

Ninth Issue of the Journal of Problem Based Learning in Higher Education

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second issue of the sixth volume of the Journal of Problem Based Learning in Higher Education. Earlier this year, we published a Special Issue on “Integrating Academic and Artistic Methodologies within a PBL-environment”, but the present volume is a regular issue with five research papers and six cases. We are proud of the two volumes in the seventh issue. Through the journal we wish to communicate both specific PBL research with a narrower focus through special issues as well as regular issues that provide a wider range of high quality research papers and cases from a variety of fields from the whole world. This volume therefore contributes to serve our overall vision of becoming a “global outlet for scholarship in problem-based learning in higher education”. We also wish to have a more or less equal balance between research papers and cases to show both scholarly depth and disseminate experiences and sharing of good PBL practices. We find that both are important when providing access to research and practice related to PBL university pedagogy.

Below are two tables providing a rough overview of the five papers and six cases. For each of these, the country of the author(s) is mentioned along with a short statement of which education programme the paper or case was based on and finally the topic of the paper or case.

The five papers

Author country	Education programme	Topic
Brazil	Project management	Blended learning course evaluation
Costa Rica, Denmark	Informatics	Organisational culture
Canada	Zoology, biology	Student allocation to groups and assessment
Denmark	Social sciences and humanities	Student diversity in groups
Denmark	Information Studies	Critical thinking skills

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Table 1 shows that the five papers origin in different parts of the world, with around half more or less based in Denmark. The papers are both in natural and social sciences and in the humanities. The papers also deal with very different angles ranging from research on students' work in groups to the development of critical thinking skills and how different cultures or structures of a course affect the teaching and learning.

The six cases

Author country	Education programme	Topic
Kuwait, United Arab Emirates	Mechanical Engineering	Project about foldable laptop riser
Denmark	Rehabilitation Psychology	Master curriculum design
United Kingdom	Human Physiology	Critical thinking skills using Apps
Kuwait	Mechanical and Civil Engineering	Challenges working in teams
United States of America	Introduction to Design Foundations	Online reflection tool
United States of America	Computer Aided Drafting Technology	Assessment

Table 2 gives an overview of the six cases. Here we see an even wider geographical spread of authors, and an even wider spread of education programmes since several of the papers deal with engineering and health. Also the angles of the papers vary a lot and some deal with overall curriculum evaluation, others on concrete examples of using different types of digital tools in the teaching.

A few general traits become visible when doing such overviews. We see that several of the papers and cases are concerned with developing critical thinking in the students. Others are concerned with assessment of students and others with how students work in groups. The latter is strongly linked to PBL as it is a core aspect of PBL that students work together in groups. According to the theories underpinning PBL, this is something that aids the students in their learning. However, the number of papers concerning this, not only in this journal, also shows that how to implement this in practice is not a trivial question and more research is needed here. The fact that the issues of critical thinking and assessment are also present in many of the papers and cases is perhaps a reflection of critical thinking being considered a very essential element of higher education, but aiming for developing critical thinking in students, and actually achieving it, is also a difficult task. Similarly for assessment. PBL may have good answers here, but more research is still needed.

The editors are very pleased to learn that JPBLHE which originates at Aalborg University in Denmark, is by no means a “local” journal. It is indeed an international journal. This is something that we wish to maintain. We also see that JPBLHE has a good balance of papers and cases in all faculties. We want to be a journal that remains open to all faculties but this is really not something that the editors can decide for ourselves. We are dependent on researchers from all faculties, and all over the world, submitting good quality papers and cases. We hope that an issue such as the present one will continue to encourage researchers all over the world to keep sending us papers.

Finally, we should like to thank all the reviewers who have contributed to the improvement of the papers and cases in 2018:

Kjell Staffas, Sweden
Claus Spliid, Denmark
Benoit Raucent, Belgium
Tanja Jonassen, Denmark
Robert (Bob) Lawlor, Ireland
Prarthana Coffin, Denmark
Mona-Lisa Dahms, Denmark
Mahyuddin Bin Arsat, Malaysia
Stine Bylin Bundgaard, Denmark
Roger Hadgraft, Australia
Erik Laursen, Denmark
Olga Timcenko, Denmark
Maximiliano Bron, Spain
Eva Brooks, Denmark
Diana Stentoft, Denmark
Thomas Ryberg, Denmark