The role of Formative Assessment in PBL: results from an online questionnaire to students

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Abstract

In active learning environments, such as Project-based Learning (PBL), formative assessment plays an important role in student learning. This paper aims to analyse student assessment in a PBL learning context and present results from the application of an online questionnaire to first year students who participated in a PBL semester, during the academic year of 2012/2013, at the Industrial Management Engineering (IME) degree programme, University of Minho, Portugal. The purpose of the questionnaire was to evaluate students' satisfaction with the PBL semester, focusing on several dimensions, where as the assessment method used in PBL was one of those categories. Findings will be presented according to the results rated by students in the section of the questionnaire exploring the assessment method, namely, in regard to items such as the number of milestones, the importance of teachers' feedback, the definition of assessment criteria, the effectiveness of peer assessment, the adequacy of the written test on the project, the grades achieved in the project and, finally, students' overall satisfaction with the project's outcomes. Conclusions will discuss the role of formative and summative assessment in PBL and its impact on learning. Implications for improving assessment practices will be discussed.

Keywords: assessment; formative assessment; student learning; project based learning (PBL); students' perceptions