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Pearson

My Operations Experience (MOX)

with Sudhir Selvaraj, University of Bradford, UK

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"It has made life more interesting. It allows students to engage in ways beyond the classroom. It works well to give students a taste of real-life experience."

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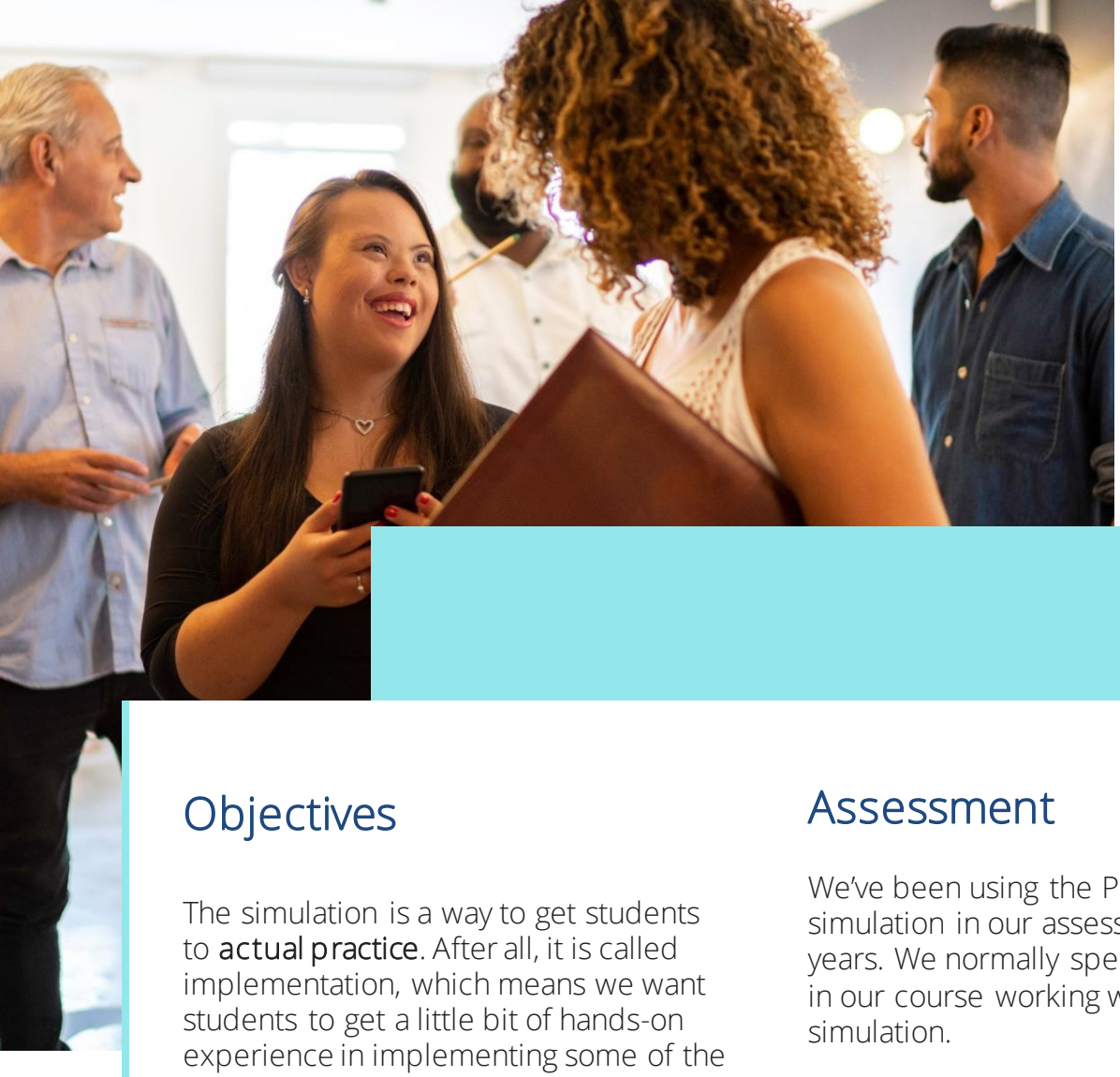
Course

We use MOX in a module, called *"Project Implementation Management"* at the University of Bradford. It's part of the Master programme in Project Management, which sits in the Department of Peace Studies and International Development. We are basically doing two things. One is the **project management aspect**, equipping students with tools, coaching them on how to use them, and then discussing successes and failures.

