University Lecturers' Perception and Implementation of Project - Based Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study is an endeavor to investigate the perception of Project-Based Learning (PBL) mainly with English as Foreign Language lecturers and other departments at the undergraduate level. This research explores the perception and awareness of the lecturers, especially those who teach English as Foreign Language (EFL), at undergraduate levels, and analyses the application of PBL by lecturers working at public as well as private universities. This study reveals that lecturers are not well-informed and well-aware of PBL projects, therefore, they are unable to guide students to do their projects according to PBL criteria and have problems in implementation of PBL projects. The findings of this study have important implications for the regulators of Higher Education system. It implies that the lecturers at university level should be equipped with required skills and information. Although, they are university lecturers, more time should be allocated for their professional development by themselves and by the regulators.

Keywords: Project - Based Learning, University lecturers, perception, awareness

1. Introduction

In the 21st century rapidly progressive globalization and ever-developing technology age, traditional education methods, standardized and stereotyped testing, assessment criteria, lectures generally fail to bring into compliance with the changing, expanding and advancing era where education has dynamic structure. Therefore, educators from kindergarten to Higher Education need to engage in on-going rapidly changing and modern society with increasing demands to life-long learners, innovators, critical-thinkers, analyzers who are able to provide research- based and authentic solutions to real life problems and social challenges not only as individuals but also as a member of group with well cultivated spirit of team. It goes without saying; there is not a unique teaching and learning method that is solely adequate to fulfill the above mentioned requirements. However, PBL (Project – Based Learning) has been recognized to be effective (Baysura, Altun, & Yucel-Toy, 2016; Habók & Nagy, 2016), student – centered (Beckett, 2006; Fook, Sidhu, Narasuman, Fong, & Rahman, 2015; Fragoulis & Tsiplakides, 2009), fruitful and multidisciplinary approach (Pack, Avanzato, Ahlgren, & Verner, 2004; Zancul, Sousa-Zomer, & Cauchick-Miguel, 2017) that improves the quality of learning and teaching (Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Lasauskiene & Rauduvaite, 2015; Solomon, 2003) and complies with 21st century competencies and domains (Chu, Reynolds, Tavares, Notari, & Lee, 2017a, 2017b; Hoose, 2017; Kavlu, 2015; Wahyudin, 2016).

1.1 Theoretical Background

Lecturers Perception towards PBL

In the process of literature review it was observed that there are numbers of research studies which have documented school (secondary, high) and university students' perceptions about PBL itself and its implementation. However, significantly fewer studies have addressed to teachers' views and perceptions on the efficacy of PBL especially university lecturers' and instructors' with adult learners. There are many studies have been proving the advantages of PBL in learning process in diverse context (Habók & Nagy, 2016; Thomas, 2000) but if the teachers / lecturers does not apply it, do not know how to implement, or do not find it beneficial so the students will be deprived of the benefits of PBL.

According to the researches PBL projects should be facilitated but not controlled by the teachers and assist learners to become autonomous learners (Bell, 2010). Project planning and implementation accepted highly time consuming and process which requires not only general information but also great attention and detail knowledge (Habok, 2015), what could count one of the possible reasons that teachers / lecturers do not want to use.

Literature review attested the positive as well as negative perceptions of teachers / lecturers towards PBL.

Beneke and Ostrosky (2009)'s teacher perception analyses revealed teachers' positive perceptions about PBL which increased learners' motivation and level of benefiting from PBL.

Teacher guidance is generally claimed to be significant in the process of PBL implementation. Although teacher is eager and motivated to apply PBL, it is difficult to accomplish the projects regarding PBL method requirements, unless teacher / lecturer receives adequate training, which should be not only theoretical but also practical in order to explore the full potential of PBL as a learning and teaching method (Wu & Meng, 2010).

Schools and universities' policies and curriculum requirements are also one of obstacles in PBL implementation (Habók & Nagy, 2016) and could be one of the reasons that teachers haven't felt the need to this method, or thus neither positive nor negative perceptions and beliefs were formed.

