliver this project.

How will you gain these skills?

What will you need that is not already provided by the curriculum?
What is a Problem?

• An open-ended and ill-structured situation that has no ‘right’ answer;

• “A problem is a gap between what is actual and what is ideal” (Zwick 1995:2);

• Problems are “instantiations of abstract principals” (Zwick 1995:6).
Problem Triggers

• Students are given triggers to initiate the project;

• Triggers do not describe the problem they initiate a creative and critical response in the students;

• Promote critical thinking and an engagement with the real world;

• Outcomes are open ended and there is no right or wrong answer.
Problem Triggers

• Examples (*high concept intended to promote discussion*);
  - The Prisoners Dilemma;
  - Depict Film Festival;
  - Sustainability;
  - Belief;
  - An Additional Lens.
Problem Triggers

- Examples (*of actual briefs*);
  - Poem Film;
  - Soap Scene;
  - MuFu Profile (EPK).
PL-PBL: Back to Work Related Learning

• Is Industry Facing;

• Reflects real world practices;

• Engages SME’s, Micro Businesses and Sole Traders on their terms;

• Live Projects for real clients with real business needs;

• Use Project Management tools to facilitate and assess projects.
PL-PBL

• Challenges to students:
  - To engage in their own independent critical enquiry;
  - To manage their own resources;
  - To take ownership for their own learning.
Davies Review of Enterprise and the Economy in Education

- Davies Review defines enterprise capability:
  - “As the capability to handle uncertainty and respond positively to change, to create and implement new ideas and new ways of doing things, to make reasonable risk/reward assessments and act upon them in one’s personal and working life”

Davies Review of Enterprise and the Economy in Education 2002 [online]
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