This article is downloaded from

http://researchoutput.csu.edu.au

It is the paper published as

Author: R. McCulloch
Title: From the classroom to Kajulu and beyond: Strategies for Teaching and learning marketing communications in the digital age
Editor: D. J. H. Ph.D
Conference Name: Communication in the Digital Age. 10th IAA World Education Conference
Conference Location: New York, USA
Publisher: International Advertising Association
Year: 2006
Pages: 1-10p
Date: 19-20 March 2006

Abstract: Teaching and learning strategies are changing as the new-age view of effective education is to prepare students for assimilation into professional practice. Within the School of Communication at Charles Sturt University in Australia the distance between the classroom and the professional community is closing. At Kajulu Communications, the on-campus student advertising agency of Charles Sturt University, students must apply best industry practice and skills to a range of authentic situations. Over the last 3 years the author has been engaged in action research, investigating the strengths and weaknesses of the Kajulu model. Based on this research, this paper examines the pedagogical practices that naturally connect learning to authentic activity, context and culture, specifically the 360 degree or "orbital view of assessment tasks within Kajulu; peer, lecturer and client/industry assessment, and draws on an actual case study to support the notion of authentic assessment within an industry-professional teaching and learning environment.

Author Address: rmcculloch@csu.edu.au

URL: www.iaaglobal.org


http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/arts/commun/staff/rod_mcculloch.html

http://www.zawya.com/printstory.cfm?storyid=ZAWYAA20060321045720&l=045700060321

CRO identification number: 7434
From the classroom to Kajulu and beyond: Strategies for teaching and learning marketing communications in the digital age.

Rod McCulloch  
Senior Lecturer-Courses Coordinator  
BA Communication-Advertising  
BA Communication-Advertising / BBus Marketing  
Charles Sturt University  
Panorama Avenue  
Bathurst NSW 2795 Australia.  
Tel: 61 2 6338 4446. Fax: 61 2 6338 4409.  
Email: rmcculloch@csu.edu.au
Abstract

Teaching and learning strategies are changing as the new-age view of effective education is to prepare students for assimilation into professional practice. Within the School of Communication at Charles Sturt University in Australia the distance between the classroom and the professional community is closing. At Kajulu Communications, the on-campus student advertising agency of Charles Sturt University, students must apply best industry practice and skills to a range of authentic situations. Over the last 3 years the author has been engaged in action research, investigating the strengths and weaknesses of the Kajulu model. Based on this research, this paper examines the pedagogical practices that naturally connect learning to authentic activity, context and culture, specifically the 360 degree or ‘orbital’ view of assessment tasks within Kajulu; peer, lecturer and client/industry assessment, and draws on an actual case study to support the notion of authentic assessment within an industry-professional teaching and learning environment.

1. Introduction

The digital age, as typified by mediums such as the World Wide Web and the Internet represents a paradigm shift in the way we market, communicate, and from an academic and professional perspective, teach and learn. Universities are under increasing pressure from both employers and students to equip their graduates with real-world skills and capabilities in this new age. As Morris [1] indicates, it is becoming apparent that employers are seeking qualifications beyond the simple framed degree. They want hands-on skills, employees who are good communicators, team players and dedicated to on-going ‘life-long’ learning in an age where massive change is the norm. Executive Director of the Australian Association of Graduate Employers Ben Reeves [2] sites industry experience undertaken by students during their final university year as being worth more on a resume than top-ranking academic results. Joanne Tyler [3] from the National Association of Career Advisors concurs stating that today most undergraduate courses include a mandatory industry internship period to “chalk up some industry experience while they are studying”, integrating this industry experience into the university course. One asks however, is this simply paying lip-service to the perceived needs of employers and industry, or is it a valuable augmentation to university learning?