According to Baysura (2016)'s study with pre-service teachers in Turkey, it shows that teacher candidates are not able to define PBL precisely, and the reason might be that the concept was not learnt in-depth during the training. On the other hand, almost all candidates mentioned that they would use PBL, this is worrying in terms of proper PBL implementation. The following studies (Çıbık, 2009; Erdem & Akkoyunlu, 2002; Gültekin, 2005) also found the positive attitudes of teacher candidates towards PBL.

Several numbers of studies (Baran & Maskan, 2009; Çakan, 2005; Da & Durdu, 2011) ascertained that teachers and pre-service teacher candidates thought they would have difficulties in the process of PBL implementation such as; limited time (Harris, 2015), uninterested students (Brooks, 2016), students' procrastination behaviors and putting PBL into practice.

According to the study results of Adams (2018) in Guatemalan context teachers found that projects strongly improved students class participation probably due to the collaborative nature of PBL. Teachers also indicated that projects mostly effective way to learn language and acquire all language skills (Kavlu, 2016; Simpson, 2011). Overall, the study's findings explicitly stated that PBL positively perceived by the teachers as well as by students (Rochmahwati, 2015).

1.2 Problem Statement

Public and Private Universities in (Iraq – KRG, Sulaimania) instructors' perception about the implementation of Project – Based Learning in their institutions. Very few studies have addressed teachers (Habók & Nagy, 2016) and university lecturers' view related to PBL and hardly any research has been done in Iraq – KRG has not been investigated yet. So, it is an up-to date problem. According to (Adams, 2018) while some works of Project-Based Learning and EFL students in developing countries have been promulgated, the area of study still has a shortage of consequential statistics.

1.3 Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to explore public and private university lecturers' insight on PBL as a student-centered trend at undergraduate level. The aim of this study is to gain in-depth information about the perception of the faculty members of KRG, Sulaymaniyah regarding PBL and to what extend its implemented at the university level.

2. Methods

2.1   Participants: The sample consisted of 48 lecturers who teach at public and private universities and different departments and different disciplines. All the participants are qualified lecturers according to the requirements of Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in Kurdistan, they are either MA holders or PhD holders. Lecturers' teaching years at universities ranged from 1 to more than 26 years in this study.

2.2 Methodology

        This study consisted of two instruments: a questionnaire and interviews. The findings are derived from open-ended questionnaire and semi- structured interviews in which the participants are offered an opportunity to express their ideas, feelings, and perspectives about the studied issues.

The Qualitative data enhanced more comprehension of PBL and the answers were a big support to enrich our paper. The Qualitative data enhanced more comprehension of PBL and the answers were a big support to enrich our paper. Open ended questionnaires were used to get benefit from the authenticity, richness, honesty and candor, depth of response which are all accepted the hallmarks of the qualitative data. Considering the significance and afore – mentioned strengths the open – ended questionnaire was applied, semi – structured interviews were used as well. Semi – structured format enabled participants to expound on the asked topics and allowed the researcher to ask interviewees to expand their ideas when necessary.

During the interview conduction, the research questions were congruent with interview questions, while listening the researcher seek clarity and deep understanding throughout the interviews of the respondents.

