

Time:

Projects can be very time consuming. When running a major project, other 'normal' class work, such as the syllabus, the next section in the textbook and tests, can get lost. Also, other learning areas make demands on the learners who then cannot complete any of their 'normal' or project work properly. Another problem is that lessons can be too short. Just as the learners are getting into their project work, the bell goes for the next lesson. It can be very difficult to get projects completed on time. There are always unexpected delays and disruptions that can make it impossible to finish on time. And when a project has been going for a while, learners can get bored, even though they are not finished.

Getting Started:

Learners can approach a project in a superficial manner. They might not take responsibility for making the project work. If the learners do not have a clear picture of where the project is heading, what is required of them and how it will be assessed, they can approach the project in a directionless manner.

Self Management:

When an educator tries too hard to stay in control in a PBL class, the learners can lose interest and can make it difficult for the class to happen smoothly. But on the other hand, when an educator adopts a PBL approach, she cannot assume that the learners will manage to cope without help. Learners do not naturally manage their time well and do not have established learning skills. Because they do not have a clear idea of what a completed project will look like, they don't know what to aim for. They do not usually know what steps to go through to produce a good project.

Group Work:

In PBL, the learners work in groups, but the groups often do not work well. Some groups never manage to achieve anything, while in other groups, the project is completed well, but some of the group members do not do anything, rather leaving all the work to the 'clever' and hardworking learners. Because learners are not used to working in groups, they lack the skills to work with others and to solve the inevitable disagreements that arise. Because learners are working in groups and doing PBL, they can make a huge noise and disturb the rest of the school.

Communication:

Projects can go wrong if there is insufficient communication. Lack of planning among the educators responsible for the project, and with the rest of the staff, can cause conflict and can also lead to undue pressure on the learners. If the parents are not informed about the project, the learners may feel that there is no parental support for their work and they may find it hard to complete a project that requires them to do anything over and above what is normally required. Parents may also complain to school authorities if they do not understand the project, and demand that their children are 'taught properly'.

Communication with people outside of the school, such as experts, can be unsatisfactory and a waste of time for all concerned if there is insufficient preparation.

Use Of Technology:

The Internet can be a distraction, and can lead learners to a lot of useless information. It can lead learners to biased information and to objectionable things such as pornography. They can also waste a lot of money if the school is on a dial-up connection. If the learners use computers, they can waste a lot of time using computer tools which are not appropriate for the project, and in using the computers for the sake of it. It can also be very embarrassing for an educator to be 'caught out' by a learner who knows more than the educator about a particular software tool.

Assessment:

When learners do group work, they are often disappointed because the weak members in their group make the stronger members do badly. Another problem is that a group can make a mistake early on in the project, and then this makes the rest of their project weak, and they get a bad final score. Assessment can be very narrow if only the learners are assessed. The organisers of the project cannot learn for future projects if there is no assessment of the project itself.

Adapted from: Mergendoller, J.R. & Thomas, J.W., *Managing Project Based Learning: Principles from the Field*.