In line with an evolving model of the university graduate, teaching and learning strategies are changing as the contemporary view of education is to prepare students for assimilation into professional practice. Today the buzz-words in education are careers in curriculum, vocational focus, cognitive apprenticeship and authentic assessment, assessment within the learning environment that is predicated on ever-evolving industry criteria, wants and needs.

This paper reports on action research and examines the learning and teaching strategies used at Charles Sturt University in Australia. It discusses broadly the situated cognition theory, but more specifically the cognitive apprenticeship model as a basis for learning and assessment.
Using the experiences of the last 3 years within Kajulu Communications, the on-campus student marketing communications and advertising agency of Charles Sturt University, this paper analyses the effectiveness of pedagogical practices that naturally connect learning to authentic activity, context and culture. In doing so, the paper describes the activities undertaken at the ‘agency’ that relate directly to authentic learning and assessment, and explains the cognitive demands that are inextricably linked to the industry-professional environment in which students work and learn. Further, the paper examines the 360 degree or ‘orbital’ view of assessment tasks at Kajulu, i.e.: peer assessment, lecturer assessment and finally industry assessment, based on the notion that in situated approaches students collaborate with one another (as teams) and their instructor (as master) toward a shared understanding. The paper draws on an actual Kajulu case study to support the notion of authentic assessment within the industry-professional teaching and learning environment of Kajulu Communications.

The author’s work is continuing for it is evident that the marketing communications environment in which we teach and students learn is constantly evolving. The aim of this paper is to share the Kajulu experience and to stimulate discussion with the objective of exploring further opportunities to enhance student learning that relate directly to professional practice in this digital age.

### 2. Defining authentic assessment

Van Merrienboer [4] suggests that authentic assessment requires that students integrate knowledge, skills and attributes as professionals do, thereby implying that the tasks they undertake are congruent with those in the workplace. Newmann [5] claims that the true criteria for authenticity may be reflected in three ways: assessment tasks, instruction and student performance.

There is, according to Savery and Duffy [6] a crucial additional perspective, that of situation or environment, combining the concepts of the quality of teaching and the context in which it is taught in terms of definable outcomes.

Regardless of individual points of view and definitions of the myriad terminology, most researchers seem to agree that teaching and learning strategies are changing. In the specific field of marketing communications and advertising, the requirement is for graduates with real-world knowledge and skills who can ‘hit the ground running’. That is, graduates who are equipped with the research, analytical, strategic, conceptual, interpersonal and practical decision-making skills needed to be effective and successful in the highly competitive multi-cultural world of global marketing communications.

### 3. CSU. The institution and its mission

Charles Sturt University is committed to the discovery and advancement of knowledge. Consulting and professional development are important mechanisms for advancing and transferring knowledge, or in simplistic terms the creation of a ‘knowledge exchange’.
The University’s vision as ‘a national university for excellence in education for the professions, strategic and applied research and flexible delivery of learning and teaching’, exemplifies a commitment to an on-going exchange between the university and the professions it serves.

The mission of Charles Sturt University is to provide distinctive educational programs for the professions that prepare students for work and citizenship [7].

Teaching strengths and innovations are expressed as a positive and differentiating characteristic of the University. Berryman [8] would seem to support this position, stating that the ultimate point of education is to prepare students for effective functioning in non-school settings. Further and as clearly enunciated in the CSU Vision, it is mandatory that our teaching and learning strategies prepare students to take their place, not simply as practitioners but also as global citizens, armed with the skills necessary to deal with the complex issues of a multi-cultural marketplace. Advertising is a global industry where more than ever there is a requirement to be able to deal effectively with the ethical and social issues that communication with the converging commonality of a global marketplace brings with it. Be these issues local, national or international.

Charles Sturt University is more than lecture halls and tutorial rooms. It’s a place where students come to learn, and to learn about themselves. Within the School of Communication at Charles Sturt University we employ a strategy of open thinking and team-based collaborative study. Charles Sturt University Communication-Advertising degrees are recognised nationally and internationally by both the education sector and the broader marketing and business communities. When combined with specialist in-situ industry training, these degree programs provide a thorough grounding in all aspects of communication theory, techniques and processes in line with the evolving demands of the digital age. Today, these demands include an appreciation of the complex society we live and a requirement by students as emerging communication professionals to develop essential decision-making competencies to be able to deal with the myriad emerging ethical and social issues in a digital world.