2.3 Data Collection

The data was collected, from both PBL users and those who don't use it.
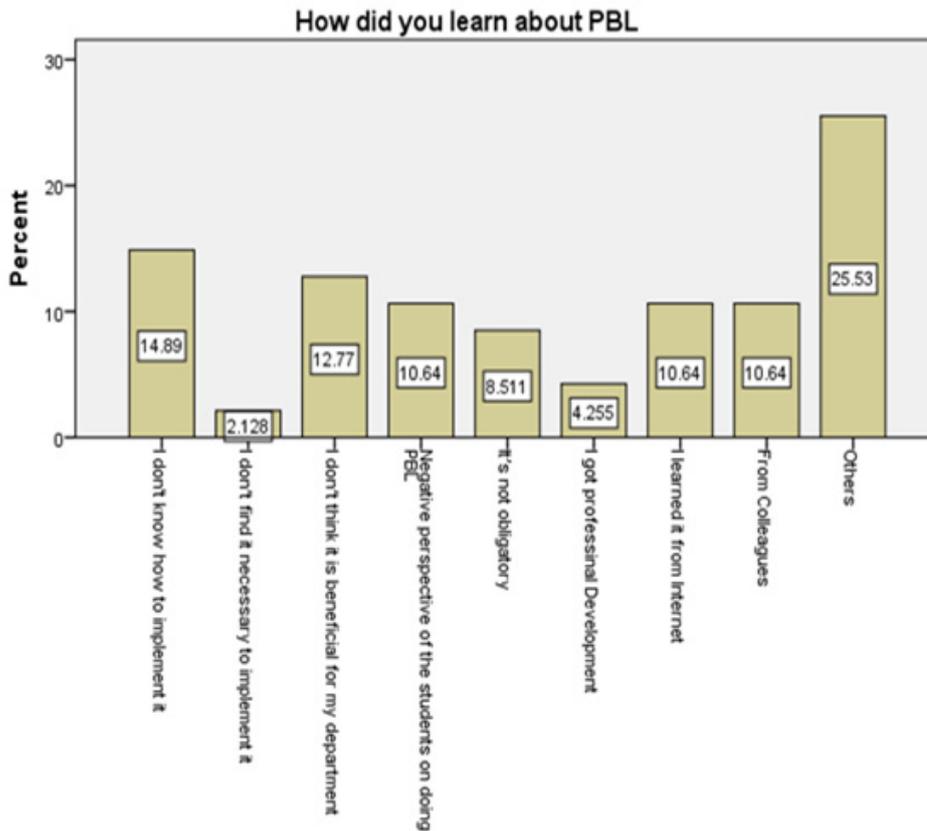
Table 1- Usage of PBL in Classes
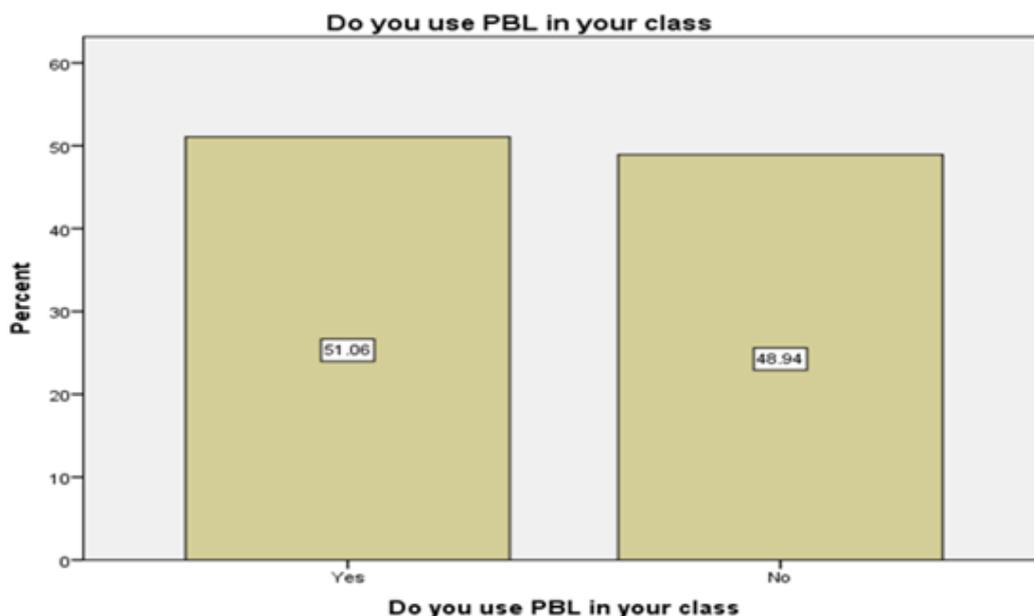
The above given data has shown that most of our participants have used PBL Projects which is 51.06%.

