

Problem-based learning

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Facilitator

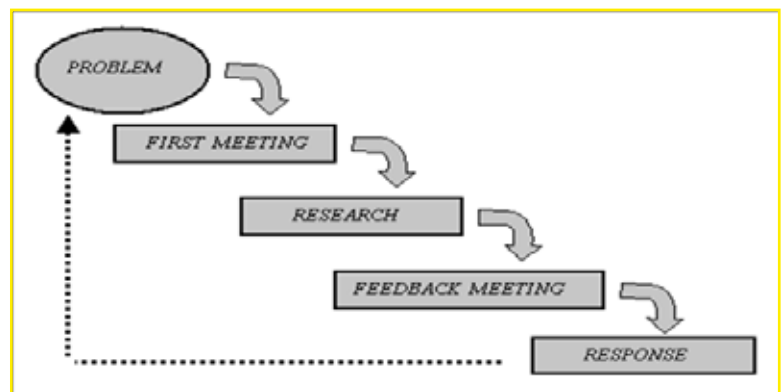
The lecturer does not teach but rather facilitates the students' learning. Your role in PBL is to support the students and provide them with feedback in their search for the solution to the task.

Student-centred approach

Remember that PBL is a student centred approach: the students take the lead and really drive the learning process. Depending on how the learning is evolving, you can consider taking some more direct involvement but this should be brief and highly focused interventions. Do not take charge!

The 7 steps

The effectiveness of PBL as a learning approach revolves around the 7-steps principles. Make sure to stick to the approach as much as possible to maximise the potential for students' learning.



Partial and full PBL

The full PBL approach does not envisage the use of lectures. However, if you are new to PBL, you can consider keeping the lectures and implement a PBL approach in your seminars/tutorials. You can then consider moving to a full PBL approach once you feel that the approach is better embedded in the module and you feel more confident about it.

Start slowly

It takes some time to master the PBL approach. So, do not worry if you make mistakes! Take one step at the time and consider introducing PBL only for a small part of the curriculum. See how it goes and, once you feel more confident, scale it up to larger parts of the module or the whole module!

The problem's design

Careful thought must be given to the design of the problems you set for the students. Think carefully about the Learning Outcomes that you intend to achieve: does the problem help the students develop the intended learning? Do the problem's learning outcomes link up with the module's ILOs?



Resources

Make sure that students have access to all the resources required to complete the problems you set for them. It is important that you provide the students with a set of references and material that they can engage with in order to provide a comprehensive answer to the problems you set.

Group management

Team work is central to the PBL approach. Make sure to be clear about the expectations from the group-work. Be in regular contact with the group leader to monitor progress and intervene quickly in case of need. You could ask for the minutes of each group meeting to be posted on the VLE for you to monitor engagement. Consider using peer-evaluation to minimise the opportunity of free-riding.

Find out more

Maastricht University (www.youtube.com/watch?v=kx7n4resHdI)

McMaster University (mdprogram.mcmaster.ca/mcmaster-md-program/overview/pbl---problem-based-learning)

Assessment

Feel free to consider various forms of assessment to test students' learning. The solutions to the problems you set can be delivered in various forms such as a written essay or a group presentation or a video or a competition between groups. Feel free to be creative!

Resistance

At first, students might be resistant to the use of PBL. It is important that you reassure them about its effectiveness and, in particular, that you will always be available to support them and provide feedback about their learning and progress.