

THE FULL POTENTIAL OF PBL PHILOSOPHY: DIVERSIFYING EDUCATION AT UM

Project EDview

EDview reflected on education at UM: Where do we stand? How do students and staff experience UM's PBL strategy? Are we well equipped for the future? EDview aimed to establish a shared view on UM education for the future (presented in EDview's Position Paper), and concrete suggestions for action following from this view (presented in EDview's Overview of Do's, Don'ts and Don't Knows). In several data collection phases, EDview held interviews and focus groups, reviewed literature, conducted a survey open to all UM students and staff, and held feedback sessions with a wide selection of stakeholders.

The current state of PBL at UM: satisfaction with theory

The EDview results show that many students and staff stand behind UM's choice for PBL. The EDview Survey, completed by 1,743 students and staff from all faculties, showed high satisfaction scores of respondents' experiences with education at UM in general and the educational method being PBL. This resonated with EDview's qualitative data, which further explained that the high satisfaction scores mainly refer to the "idea" and theory of PBL, but to a lesser extent to its practice. It was found that PBL fits well with state-of-the-art educational theories, which promote constructive, collaborative, contextual and self-directed learning to enhance deep learning, motivation for learning, and 21st century and lifelong learning skills.

The current state of PBL at UM: dissatisfaction with practice

EDview Survey respondents were least satisfied about how PBL is carried out in practice, and interview participants felt that UM had not fully succeeded in delivering on the promise of PBL. Participants for example experienced challenges related to the seven steps format, staff capacity, alignment with assessment, tutorial group size, applying PBL in different disciplines, and a mismatch between how PBL is communicated and what students and staff encounter in practice.

The current state of PBL at UM: a trend towards flexibility

It was apparent that when we currently talk about PBL at UM, we often mean the seven-steps-like tutorial structure. Simultaneously, a trend can be observed of defining and approaching PBL in a broader way, with PBL variations and alternatives being applied in several programs across faculties. A majority of the EDview Survey respondents would like UM to be more creative and flexible about how to implement PBL in the future.

Where to go from here

Considering the above, we can distill a view on UM education for the future, specifically the role of PBL. For the future, we do not take any PBL *format or structure* as a starting point. We take 'only' the UM *philosophy* of PBL (constructive, collaborative, contextual and self-directed learning) and the course/program objectives as starting points. We design education based on one key question: *Following the UM philosophy of PBL, how can I design education in a way that best achieves the learning objectives?* This implies a diversification of UM education, in order to achieve the full potential of PBL philosophy.

How to get there

EDview's message is not new: previous projects and documents described similar issues, and current UM education is already diverse. However, why do we still talk about PBL as a synonym of the seven steps tutorial structure, and why do some teachers feel they can only innovate 'under the radar'? EDview put together a comprehensive overview of Do's, Don'ts and Don't Knows that range from teaching and designing education to marketing and communication, leadership and human resources - suggesting the actions and attitudes needed if we commit to the UM view on education described above. Importantly, the UM philosophy of PBL is not static; we should approach it as a dynamic, shared framework that drives continuous debate and dialogue about educational quality and improvement. In an organization that wishes to cultivate a vibrant educational culture, this conversation must never stop.