2.4 Findings

University lecturers perception about use of PBL:

Table 2-   Necessity of use of PBL and procedures of learning PBL

How did you learn about PBL

The given data in table-2 has shown that Internet was of a good help to the lecturers at university because the majority of those who use PBL have learned it from the internet which is 10.64 percent of our participants. Besides, it has also proven that colleagues were cooperative to help each other to get introduced to PBL usage, it's also 10.64 percent. However, lack of professional development training is really clear in universities of Kurdistan of Iraq, only 4.255 percent of the lecturers have got Professional Development Train- ing. Simultaneously, 25.53 percent of participants have chosen others, but while analysing others, most of them have said that they learned use of PBL while doing their degree either MA/MSC or PhD.

From collected data (48 participants) in Table-2, 14.89 percent of non PBL users stated that hey don't know how to use PBL; this shows lack of technological knowledge among university lecturers, (participants) and also 12.77 percent of participants believe that they don't find using PBL beneficial for their departments, that means there is a negative perspective from the teachers and pre judgement to the use of PBL projects. Furthermore, 10.64 percent of the participants chose negative perspective of the students on do- ing PBL Projects which indicates that there is a negative comprehension on doing PBL projects by both sides (lecturers and students). This research and further attempts are outstanding endeavors to raise awareness among lecturers and students. Moreover, 2.128 of participants consider that using PBL is not necessary for their departments, so; it has been observed that the scientific departments are more towards using PBL while humanitarian departments and other departments are not. Some lecturers have learned PBL while doing their master's degree. Participant lecturers have notified that when students get used to PBL they feel more independent and autonomous learners. One of those samples have been received from College of Law, there are a large number of participants from law department, shortage of using PBL can be seen. According to the responses to the interview questions provided, Law department lecturer believe that is not obligatory to apply PBL that's why they do not use it.

Bitinas, (2006) in Lasauskiene & Rauduvaite, 2015) stated that lecturer's efficient action employs growth of educational project and its empirical execution. Besides, creativity plays a vital role in implementing PBL according to the data in Table-2, personal effort has played an outstanding role in executing PBL projects. Years of teaching also plays a big role. While collecting data the unwillingness and non-cooperative feature of the participants and response delaying were observed. Regarding checklist and rubric usage aware-ness, either the participants are not aware of it or they don't want to share it, it's a little ambiguous and it is the point that this study has not been able to discover. A remarkable observation through analyses - is one participant from Colorado State University, he is not using PBL at Civil Engineering and Environmental Science Department. He has facilities but he is not using project-based learning and he wanted to be honest so he declared that he has not used it.

Table 3- Teaching Experience and Use of PBL

Experiences * Do_you_use_PBL_in_your_class Crosstabulation

			Do_you_use_PBL_in_your_class		
			Yes	No	Total
Experiences	1 to 5 years	Count	14	12	26
		% within Experiences	53.8%	46.2%	100.0%
		% within Do_you_use_PBL_in_your_class	58.3%	52.2%	55.3%
	5 to 10 years	Count	4	10	14
		% within Experiences	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
		% within Do_you_use_PBL_in_your_class	16.7%	43.5%	29.8%
	10 to 15 years	Count	4	1	5
		% within Experiences	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
		% within Do_you_use_PBL_in_your_class	16.7%	4.3%	10.6%
	15 to 20	Count	1	0	1
		% within Experiences	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Do_you_use_PBL_in_your_class	4.2%	0.0%	2.1%
	20 and more	Count	1	0	1
		% within Experiences	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Do_you_use_PBL_in_your_class	4.2%	0.0%	2.1%
Total		Count	24	23	47
		% within Experiences	51.1%	48.9%	100.0%
		% within Do_you_use_PBL_in_your_class	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

According to the data in table-3, if experienced and novice (less experienced) lectures are compared a big difference can be seen. As it's shown in the above given data there are lecturers who have been working for more than 20 years but they are still enthusiastic to use PBL as they see using PBL as an obligatory tool for their department, for example Architecture Department participants, they have a good knowledge of PBL and they use it perfectly compared to Law Department.