At the same time, we're also teaching them how to **deeply engage with questions of project management** nature in the development sector: questions of gender, questions of sustainability and how best to balance all these things out. There are two modules in the first term, *Project Planning and Design*, and *Project Finance and Appraisal*. Students would have already learned the basics of the planning and design process during the first term. Then, they will learn about the **implementation** part.

We cover themes on methodologies and contemporary questions like sustainability and power relations. We have explicit themes on project management in international development, but then we also implement skills such leadership, communication, and building organisation culture.



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Objectives

The simulation is a way to get students to **actual practice**. After all, it is called implementation, which means we want students to get a little bit of hands-on experience in implementing some of the theories they learn.

The simulation does a really good job of not only **presenting the real world** and showcasing how construction projects could work but also the **emergency situations**. Understanding, for example, when catastrophe could strike or how contractors might not be the most cooperative. Or the opposite – contractors might be very cooperative and then you might get ahead of budget.

So, it's a good way for students to get that **practical experience** in their life. For example, one student came to me and said, *'Professor, how does one get a flood and a fire at the same time?'* And I said, I really hope you won't have to find out. But you know what? It is possible.

Assessment

We've been using the Pearson simulation in our assessment for two years. We normally spend **two weeks** in our course working with the simulation.

Then, students also get to use a **reflective practice essay** to reflect on their performance in the simulation, or on their own leadership styles and skills, as well as how they move forward in the field.

Experiential learning

I think the important point here is for the student to have **real-world experience**. It's also important to learn that projects come in all shapes and sizes and all industries. So, even if we are teaching International Development, having a simulation on construction is a great opportunity to add to this experiential learning. Then again, we do recognise that it's different from the real world in long term – but at that moment in time, it is really useful to have students understand that.

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Integration

The simulation is part of our assessment. We have two labs for the module, and students are assessed on both. That is one part of the assessment, and then students are subsequently asked to reflect on that experience.

In our department, we prioritize reflective practice. **Reflective essays** work well for students, allowing them to reflect on their own practices and skills. The Pearson simulation works well for that.

It's a very focused process. It works really well for us to have a Pearson colleague come in and help us set up students on the page. From there on, we get together and work on the simulation together in the classroom. It's understandable that sometimes when you're doing a project, you might be sitting at a hot desk in a large office. You might be in an office where you don't know anybody. And that type of simulation works well also, so we do that **across two weeks for two hours per session**.

Impact on teaching

It's useful to have the ability to give students a simulation of what the real world could look like also it caters to students' different learning styles. I wouldn't necessarily say it makes teaching easier. But, allowing students to learn on these types of platforms and how to work on paying attention to detail is very important.

It has made life more interesting. **It allows students to engage in ways beyond the classroom.** It works well to give students a taste of **real-life experience.**

Favourite feature

I always tell students that MOX is much **like a life lesson**. When you go down the critical path, you can't go back and change the past and the present; you can only change the future. So this is something important to think about when planning and designing elements, but also understand that you must be versatile and on the fly, too.

There are a lot of good life lessons to be taught beyond the module. I really like that **students resonate with MOX** when saying they understood this lesson. If you're a good facilitator, you can draw those things out.

"I very much enjoy using the simulation. I really think it's a useful tool for students, and I hope that others will get a chance to use it too because it's good, and students respond well to it."

Biggest benefits for students

Apart from providing experiential learning, it **serves different learning styles**.

What students say

I think students really like it. They get the chance to have **varied experiences** compared to the typical essay. What we do on the programme is try to cater to different students, their learning needs, and assessment needs.

That's why we're doing two things in this module that most wouldn't do. One is a **simulation**, and the other is the **reflective practice** because it adds to the strengths demonstrated in traditional essays such as analysis, writing, and critical thinking.

Advice for first-time users

Most importantly, **give yourself time** – even in project planning.
Secondly, **look at the tutorial carefully** because even in life and projects, it's really important to know the rules of the game you're playing.

Knowing and understanding the rules of the game is essential. If you don't know them, things could change very fast and you'll be caught uninformed and unaware. So, take your time, and all should work well.

Summary

I very much enjoy using the simulation. I really think it's a useful tool for students, and I hope that others will get a chance to use it too because it's good, and students respond well to it.

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