PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Project-based learning (PBL) is integrated within the denominated active teaching and learning methodologies, which involve students in the learning process more directly than in other methods. By taking part in projects that aim at solving real-life problems, students acquire essential knowledge and key competencies.

Jones, Rasmussen and Proffitt described PBL as “a group of problem-solving tasks which engage students in planning and designing their own learning process throughout research, giving pupils the opportunity to make decisions and to work independently during most of the process, which culminates in a final project that they will present in front of their class.”

In PBL, students are the ones that lead the learning process, since they are the ones involved in planning, structuring and creating the final project. Thus, they develop their independence and sense of responsibility. The teacher’s role would be to guide and support students throughout the process.

As with other learning methodologies, PBL has both advantages and disadvantages.

Given that it needs to be planned more carefully and it requires specific assessment techniques, it involves a heavier workload for students and teachers. However, the benefits it brings about outweigh any difficulties. To mention a few:

* PBL is more meaningful than other learning approaches due to its resemblance to real-life situations.
* Students are more motivated; they know what to do and why.
* Connecting tasks with the assessment criteria is relatively easy.
* Projects facilitate cooperative work.
* PBL encourages critical thinking.
* It boosts creativity, imagination and problem-solving skills.

The three key elements of this learning approach are the challenge or driving question, the gathering and processing of information, and the development of the end product, which must, in turn, be assessed and presented to the others.

The end product is the solution to the challenge initially posed, and it must meet the following requirements:

* be close to real-life situations and relevant to students
* have more than one possible solution
* entail a thinking process
* require cooperative work
* be based on prior knowledge
* have the possibility of being assessed both during and at the end of the process
* involve searching for and interpreting information
* help to construct new knowledge after solving the problem

Due to the above-mentioned characteristics, PBL proves to be one of the most effective language learning approaches. It helps students acquire a comprehensive knowledge as well as a complete understanding of a topic. Furthermore, it develops their academic, social and personal skills, which are the skills they will need to become responsible and mature adults in the future.

It is often combined with traditional methods to suit our students’ needs and make the most of the different teaching styles. In addition, the school has a working group made up of teachers from different subjects, who are currently developing projects in cooperation with colleagues in other working groups, such as The Plurilingual Programme group.

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