

Key assumptions and challenges to those assumptions

Assumption	Challenge
<p>There is a need to move away from a repetitive 'banking' method of teaching and assessment.</p>	<p>New approaches can leave students feeling confused and overwhelmed dealing with unfamiliar methods. Changes to assessment have a greater influence on student learning than other changes to the curriculum (Gibbs 2006) and introducing variety has been shown to confuse and disengage students as they struggle to understand the requirements of different approaches. A sensible mix can enable greater alignment of assessment with outcomes. http://www.ulster.ac.uk/staffdev/DatabaseGoodPractice/hharveymodule.htm and in the earth sciences http://goodpractice.gees.ac.uk/cgi-bin/searchspec.pl?terms=206</p>
<p>A need to teach and assess in a way which 'makes a difference' to the students - with a desire to move students from understanding to taking action.</p>	<p>Encouraging pro active engagement with social issues can be challenging in both teaching and assessment but can result in deep and meaningful learning.</p>
<p>This approach is based on a need to make links between tacit understanding of the world and new ways of seeing and understanding.</p>	<p>Approaches should stress the process more than final product. This can be challenging. A greater strategic use of formative assessment and alignment of assessment (Biggs1999) are essential.</p>
<p>Recognises the role of the 'group' in the class room.</p>	<p>Downplays role of tutor as 'expert'. Tutor is facilitator of learning - this may require new skills and understanding.</p>

Potential problems and solutions to approach

Potential problems	Possible solutions
The process becomes more important than the product.	Need to ensure that the learning outcomes and assessment criteria give full weight to process but also celebrate the desired product. Keeping timescales clear helps to keeo students 'on track' with a focus on the outcome as well as the process
Students can be confused about the process.	Preparatory work with students to clarify commitment required, teaching method used, rationale and scope of practical assignment is needed. Invite students to contribute to design of assessment criteria. Preparatory work required by tutor on resources and timings. Reflective element to assessment needed to recognise and credit development of understanding
The approach downplays the role of tutor and the value of theory.	There is evidence that the opposite can be true, as the approach requires understanding of dialogic and active approaches to learning and the development of key resources to engage student participation.
It is a challenge to engage students in social action.	Clearly planned, imaginative and relevant projects tend to stir students to engage enthusiastically.