Berryman [9] believes that for effective learning individuals should learn in traditional apprenticeships, noting that whereas school curricula tend to be a specification of practice, apprenticeships arrange opportunities for practice (Lave et al [10]). Berryman concludes that apprenticeships are conducted in a community of expert practice in which the ‘teacher’ continuously engages in and is master of the practice being learned.

School of Communication Advertising teaching staff is, in the main recruited from industry. Indeed most remain actively involved in the industry in both managerial and advisory capacities, thus ensuring currency. They combine extensive industry experience both in Australia and internationally, with advanced academic qualifications and teaching skills to provide students with the essential mix of professional instruction and mentorship (as masters), as well as practical and contemporary industry knowledge.
4. Teaching and learning within the industry-professional Kajulu environment

Gulikers et al [11] in discussing a ‘five-dimensional framework for authentic assessment’ refer to the physical context, the location and surrounds where learning will happen and assessment will take place. Brown et al and Herrington and Oliver [12] state that the physical context of an authentic assessment should reflect the way knowledge, skills, and attitudes will be used in professional practice.

Within the School of Communication at Charles Sturt University the distance between the classroom and the professional community is closing. The evolution to professional practice and vocational teaching and assessment began in 1999 with the establishment of Kajulu Communications, the on-campus student advertising agency of Charles Sturt University. Appropriately named, Kajulu is an Australian Aboriginal word that means ‘to look ahead’. Kajulu replicates a real advertising agency in every way; from systems, procedures and responsibilities to student roles and accountable outcomes. From client briefs to the development and presentation of industry standard integrated marketing communication campaigns. And in more and more instances, campaigns that are actually going to market, thereby taking them out of the realm of the traditional student assignment and exemplifying innovative and practical approaches to authentic learning and authentic assessment.

Final year Advertising students leave the traditional lecture hall and tutorial room environment behind as they work almost exclusively in the agency environment of Kajulu. In effect completing a full year’s industry internship whilst still at university.

Within Kajulu students are required to rigorously apply best industry practice to a range of real-world situations. They do this by operating as advertising agency teams, adopting specific professional roles and responsibilities, developing integrated communication campaigns, which represent authentic tasks for real clients.

The philosophy of Kajulu reflects the industry-orientated marketing communications teaching and learning model employed, and is expressed as follows:

“When you leave CSU and Kajulu you are more than simply graduating. You are leaving one agency and going to another.”

Gulikers et al [13] argue that in order to meet the goals of education, there needs to be a constructive alignment between instruction, learning and assessment. Traditional front-of-class instruction, or what is often referred to in academic circles as ‘chalk and talk’, is an example of such an alignment characterised as instructional approach-knowledge transmission (also referred to as rote learning) and is assessed purely on the basis of knowledge acquisition via traditional assignments and tests. Gulikers et al [14] maintain that today’s educational goals focus more on the development of competent students and future employees than on simple knowledge acquisition. Here they state that the goal of assessment is higher-order thinking processes and competencies demanded by the era in which we live and work, instead of simply theoretical knowledge and basic skills. This closely parallels the vision of a CSU graduate [15] in they should have the ability to learn and work both independently and collaboratively, exercise reflective and critical judgement and importantly, be able to apply this knowledge in the workplace. In colloquial terms they
should be able to ‘hit the ground running’ with an inherent ability to apply their learning to the broad spectrum of professional and life situations they are likely to encounter.

