



# Why Can Educational Innovation Fail? Lecturers' Reflections on the Pros and Cons of Implementing Problem-Based Learning

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## Abstract

This research focuses on problem-based learning (PBL) as an innovative learning and teaching method which uses complex real-world problems as the triggers for student learning, as opposed to direct presentation of facts and concepts. Besides deeper learning of course content, PBL is expected to promote the development of transferable skills like critical thinking, problemsolving abilities, group work and communication skills – all necessary to cope with the demands of changing labor market. The aim of the study was to find out how university lecturers understand the nature and value of problem-based learning, and what is their perception of the factors that could support or hinder its wider implementation. The results of the qualitative survey showed that lecturers have a rather positive attitude towards problem-based learning, but they were not ready to apply the method strictly on the basis of a theoretical model. Adopting a new method requires open mind, courage to experiment, and understanding why it is necessary and useful. As such, PBL might not suit for every faculty member or during all stages of the academic career. The complexity of the problem formulation, difficulties in assessment and finding competent tutors, as well as increasing time pressure were seen as the main bottlenecks hindering the wider adoption of the PBL method. The latter could be supported through appropriate training and sharing of best practices.

**Keywords:** active learning, failure, higher education, problem-based learning