Most of the participants of this study have learnt how to use PBL from internet so it implies that there is a lack of training courses to teach University lecturers how to implement and use PBL at Kurdistan Universities and also from different universities from around the world. A few of them said that they have learnt from colleague, only two of them said they have learnt PBL from professional training. Though the architecture department lecturers are perfectly using PBL but they still have a big problem with large number of students in each class and lack of facilities and size of the class and insufficient time to do the PBL projects successfully.

From the collected data lecturers of English departments they use PBL precisely and they manage it in EFL classes. They mentioned that they have less problems compared to other departments and just one English teaching lecturer hasn't used PBL in this study. Lecturers believe that students' performance would be great with PBL, they believe that through using PBL students will have more authentic and influential outcomes. Many English lecturers accredit   that PBL should be implemented in each class. More of the PBL users are of the participants are from private universities because they seem to have more up-to-date and technological facilities and they had prompt reply to participate in this study's interview questions compared to public University lecturers.

An impressive finding has been found which is; in law department only one lecturer has used and implemented PBL and he was the only participant who answered in English so it can be derived that knowing English has a big role in using PBL and awareness of trendy techniques in the teaching and learning process, though he has only 2 years of teaching experience compared to other instructors with more years of teaching.

Translation Department lecturers have used PBL because they think that translation itself is a project and it is based on PBL projects so it should be based on PBL, most of those who do not use PBL either because they don't know how to use it or they believe that negative perspective of students might hinder them from using PBL. It has been also mentioned that some lecturers considered that they don't find using PBL beneficial as a lecturer teaching technique.

3. Results

It is clear from the data, lecturers in private universities use more PBL than lecturers at public universities, that might be due to lack of facilities and enthusiasm or motivation in public universities. Furthermore, lecturers from Business and Management, and Accounting Departments use PBL as well to stop spoon feeding process at university level as the students have been used to being spoon fed in the high school. The data was collected from different departments and different universities, different cities and different backgrounds, number of participants in the collected data is 48 participants. The data is reliable and multidisciplinary which makes it more valid.

3.1 PBL user's perception and Non PBL users Perception

According to the data analysis lecturers of scientific departments such as Geology, Civil Engineering, Architecture Engineering, Media, IT, ELT (English Language Teaching), Business, Kurdish departments have participated in this study. The data has asserted that lecturers of scientific departments and especially Architecture department apply PBL projects more because it is a requirement in compliance to the curriculum of their departments so they have more exposure to project implementation , participants from Geology departments from Science department use PBL in each class because they believe that scientific departments need PBL to be used and it's obvious that lecturers perception is to find out whether it is effective and influential and it has been mentioned that PBL should be a part of teaching in their departments. Those who know and implement PBL, they find it difficult and demanding to implement. The data shows that most of the lecturers are facing the following problems;

a.   large classes
b.   large number of students
c.   lack of time
d.   lack of equipment
e.   lack of personal and professional desire to learn trendy techniques for teaching

so the above mentioned reasons are the factors behind lack of using PBL. Two participants from the US one of them is a geologist and she uses PBL and she believes that it is required in her university to use it but the other one is a lecturer at engineering environmental department and he believes that he has managed teaching without using PBL. For some departments even in the US, its ok to not use PBL. All participants from different departments and different places around the world, especially in Kurdistan and 2 in the USA, the criteria and the sample of PBL are to be learnt in the appendix of this paper it has been put there in order to be a pathway to new users of PBL as it believed that there are a large number of new learners of PBL.