Birenbaun and Dochy [16] characterise authentic assessments, noting that students have a responsibility for their own learning requiring that they reflect, collaborate and conduct a continuous dialogue with their teacher. Here they maintain that ‘assessment involves real-world or authentic tasks and contexts as well as multiple assessment opportunities and methods to reach a profile score for the determination of student learning and development’. Brown et al [17] introduce the concept of cognitive apprenticeship, the development of concepts through continuing authentic activity. Cognitive apprenticeship supports learning in a domain (environment) by enabling students to acquire, develop and use cognitive tools in an authentic domain activity…a real-world situation. In this environment, teachers (masters) make explicit their tacit knowledge by modelling strategies in an authentic activity, and then support students in their attempts at doing the tasks. Finally, they empower students to continue independently.

4.1. Real world situations and processes
Newman [18] proposes an integrated concept of authentic intellectual achievement based on three criteria: the development of student knowledge through disciplined enquiry beyond the classroom; disciplined enquiry that replicates the skills and techniques of professionals; and reflection and simulation of problems, issues and situations encountered in the real world.

The concept of Kajulu is predicated on students working in a real-world professional environment on real-world clients, and being accountable for the results. Since its inception, Kajulu and Kajulu students have worked on the development of marketing communication campaigns for regional, national Australian and international client companies and organisations. Kajulu clients have encompassed FMCG products, business to business, business to consumer, consumer service and not-for-profit organisations. Specifically they have included Compaq Computers, Visa Card, Yahoo!, Foodbank, The National Heart Foundation, Newsweek, Lion Nathan Breweries, Electrolux Home Appliances, to name but a few.

4.2. A 360 degree view of assessment within Kajulu
Within Kajulu assessment is based on a 360 degree, or ‘orbital’ perspective. It is recognised that the challenge lies not simply in the assessment of tasks and projects but also in effectively addressing the perennial question of single student assessment versus group assessment. Hence an all-encompassing view of assessment is required.

Traditional assessment is based on students answering set assignment tasks. In the main the tasks are theoretical, often simply something from a text book. Hence answers tend to reflect readings from the text and rote learning, without the need to reflect on learning or a desire to venture further in the assimilation of knowledge or the development of a point of view. Within the context of the industry-professional teaching and learning environment of Kajulu, students assessment is based on a response to the client brief; a demonstration of reflective practice and progressive argument, how they work within Kajulu, their contribution within their teams, set assessment criteria and feedback from their industry client.
The following assessment practices are employed:

- **Progressive learning assessment:** Regular reviews and ‘mini-tests’ to ensure students are acknowledging and comprehending strategies progressively delivered throughout the session, and to allow them to reflect on these strategies;
- **Content assessment:** A specifically developed assessment grid that highlights the various levels of student achievement through any or all assignments.

Assessment of student work undertaken for Kajulu clients is in 3 phases. Each phase replicates the authentic procedures found in industry. The first two are internal agency procedures to monitor and evaluate the performance of the student agency in terms of service commitment and the development of client relationships. The final is provided to the client by the agency as a means of gaining an honest and frank externally assessment of the industry standard quality of their work (in a ‘pitch’ situation), as well as their overall performance.

(i) **Team or Group Assessment:** Client campaign projects undertaken by Kajulu teams form an integral component of final year students’ curriculum. They are fully assessable. Individual assignments augment the team work so as to aid in the identification of individual student performance. The major client campaign development and presentation work is assessed utilizing the following accepted industry criteria:
  - Team campaign presentation in a competitive ‘pitch’ situation
  - Content and recommendations – breadth, scope and originality
  - Practicality and persuasiveness of concepts
  - Report documentation
  - Evaluation procedures and expected ROI

(ii) **Peer Assessment:** Success as an agency means that all members of the agency team must perform as one. The team is only as strong as the individual members and the dedication they bring to the agency and project. Students complete in confidence a **Team Member Peer Evaluation Form** which asks team members to evaluate the input of fellow members using a 1 to 100 scale, on the basis of level of enthusiasm and participation, understanding of what had to be accomplished, ability to contribute meaningfully, performance of set tasks, and helping the team to function as an agency. It also asks the individual student to reflect on his or her own contributions, their strengths and weaknesses and where they see they benefited most from the exercise. This evaluation is in itself assessable. It represents 10% of the overall final marks.

