Experiential Learning (EL) In Planning Education

Johanna Rosier
Claudia Baldwin
Christine Slade
Benefits of Experiential Learning

- Skill development – both hard and soft skills
- Reflection and self-assessment occur
- Academia develops connections to the community
- Students gain experience and knowledge of actual practice, increasing their employability
- Allows for different learning styles
- Those students whose undergraduate education incorporated experiential learning are more likely to continue their education in postgraduate programs

Sources: Kolb 1984; Barnett 1995; Cantor 1995; Boud 1999
Experiential Learning is not Problem-free

- How to Assess Students
  - Baldwin 2000

- Supervision
  - Davys & Beddoe 2000

- Who Plans and Organises Experience
  - Baum 1997; Niebanck 1998

- Compatibility with Program
  - Ellis 1995

- Fair Workload for Students
  - Ellis 1995; Roakes & Norris-Tirrel 2000; Petkus 2000
Overall Project Aims

- To improve relevance of planning education in meeting new professional demands

- To develop an integrated package of activities, assessment and evaluation resources to support planning educators in delivery of best practice experiential learning:
  - Activities vary in terms of complexity along a continuum from guest lectures to workplace practicums;
  - Qualitative and quantitative evaluation will test the effectiveness of the framework and resources in improving student learning outcomes.

- Build a planning knowledge network (online resources)
Project Team

Johanna Rosier & Claudia Baldwin (USC) Joint Project Leaders

Christine Slade
Project Manager (USC)

Project Partners from Planning Programs
- Trevor Budge – La Trobe University
- Eddo Coiacetto – Griffith University
- Michael Lockwood – University of Tasmania
- Tim Perkins – Edith Cowan University

Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)
Representative: Cathy Towers
– changes to accreditation criteria
Context

- Project leaders and project manager are all interested in experiential learning.

- Recent reports and studies identify several issues for planning educators:
  - New skills and creative qualities needed – many best delivered through “experiential learning”.
  - Very little cross institutional support for learning from colleagues about best practice.
## Continuum of Experiential Learning – first cut

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominantly university-based</th>
<th>Predominantly work-place-based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brief encounters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest speakers Field trip to tribunal or site</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio-project-based work with a client and/or community</td>
<td>Structured work practicum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulated development of project at a real site Track development application of Council Work on project for a client</td>
<td>Work placement under supervision of planning professional combined with classroom (peer and university staff) learning e.g. one day/week or holiday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step One: USC Pilot Evaluation Survey

**Initial Findings**

- **Goal of learning unclear**
- **Negotiate learning goals with students**
- **Community-university partnerships enhance student performance**
- **Reflection enhanced by dialogue**
- **Guidance on how to apply theory to practice appreciated**
- **Students enjoy real world experience**

Community-university partnerships enhance student performance

Reflection enhanced by dialogue

Guidance on how to apply theory to practice appreciated

Students enjoy real world experience

Goal of learning unclear

Negotiate learning goals with students
## Step Two: Define Planning Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief encounters</th>
<th>Studio-project-based work</th>
<th>Structured work practicum</th>
<th>Work experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purposeful</strong></td>
<td>Whether it is a game, role play, guest, simulated exercise, speaker, design or research project – the purpose of the experiential activity needs to be explained within the context of the overall course or program requirements (CU 2009, Jones et al 2009a). Clear goals and expectations need to be established.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Principles:** Student-centred; the application of theory/classroom knowledge; the ‘real world’ context; guided practice; reflection; evaluation; and community-university partnerships.


Jones, M, Jackson, J Coiacetto, E, Budge, T, Coote, M Steele W, Gall, S & Kennedy, M 2009a, *Generating Academic Standards in Planning Practice Education: Final report to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council*
## Step Three: Describe Current Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Description</th>
<th>No. Courses Using Task (n=104)</th>
<th>No. Courses Assessing Task (n=104)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guest Speakers</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trips</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio Project-based</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulated Development at Real Site</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track Development Application</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Play</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on Project for Client</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Work Experience</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional or International Field Studies</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Work Placement</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Description</td>
<td>Assessment Types</td>
<td>Evaluation Tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Speakers</td>
<td>Exams, group projects, assignments, mini essays, online discussion, reflection</td>
<td>Formative for future assessment tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trips</td>
<td>Reflective journal, formal report, group presentation, assignment</td>
<td>Formative, summative, graded, pass/fail, hurdle task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio Project-based</td>
<td>Report, group assignment, reflective part, display, strategy framework, presentation</td>
<td>Graded, pass/fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulated Development at Real Site</td>
<td>Group project, reports, presentation to professionals, prepare strategies, essay</td>
<td>Graded, pass/fail, formative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track Development Application</td>
<td>Part final assignment, Ministerial briefing paper, development application report</td>
<td>Graded, pass/fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Play</td>
<td>Peer/group assessment, presentation, participation, reflection.</td>
<td>Graded, pass/fail, formative, mandatory activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on Project for Client</td>
<td>Assignment, project report, presentation</td>
<td>Graded, pass/fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Work Experience</td>
<td>Reflective piece, presentation.</td>
<td>Graded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional or International Field Studies</td>
<td>Project report, assignment, presentation</td>
<td>Graded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Work Placement</td>
<td>Presentation, poster, journal article, supervisor assessment, participation, exam, reflective journal</td>
<td>Graded, hurdle task, pass/fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is a Guest lecture Experiential Learning?

• Kolb’s EL model critiques theoretical courses that do not:
  - Value prior knowledge and experience (Healey & Jenkins 2000:187)
  - Prepare students for the experience, reflect on experience and apply to wide course aspects (Jenkins 1997, cited in Healey & Jenkins 2000: 187)

• A guest lecture can be part of the overall EL experience in planning:
  - Needs planning and incorporation into curriculum
  - Can be used as formative assessment – some already using
  - Guest lecture part of transition from non-EL to EL (Illeris 2007:93)
  - Preference for incremental experiential progression (Billet 2011: 15)

References:
Guest Lectures in Planning Education

- In an applied discipline, such as Planning, guest lectures are a transition activity.
- In our survey the 76 Guest Lectures topic areas are:
  - Planning practice - Law/court procedure; development assessment; and strategic planning process.
  - Environmental Impact Assessment
  - Specific Issues in specific locations (field trips)
What is the Next Step?

All Partner researchers are refining one or two principles and integrating them into course delivery and curriculum.

In addition, project team members are:

1. Trialling the pilot framework of learning tasks and assessment in their own planning program over the next two semesters.
2. Applying the evaluation tools developed at USC.
3. Developing case studies and resources specialising in those types of learning activity that were trialled in their universities.
4. Debating how these resources will be translated into PIA program accreditation criteria.
For a copy of our newsletter or further information about the project contact:

Christine Slade
Project Manager
cslade@usc.edu.au

Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views in this project do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.