3.2 Discussion

While deep analysis it has been noticed that there are differences in the use of PBL in the same lecture of same specialty, same experience but different work places such as the private university and public university, the private university lecturers say that it is a must here that learning goes through using projects, however, (Holm,2011) in (Habók & Nagy, 2016) specified PBL in a practice-based manner as "student-centred guideline that occurs over an extended time period, during which students select, plan, investigate and produce a product, presentation or performance that answers a real-world question or responds to an authentic. So, accordingly every public and private university lecturer should comprehend the value of using PBL . Technically it can be derived that Lecturers themselves can play a vital role in implementing PBL projects wherever they work, as Boss,2013) believes that interviews with teachers is necessary to know their real intention about PBL Projects, she thinks that interviews with teachers is to prepare a common ground for tight, suited and digital- era learning that energize the students about their future and performance.

Lecturers should understand the phases that each project should undergo, this understanding should also be raised among students because knowing the phases properly will enhance their willingness to participate in such projects better, as (Boss, 2013) clarified that there are four facets in every well-designed project, First, Project Launch; which is considered as an entry for enhancing students inquisitiveness into driving questions to build investigating experience. Second, Knowledge Building; students build background com-prehension. Third, Product Development and critique: students creativity will be activated and discovered. Fourth, Final Presentation and reflection; students allocate their accomplished work with an authentic audience.

The one who teaches at Cihan University, College of Law, he is the only speaker of English among the lecturers of Law department participants and he is also the only user of PBL projects. He has sent us the rubric and the checklist according to his plan. So, the instructor's perception can play a big role in implementation of PBL even though the majority is not implementing it. Boss (2013) be-lieves that PBL Projects requires similar role for teachers and students. A successful lecturer should involve every student in different projects as they like, students or teachers can not do anything alone because it is a cooperative process.

Donnelly in (Boss,2013) insisted on using PBL as a trendy way of teaching by saying that Problems and questions are located in real world contexts: the attention is on the rational risk taking and testing and error- problem resolution.
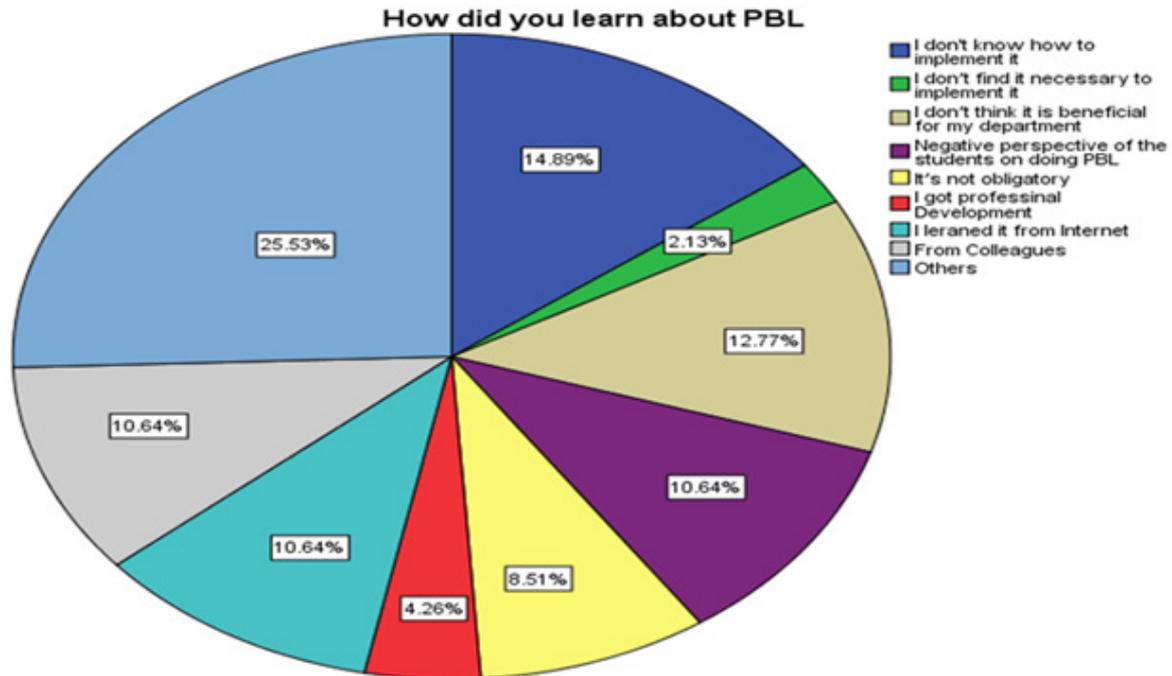
The data in table-3 has shown that each instructor's perception can play a vital role in implementation of PBL. The previous analysis has explored that the teachers with 5 to 10 years of experience are facing more problems with the use of PBL. However, lecturers of 1 to 5 years' of teaching experience also have this problem but the number of PBL users do not differ from the number of non PBL users. Another problem we have found out from table-4 is that the lecturers who ask students to use PBL are not teaching them how to do projects but they are only asking them to do projects and that can never achieve the real goal of PBL - projects. Lecturers should be equipped with the right information of doing PBL- Projects via training courses!

