Chapter 11
Strategies for Effective Teaching in Project Management

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ABSTRACT

Preparing project management students for their future life and work requires actively developing and evidencing a suite of transferable skills and attributes. This chapter reports on how a student-centered pedagogy, which included the use of guided sequential exercises, and the collection of instantaneous student responses through a personal response system (PRS), was implemented in a large first year undergraduate Project Management course. The students' perceptions of this pedagogy demonstrate that they found the pedagogical approach supported their learning and fostered deeper engagement in the course, with the most useful aspect of the course perceived to be its interactive nature. The chapter affirms the importance of giving life to a learning orientation conception of learning. The chapter has implications for ensuring learner engagement in the particular discipline of project management and for good practice in large class context in higher education.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Preparing Project management students for their future life and work requires actively developing and evidencing a suite of transferable skills and attributes. These attributes include professional communication, critical thinking, collaborative problem solving, and critical reflective skills. For project management graduates to transition to work, they must bring to the profession the capacity to integrate and apply their discipline knowledge and expertise in response to the diverse and competing demands which define the profession and diversity of contexts in which project management can be undertaken. As Pant and Baroudi (2008) identify, similar to many other professions, the role of the Project Manager comprises a complex hybrid of skills sets, with 'interpersonal ability, technical competencies, and cognitive aptitude' paramount (p. 124).

The demand for project management graduates and project management education is growing. The number of enrollments is increasing and there are undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered at established universities with well-known reputations and brands. There is also a demand from other majors such as engineering and business in which students are encouraged to undertake courses in project management as their elective. The increasing number of enrollments has led to larger class sizes.

In higher education, the large classes are often delivered in lecture mode. As the literature attests, the large class lecture can present many challenges for educators, with the risk that students engage in a didactic learning experience, whereby a one-way transmission of knowledge negates opportunities for them to actively engage in learning. There is well established evidence that one-way communication in the lecture setting does not result in good learning outcomes (Gysbers et al., 2011). A purely didactic approach, not balanced with student centred learning, can result in students retain only a small percentage of the learning material. Thus, the larger class sizes and the need for student engagement aiming for skill developments are two forces working in opposite directions.

The academics teaching project management courses often are not equipped with the right skills and knowledge to foster student engagement in large lecture settings. They may be highly experienced project managers who ran workshops and training courses in the industry. Or they may come from disciplines such as engineering, architecture, and construction management with less experience in dealing with large cohorts.

In the large lecture setting, technologies can help to foster a collaborative learning environment. These technologies can make real time formative feedback possible and create an engaging environment for learners. One of these technologies is Personal Response System (PRS) also known as Clickers or Electronic Voting System (EVS) (Surentheran, 2014). PRS has primarily been adopted to enhance the

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