

## Project-Based Learning (PBL) Taken to Extremes: Full-Year/Full-Time PBL Replacement of Core Curriculum

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**Abstract :** Radical use of project-based learning (PBL) in a small New Zealand business school provides an opportunity to longitudinally examine its effects over a decade of pre-Covid data. Prior to this business school's implementation of PBL, starting in 2012, the business pedagogy literature presented just one example of PBL replacing an entire core-set of courses. In that instance, a British business school merged four of its 'degree Year 3' accounting courses into one PBL semester. As radical as that would have seemed, to students aged 20-to-22, the PBL experiment conducted in a New Zealand business school was notably more extreme: 41 nationally-approved Learning Outcomes (L.O.s), these deriving from 8 separate core courses, were aggregated into one grand set of L.O.s, and then treated as a 'full-year'/'full-time' single course. The 8 courses in question were all components of this business school's compulsory 'degree Year 1' curriculum. Thus, the students involved were notably younger (...ages 17-to-19...), and no 'part-time' enrolments were allowed. Of interest are this PBL experiment's effects on subsequent performance outcomes in 'degree Years 2 & 3' (...which continued to operate in their traditional ways). Of special interest is the quality of 'group project' outcomes. This is because traditionally, 'degree Year 1' course assessments are only minimally based on group work. This PBL experiment altered that practice radically, such that PBL 'degree Year 1' alumni entered their remaining two years of business coursework with far more 'project group' experience. Timeline-wise, thus of interest here, firstly, is 'degree Year 2' performance outcomes data from years 2010-2012 + 2016-2018, and likewise 'degree Year 3' data for years 2011-2013 + 2017-2019. Those years provide a pre-&-post comparative baseline for performance outcomes in students never exposed to this school's radical PBL experiment. That baseline is then compared to PBL alumni outcomes (2013-2016....including 'Student Evaluation of Course Quality' outcomes...) to clarify 'radical PBL' effects.

**Keywords :** project-based learning, longitudinal mixed-methods, students criticism, effects-on-learning

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