(iii) **Agency Performance Assessment:** The purpose of this survey is for the client to honestly and openly assess the performance of the Kajulu agency team in terms of the relationship they have developed with the client, their processes related to keeping their client informed of campaign development progress, their ability to translate the brief into effective and cost effective recommendations, their overall professional performance in terms of campaign development and expected effectiveness, as well as skills in the development of an on-going client relationship.
On an international level, Kajulu student agency teams have competed with the best from around the world. Since 1999, Kajulu Communications has been involved in the world-wide International Advertising Association student advertising competition ‘InterAd’, a competition open to all IAA accredited universities world-wide.

Since 1999 Kajulu Communications has won the World Championship on three separate occasions; in 1999 for Compaq Computers, in 2002 for the IAA itself as an organisation, and in 2005 for an integrated campaign for Yahoo!

5. Foodbank Australia - a case study

A major client for Kajulu in 2004 was the Sydney-based international, non-denominational, charity Foodbank Australia. Foodbank facilitates the collection of food and grocery donations from manufacturers and then distributes them to more than 1,500 community-based welfare agencies in Australia and, as an international organisation, to thousands of charities globally.

Foodbank Australia was also the client in 2004 for the International Advertising Association’s Australia Chapter ‘Big Idea’ national advertising competition. Kajulu competed against university teams from around Australia. In line with industry ‘pitch’ timeframes, teams were given 6 weeks to develop and present a fully integrated communications program. The initial presentation was to be undertaken via campaign report and electronic submissions with the winning team to have the opportunity to present formally to the client in Sydney.

Kajulu was judged the outright winner and National Champions. The Foodbank project was acknowledged to be the major Advertising course project for the session and as such was also assessed internally. The ‘orbital’ model of evaluation as described previously was applied, specifically the quality of presentation, report content and campaign implementation. These assessments were overlayed with agency team member peer evaluations as well as the formal documented client assessment and an overall grade awarded. Results were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presentation</td>
<td>34/40</td>
<td>HD-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report presentation and content</td>
<td>54/60</td>
<td>HD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client evaluation</td>
<td>75/100</td>
<td>DI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
<td>81.5/100</td>
<td>Distinction grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Kajulu group evaluation results

The winning Kajulu Communications campaign received favourable feedback [18]:

A highly professional presentation. We are delighted with the innovative and creative ideas and are committed to implementing these in our 5 year campaign from 2005.
Whilst an overall team grade is awarded for a major project, it is recognised that individual team member grades must reflect individual contribution. Using the final element of the ‘orbital’ matrix, Kajulu scores were overlayed with both individual assignment scores and peer evaluation scores to ascertain individual results. Final student grades encompassed 2 x High Distinctions; 2 x Distinctions; 3 x Credits.

6. Conclusions

Invariably in any marketing communication campaign the final assessment is made by the market. In the case of Kajulu team members undertaking the final year of their Advertising degree at Charles Sturt University, it is a demonstration of the quality of thinking and applied knowledge to the myriad product and market situations, as judged in accordance with industry criteria by academic staff as well as the client (in this instance Foodbank) that is taken into collaborative account in the final grades. But arguably the true measure, beyond the awards and accolades, is graduate employment. CSU and Kajulu students this is almost 100%, supporting the notion that the Kajulu model and the concept of authentic assessment within this industry-professional context is indeed preparing graduates well for a marketing communications career in the digital age.

Action research is on-going. The author recognises the limitations of the current data collection process and identifies the potential value of overlaying a rigorous quantitative model to collate the considerable student-centred data to better inform assessment practice as well as on-going research and development of student teaching and learning practices.
References


