

Tutor Reflection on the Impact of Problem- Based Learning (PBL) Implementation on the Students Performance in an Introductory Finance Course

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Abstract

This action research was designed to provide a voice to tutors in the process of implementing the Bahrain Polytechnic Problem- Based Learning Model (Scott & Mullah, 2012). It would reflect on the students' knowledge progression and overall performance, at an early stage of their study in the institution. The paper will showcase the impact of applying the Polytechnic's 7 steps PBL Process as a learning and teaching strategy, in its aim to enhance the students' employability skills.

Keywords: Problem- Based Learning, Employability Skills, Academic Performance, Reflection.

Research questions:

- How to initiate and design a problem for a PBL class?
- Would students academic performance in a PBL class be superior than students in a student-centered class?
- How would PBL contribute in developing students' employability skills?
- What are the strength and challenges of implementing this teaching method?

Methodology:

Primary Research:

During the second semester of the 2018/19 academic year, an empirical study has been carried on one of the introductory finance courses. Two classes were included in this study (24 students

in each class): PBL was implemented in one class and the students results were compared to another class where student- centered approach was followed. The performance of the students in both classes were then analyzed at the end of the semester to measure the impact of implementing PBL Model. This study pays a great attention to the students' voice and therefore, a pre-delivery survey has been distributed in both classes to identify any previous involvement and/or experience with the process, as well as the students' expectations. This will be followed by a post-delivery survey to measure the impact of PBL Model on students' performance and behavior.

Secondary Research:

Literature review consist of articles related to PBL implementation in business related area courses to determine the trend of applying this model cross higher education institutions and the impact of implementing this model on students' performance.

Findings:

In semester two 2018/ 2019, two Introduction to Finance classes running by the same tutor were included in an experiment to identify how different learning and teaching styles/ methodologies would affect the overall students' performance during an early stage of their study at Bahrain Polytechnic. During that semester PBL was implemented in one class and student- centered approach was implemented in the other class. The study revealed that the average grade of students' performance in the student- centered class supported by a decent amount of scaffold provided by the tutor was 71%, while it was slightly lower in the PBL class at a rate of 66%. Many factors must be taken into consideration before implementing PBL Model including but not limited to the following, students' prior knowledge, academic status, their performance in other courses during the same semester, how well PBL Model was introduced to them, tutor capabilities, resource availability and the classroom environment.

Conclusion:

The study emphasizes on the importance of selecting an appropriate learning and teaching methodology for courses at different NQF levels and offered at different stages of degree study. It concludes that students at year 1 and 2 need more support and guidance from the tutor to

perform well. They should not be given the autonomy to be responsible for their own learning at this stage unless if have been prepared well. Implementing PBL at early stage of study at a higher education institution might disadvantage students in different ways, and as potential graduates who will join the workforce later on, it might be harmful for the economic and social well being of the country. In order to implement PBL, resources and facilities need to be in place. In addition, PBL is time consuming, so the current model and design of classrooms and timings are not conducive to the PBL methodology.

References:

Coutts, C., Huijser, H. & Almulla, H. (2012). A project management approach to sustainable PBL curriculum design implementation at Bahrain Polytechnic. In: 3rd International PBL Symposium: PBL and the Problematization of Teaching and Learning. pp. 7–9, Singapore.

Topic: Action research (PBL Implementation)

Contribution Format: Presentation