According to the data which is shown in table-4; negative perspective of the students was one of the prominent reasons behind less use of PBL by lecturers. This study has shown that the perception of lecturers can be crucial but for further research studies maybe the best option would be the student's perception about use of PBL, it would be more accurate to see their negative perception or positive one as students not to be decided by their lecturers to find out the hypothesis which hinders their teachers to use PBL. That could be so helpful to know whether they really want PBL projects to be used or not. It needs passion and patience for a lecturer and the students to see the product of their preparation in events about their projects.

According to the data in table-4, some participants have also said that they don't think it is beneficial for their departments which means that for some lecturers using PBL projects is a waste of time, but using PBL Projects is saving time instead of wasting it in the teaching process . The lecturer's awareness should get increased, more training should be given to the students, in order to compre-hend use of PBL. So, they find it as an excuse to reduce their commitment to their job which will be 24/7 teaching process. They should come to the idea that when teaching becomes an ongoing process through implementing PBL projects, it becomes more productive. Thus, motivation and appreciation by the university is needed to enhance lectures enthusiasm to use PBL.

 (Boss,2013) has also found out that communication with parents and colleagues can be really an outstanding factor for achieving students success, furthermore, Ibid 21st century project should approach and encourage parents and other community members to find ways to support project work. For instance, they can provide feedback and share their skills and help them to defend themselves when they are required to ask an answer for the interlocutor.

Table 4- Percentage of procedures of learning PBL and use of PBL among lecturers

How did you learn about PBL

Legend:
- I don't know how to implement it
- I don't find it necessary to implement it
- I don't think it is beneficial for my department
- Negative perspective of the students on doing PBL
- It's not obligatory
- I got professinal Development
- I leraned it from Internet
- From Colleagues
- Others

Values shown: 14.89%, 2.13%, 12.77%, 10.64%, 8.51%, 4.26%, 10.64%, 10.64%, 25.53%

4.1 Conclusion

The era of technology and innovation needs creative and innovating lecturers.This paper has found that it's very necessary for every university lecturer to use PBL to enhance teaching process and to motivate students in order to empower their abilities to learn better, simultaneously, we have found out to create a friendly environment and a safe environment for students it is needy to use PBL. In this Era, It's very trendy for students to feel safe in their classes. This can be achieved by using PBL. Many lecturers face problems while using PBL so we suggest that training courses should be obligatory and offered by administration of Ministry of Higher Education in order to make learning and teaching process up to date and appropriate for the 21st century requirements. Though lack of technological knowledge was one of the reasons behind less use of PBL Projects but there are still opportunities for the lecturers to improve themselves and to be progressed by their universities.

Al Barwani, Al-Mekhlafi, and Perur Nagaratnam, (2013) in Adams, 2018) have discovered that EFL lecturers face a large number of demands each year, particularly in developing countries.

