

Engaging Students to Learning through Project-Based Activities: Conditions and Perspectives

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Abstract: This article discusses the importance of incorporating project-based learning into teaching to effectively engage learners. Although project-based learning is a well-known and widely used instructional strategy, it remains a challenging issue to productively apply to practical settings to improve the learning performance of students. Didactic principles underlying this methodology along with some background information on the method will also be presented.

Keywords: project method, didactic principles, foreign language competency, educational process.

The current stage of society's growth is characterized by ongoing and rapid changes in many areas of life, an increased rate of updating scientific knowledge, and a quick shift in activity circumstances. The traditional nature of the educational sector and the requirements of a quickly evolving society have become starkly at odds with one another. It can only be resolved by actively changing pedagogical structures and integrating cutting-edge technologies into the teaching and learning process.

The current educational reform in Uzbekistan is characterized by a significant level of radical change. Therefore, when arranging professional training for university students, it is crucial to consider this context. The effectiveness of addressing various challenges in educating the younger generation largely hinges upon the expertise and competence of teachers. Consequently, there is a pressing need to prepare students who can fully align with the demands of contemporary society. These individuals should possess a strong foundation in general knowledge, exhibit creative attributes, have a well-developed imagination, and possess the capacity to generate and implement innovative ideas.

Project-based learning has become one of the main pedagogical models to respond to the challenges of the new century, being adopted in several educational contexts, both to increase motivation and to enable students to put what they have learned into practice.

According to Krajcik and Blumenfeld [6], project-based learning allows students to learn through practice by putting concepts into practice and participating in real-world activities that are comparable to the professional tasks they may eventually perform. They contend that authentic projects centered around a single subject, assignment, or problem are very motivating and interesting for students, who absorb academic material applied to the context of future employment.

The project approach started to take shape in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region at the turn of the 20th century. A small group of staff members was created in 1905 and attempted to actively use project methods in teaching practice. They were led by teacher S. T. Shatsky. Many teachers enthusiastically adopted the concept, and it swiftly developed. However, the project technique was criticized for being "frivolous" during the Soviet era and later outlawed.

Since that time, and up until recently, no significant efforts have been made to bring this method back into the CIS.

In the USA, Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and many other countries, the project method found widespread use and gained great popularity due to the rational combination of theoretical knowledge and its practical application to solve specific problems of the surrounding reality in the joint activities of schoolchildren. “I know why I need what I know, and where and how I can apply this knowledge” - this is the main thesis of the modern understanding of the project method, which attracts many educational systems seeking to find a reasonable balance between academic knowledge and pragmatic skills [5].

The works of scientists emphasize that the project methodology allows to organically integrate the knowledge of students from different fields when solving one problem, makes it possible to apply the acquired knowledge in practice, takes into account the interests, inclinations, and needs of students, has a positive effect on the motivational sphere, promotes the development of cognitive needs and creative potential students.

According to E.S. Polat, the project approach can be utilized to instruct pupils in any sort of educational setting—as long as specific prerequisites are met—and at any stage of training. According to E.S. Polat, the basic requirements for using the project method are:

- definition of the problem and the research objectives arising from it;
- putting forward hypotheses for solving problems;
- Discussion of research methods (statistical and experimental, etc.);
- discussion of ways to present the final results;
- collection, systematization and analysis of the obtained data;
- summing up, drawing up results, their presentation;
- Conclusions, putting forward new research problems [4].

Thus, the process of preparing students for project activities should be purposeful and contribute to the solution of three blocks of tasks:

- 1) educational objectives - familiarization with the project method, its features and students' mastery of design and technological knowledge;
- 2) developmental tasks - the development of cognitive interest, creativity, skills and abilities related to the planning and implementation of project activities, including the use of ICT;
- 3) Educational tasks - nurturing determination, independence, demands on oneself and others, the ability to work in a team, reflection, tolerance, empathy and other personal qualities.

In accordance with the listed tasks that need to be solved, the following three criteria for readiness to organize and implement project activities have been identified:

- 1) the cognitive criterion includes a complex of knowledge about the essence and didactic features of project activities; understanding the importance of project activities in a person's life; mastery of content, design sequence, and intellectual ability);
- 2) The operational-activity criterion allows us to outline the range of skills, including in the field of information technology activities, necessary for the implementation of full-fledged project activities in an educational institution.

- 3) Personal criterion - a set of certain personal qualities necessary for a student to carry out project activities: tolerance, sociability, non-conflict, ability to work in a team, and creative abilities (creativity).

Project-based learning is a teaching method in which students actively participate in significant projects that are relevant to their everyday lives. Project-based learning can, when applied correctly, result in deeper learning, greater levels of engagement, and improved student results, according to numerous studies. Project-based learning is actually a remarkably successful method for instructing pupils about potential careers. This covers instruction in core academic topics like math and science as well as instruction within vocational and technical education programs.

Project-based learning aids students in learning whether teachers are inspiring them to consider their future by exposing them to a variety of professional alternatives, teaching them career skills that will help them succeed after high school, or demonstrating how core material is used in the real world.

The purpose of project activities is to develop students' readiness for independent and creative work such as:

- Development of critical thinking, the ability to analyze, formulate a problem and find ways to solve it;
- Development of cognitive interest and motivation for educational activities;
- Improving skills in information and communication technologies: computer programs, multimedia, Internet services, etc.;
- Development of the ability to work in a team;
- Formation of public speaking skills and presentation of performance results;
- Improving independent work skills;
- Development of creative thinking (creativity) [3].

By integrating project-based learning into the classroom, educators can unlock a multitude of benefits for students. The research evidence overwhelmingly supports the positive impact of the method on students, teachers, and school communities.

Conventional or traditional instructional approaches encompass various techniques to foster student learning, such as assigning homework. On the other hand, project-based learning goes beyond language acquisition and aids in cultivating essential life skills like time management, critical thinking, teamwork, delegation, prioritization, and more.

Thus, based on the above, we can conclude that the project method is based on the development of students' cognitive skills, the ability to independently construct their knowledge, navigate the information space, as well as the development of critical and creative thinking. Therefore, the project method is meant to be precisely the way to achieve a didactic goal through a detailed development of the problem, which should result in a very real, tangible, practical result, formalized in one way or another”.

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