

A developmental workshop: Gaining course synthesis through multi-stage deliverables

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

Students often struggle to understand the interconnected nature of the organization and how strategy becomes institutionalized through policies, structure and culture. Success in developing this organizational perspective has been achieved through the blending of project-based learning and scaffolding assignments. This workshop provides tools to develop a multi-stage student project which builds upon each prior deliverable to encourage course synthesis. Facilitator will share thoughts for designing a multi-stage project, offer rubrics for quick grading, and best practices – in both online and onground classrooms. Time will be allotted for session participants to design a multi-stage project for their own course.

2) Teaching Implications:

There are three primary learning objectives for this workshop:

- To help the instructor balance a project-based learning approach with scaffolded exercises to improve overall synthesis of course concepts and strengthen student understanding.
- To support multiple learning styles through the blending of observation and application in a minimal risk environment.
- To provide time, space and coaching for developing a scaffolded project

Project-based learning focuses on three principles: (1) that learning centers around a specific context, (2) that learners are actively involved in that learning and (3) that their learning goals are achieved through social interactions and sharing knowledge (Cocco, 2006; Kokotsaki, Menzies & Wiggins, 2016). When developing projects, instructors are encouraged to provide a central focus (*e.g. understanding institutionalization*), guided by an overarching question (*e.g. Do the policies and procedures of the organization mirror the mission and vision?*). This stimulates investigation and assists in bringing the course concepts to life (Thomas, 2000). Additionally, when projects are based in a personal work context, they encourage autonomy and passion for the project; helping to identify the presence of course concepts in students' "real" environment.

Despite the benefits of project-based learning, delivery of the project and analysis of the situation at the end of the course merely demonstrate students' comprehension of the material, but does not provide time for correction and redirection if they have misunderstood or become confused. Scaffolding, or the development of multi-stage deliverables, encourages students to test their understanding of course concepts, throughout the course, with minimal risk to the final grade. Scaffolding compliments Bloom's Taxonomy in terms of addressing the key components of create, evaluate, analyze, apply, understand, and hopefully, remember (Athanasios, McNett & Harvey, 2003; Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). Through multiple deliverables students examine (analyze) how a particular concept might impact their end result

(apply). Feedback provided after each deliverable allows the instructor to correct interpretation of a concept (understand) long before the final deliverable is produced. Through scaffolding assignments, students are provided the opportunity to apply specific concepts, receive feedback and rework their deliverable. This trial and error design allows students to tweak their understanding and interpretation of concepts, building strong final deliverables (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). This, in turn, instills greater confidence in application of these concepts in their work life (Kwon, Wardrip & Gomez, 2014; Patton, 2012).

Many topics in management require an understanding of the interconnectedness of organizations (Athanasios et al, 2003) scaffolded, project-based learning would facilitate exposure and practice for students to develop a new way of viewing organizational issues. For example, a scaffolded analysis of the organization's mission/vision and how that mission/vision is institutionalized through policies, procedures and tacit norms would offer insight into concepts of power, politics, HR, organizational structure, communication networks, culture and strategy.

Developing applicable multi-stage projects are time consuming. Successful implementation is dependent on the instructor to provide the right balance of learning, motivation, and encouragement through an incremental development of the final deliverable (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). The instructor must determine which concepts would be best served in a project-based environment, how to parlay selected concepts into multi-stage deliverables to develop the cumulative learning process, achieving "cognitive growth just beyond their reach" (Bell, 2010, p. 41). All this must be accomplished while balancing the instructor's need to manage the grading load. And, although best practices encourage a two-stage process whereby the first stage encourages the comprehension of technical concepts, while stage two synthesizes those concepts into analysis and recommendation (e.g. Drain, 2010), management topics don't always fit nicely into two –stages. For example, institutionalization of the whole organization (e.g. C-suite, HR, management, communication, etc.) requires multiple layers. Therefore more stages may be necessary.

3) Session Description and Plan:

This workshop is designed to offer guidance in terms of breaking apart the project deliverable into appropriate stages, overlaying course concepts and guidance in providing helpful feedback to the student without complicating the grading process. The session facilitator will briefly present the concept of multi-stage, project-based learning, and offer some best practices from her work at undergraduate and graduate level. The bulk of the session, however, focuses on participants. Participants will be encouraged to bring their own projects to work on; coaching will be provided for developing multi-stage deliverables.

Adequate time should be allotted to achieve the objectives of this workshop (1) To provide the pedagogical benefits of blending project based learning with scaffolding so as to achieve application and integration of course concepts in a safe, trial and error environment and (2) to provide space for participants to design a multi-stage project of their own. I strongly recommend a 60 minute session to achieve learning objectives. A

30-minute session would not provide time for participants to experiment with own project.

A 60 minute session would map into the time frame thusly:

- 0:00-0:03: Introductions, Brief overview of session
- 0:04-0:20: Demonstration of scaffolding projects, linking interim deliverables to course concepts, rubrics used to grade interim and final deliverables.
- 0:21-0:28: Individual participant identifies three salient course concepts for students to grasp for a strong final deliverable
- 0:29-0:36: Participants pair up to discuss concepts, and how they might split them out from the final deliverable
- 0:37-0:47: Individual participant drafts two interim deliverables mapping salient concepts to final deliverable
- 0:48-0:53: Participants pair up to discuss layout.
- 0:54-0:60: All discuss how to build out to final, offer thoughts on multi-stage process.

A 30-minute session would map onto timeline thusly, as you can see it greatly shortchanges development time:

- 0:00-0:03: Introductions, Brief overview of session plan
- 0:04-0:11: Demonstration of multiple deliverable concept, linking interim deliverables to course concepts.
- 0:12-0:19: Individual participant identifies two or three salient course concepts for students to grasp for a strong final deliverable
- 0:20-0:25: Participants pair up to discuss how to build into mini-deliverables.
- 0:26-0:30: All discuss how to build out to final, rubrics used to grade interim and final deliverables are offered as take-away's.

4) Application to Conference theme:

This session addresses three relevant changing currents for pedagogy. First, project based learning coupled with scaffolding can be used under any teaching modality. The facilitator has developed multi-stage deliverables for both the on-ground and the online learning environments, and with graduate and undergraduate students. This type of assignment is particularly useful in the online environment as a means of interacting with the student or team on a consistent basis throughout the course.

Secondly, through the use of project-based, multi-stage deliverables, course concepts and complex theories are applied directly to a real-world situation which is salient to the graduate student, and important in helping the non-working undergraduate appreciate the working environment. Students' value using their classroom experiences to sense-make a project of their own conception.

Finally, the 60 minute session provides time for collaboration with others to build multi-stage project designs for the classroom. This encourages OBTC conference

attendees to work within a forum sharing, pooling resources, and crafting a stronger deliverable.

5) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

This is a new work, not under review elsewhere.

References:

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