According to Baysura, Altun, & Yucel-Toy (2016) the principal purpose of the PBL method is to qualify students to originate solution oriented outputs for different circumstances that they encounter by associating their learning to actual. On the other hand, trying to find out the importance of PBL projects and the advantages of doing PBL in different fields, thus, according to Simpson (2011) in Adams, 2018) research designated that Project Based Learning (PBL) can be a more operative teaching scheme than habitual techniques.

3.4 Appendix Criteria for PBL and Data

Roles for This Document	Typically Performed by	Date and Signatures
Author	Dr. Aziza Kavlu – Lecturer of Advance English and Business Communication Skills	
Submitter	First Grade Architecture and Civil Engineering Departments' students	
Approver(s)	**Head of Departments** Head of Architecture Engineering Head of Civil Engineering	Mustafa Mukhlis Ilham Ibrahim

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Department/Unit:	First Grade Architecture and Civil Engineering Departments, Ishik University, Sulaimaniyah
Type of the Project	■ Academic ☐ Social

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND

Project based Learning Projects for Architecture and Civil Engineering 2017 – 2018 Academic Year's Summer School,

Topic: Build Your Dream Journey for Architecture and Civil Engineering Students

The project aims to enhance students' English language skills, investigating skills and digital skills.
Journey

- ◉ **Dream**
- ◉ **Choose Country**
- ◉ **Sightseeing**
- ◉ **Natural Beauty**
- ◉ **Weather**
- ◉ **Accommodation**
- ◉ **Food**
- ◉ **Entertainment**
- ◉ **Offers**

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The positive integration of English Language to authentic settings and investigative skills

- ✓ Shift from rote – memorization to investigating, authentic and learning by doing atmosphere.
- ✓ Get information and awareness about the place of English in their field education
- ✓ Acquire Research and interview skills, analyze data and information, and draw conclusion abilities.
- ✓ Practice public speaking skills while presenting results.
- ✓ Practical application of learning to the real world and the world of work
- ✓ Skill development including communication, team work and presentation
- ✓ Hands on learning, problem solving and development of creative solutions
- ✓ Development of an understanding about architecture and the built environment.
- ✓ 5 min video
- ✓ Leaflet
- ✓ Requirements
- ✓ **Real-World Oriented:** —connection to the real world, has a basis in, or application to, real-

Name of University: _____, Department: _____, Major_____, Gender: F /
M _____
How long have you been teaching at University? Since_____
Do you use PBL (Project -Based Learning) in your classes?   Yes ____   No____
If No, due to one of the following factors:
a.   I don't know how to implement it
b.   I don't find it necessary to implement it
c.   I don't think it is beneficial for my department
d.   Negative perspective of the students on doing PBL
e.   It's not obligatory
If Yes:
1.   How did you learn about PBL?
a.   I got professional Development Training
b.   I learned it from Internet
c.   From Colleagues
d.   Others   _____
__
2.   Can you define PBL briefly from your perspective?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
3.   What type of PBL projects have you applied so far? (Please mention names and the results)
Project Names   Type   Results

4.   Do you think PBL projects are different from traditional teaching methods type projects? Why?
_____
_____
_____

5.   Do you think it is necessary to use PBL in EFL classes, Why?
_____
_____
_____
6.   Do you think every University Lecturer should implement PBL, Why?
_____
_____
_____
7.   Can you mention difficulties, problems and challenges you have faced while implementing PBL?
a.   In the class _____
_____
b.   With students _____
_____

c.   Personally_____

d.   Professionally _____

e.   Others_____

Dear participants,

This questionnaire is a part of our research in PBL (Project-Based Learning) and English Language Teaching. It is completely confidential and there are no right or wrong answers, so you can be as honest as you like! The answers you provide are used solely for academic purposes in this project. In fact, if you decide in the end that you would prefer not to participate in this survey, you will be free to opt out without any consequences and the answers that you have given will be discarded and not analyzed. Thank you.

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