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Project-Based Learning and Students’ Motivation: Kacem Amine High School as a Case Study

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| ***Abstract***  *The learning methods can either increase or decrease students' motivation. Project-based learning is one of the modern learning methods that have been found to create a welcoming and motivating learning environment where learners enthusiastically participate in constructing knowledge on their own. To investigate this in the Moroccan context, the researchers conducted a correlational study to explore the relationship between project-based learning as an independent variable and students’ motivation types as a dependent variable. The twenty students who participated in the experiment were given a project to conduct. The project was related to what they had studied in unit four of the Ticket to English textbook. The results indicate that PBL and students’ motivation are to a greater extent interrelated.* | ***Received:***  *12/11/2024* |
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

Motivation is of great importance in learning. According to Margaret and Gardener (2003), three factors develop students' speed for learning a language: age, personality, and motivation. The latter is the most important of these elements. They emphasize this point by saying that motivation is responsible for students' engagement in the learning process. Since students have different levels of motivation, there are various teaching methods and strategies a teacher can use to create a supportive learning environment where all students eagerly participate in the learning process (Chafi et al., 2014**)**. Additionally, teachers use motivation in terms of what and how students learn about the subject matter. That is, when motivating teaching strategies are used, students’ way of learning becomes more successful, which can increase their learning efficacy. Project-based learning (henceforth, PBL) is among the teaching methods that are believed to increase students' motivation for learning. Therefore, the objective of the present research is to explore if there is a significant relationship between PBL and students’ motivation types, namely extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and attitude motivation.

* 1. **Research Questions**

The current study tries to answer the following research question:

* Is there any significant relationship between project-based learning and students’ motivation types: extrinsic, intrinsic and attitude?
  1. **Research Hypothesis**
* There is a significant relationship between project-based learning and motivation types: extrinsic, intrinsic and attitude.

1. **LITERATURE REVIEW AND EMPIRICAL STUDIES**
   1. **Motivation Defined**

Notwithstanding the disagreement on its definition, motivation is thought to be a crucial component of the teaching and learning process. It is defined as a process or a circulation through which learners are motivated (Fishbein & Icek, 2000). In other words, there is a certain degree of motivation inside an individual; it can either increase or decrease. It means that there is a hidden force creating energy that pushes us to act (Pakdel, 2013). According to Qashoa (2006), motivation is a psychological mechanism that controls and guides learners’ actions. Besides, Pardee and Roland (1990) believe that motivation is the reason that encourages an individual to do a certain behaviour in a certain way to develop an inclination. Thus, motivation is seen as a decision-making process on which a person relies to opt for the desired outcomes (Zhou & Brown, 2015). Because motivation is an important element in the learning process, it is challenging for low-motivated students to be active, productive, and self-reliant (Dewey, 1997). Rahman (2016) defines motivation in learning unequivocally as a driving force that positively influences any educational learning process, particularly learning, and attempts to execute specific actions with success or failure, depending on the relevance and intensity of motivation in operation. Al Rifai (2010) defines motivation as a desire to obtain the objective of learning a language. To put it another way, motivation to learn a language is about the extent to which a learner makes an effort to learn it. According to Sagheer and Tehmina (2013), motivation is the main factor that pushes learners to be active in the classroom and acquire the necessary skills from which they can benefit in their future schooling. It is thus concluded that motivation is the main key to creating a successful learning environment where learners rely on themselves to reach the desired goals.

* 1. **Project-Based Learning Defined**

PBL appeared as a revolutionary learning approach to the traditional teaching methods that took place on a large scale in schools in the USA (Norman & Schmidt, 1992). It is considered a student-centred method where educators help and guide learners through the process of solving problems. This includes finding a problem, developing a strategy or plan to solve it, implementing the plan, reflecting on the plan while completing the project, gathering and analyzing data, drawing conclusions, and reporting findings (Choo, 2007). This innovative learning method makes students active in their learning through a structured process aimed at solving a problem. It gives students a great chance to activate their prior knowledge to solve real-life problems (Havenga & Walt, 2016). Al-Balushi and Al-Aamri (2014) regard PBL as an inquiry-based teaching method (IBT) that offers a chance for educational reform where learners are provided with a real learning environment that contains authentic problems within real-world practices. It reflects an inclusive learning context where students use different disciplinary concepts and experiences to find answers to authentic problems. Moreover, PBL is recognized as a progressive active-learning and student-centred method that allows students to acquire content and skills over a long or medium period and resolve a real-world problem (Wurdinger et al., 2007). In light of the above, it is concluded that, in PBL, students are no longer passive learners who are required to memorize abstract knowledge, but they are active learners who are given the chance to work on their own and construct knowledge in real situations, making use of their schemata.

* 1. **Project Implementation Procedures**

Implementing instructions that enable students to apply course material, take responsibility for their learning, and collaborate is essential for developing twenty-first-century competencies. PBL is an instructional method that could work well. It can motivate students for the learning process and help them acquire the necessary skills they need in life. To successfully adopt PBL, both teachers and students should follow certain steps and pieces of advice (Harmer, 2014).

PBL aligns best with process-focused course outcomes, such as collaboration, research, and problem-solving. It can support students' development of disciplined habits like writing and communication, and conceptual knowledge. Once your course's learning objectives adapt to PBL, it is advised to create formative and summative tests to assess students' progress. Common PBL assessments include group agreements, rubrics, learning reflections, self- and peer-evaluation forms, and writing examples (Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2005).

After that, you should incorporate an embedded project problem that arises from student brainstorming into the design of the PBL scenario. Consider a real problem related to the used textbook’s content. In our fields, it is rarely difficult to detect numerous issues; what is important is to create a scenario that allows for all types of discussions, investigation, and learning required to meet the learning objectives. Scenarios should be motivating, appealing, and communicative (Kahn & O'Rourke, 2004).

If the students are unfamiliar with PBL, teachers should start with an easy scenario. After dividing learners into groups and giving them enough time to engage in a short version of the project, teachers set deadlines and describe expectations and rubrics for the assignments. Afterwards, teachers invite the groups to read the scenario. To do so, teachers can either create a single scenario that the groups work on autonomously or make several scenarios, each addressing a different issue or assign homework for the groups to complete in a two or three-day project (Harmer, 2014).

Small-group brainstorming sessions are the first step in a given project-based activity, in which learners determine the problem, assess their underlying knowledge, and decide on what they need to learn more about the project problem and where they need to look to find data. The problem should be stated or posed as a research topic by the groups. They will probably need help. Students should choose group roles and assign duties such as researching the subjects that will help them completely understand their challenges. Next, when they reach a solution, they formulate a preliminary hypothesis to "test". At this point, teachers remind students that their research questions and hypotheses may change if they discover evidence that contradicts their initial assumptions (Harmer, 2014).

The research phase is followed by students’ presentations that include their knowledge and findings about the research problem. Teachers should have total control over the summative assessment's format. After researching, the learners create presentations that synthesise their research and learning. The type of the summative assessment is completely up to the teacher. This step is treated like a research fair. Students find resources to develop background knowledge that informs their understanding, and then they collaboratively present their research outcome, including one or more viable solutions, as research posters to the class (Harmer, 2014).

 During the project activity assessment step, teachers should assess the groups’ performance, using rubrics to decide whether learners have clearly tackled the project problem and whether all group members have participated meaningfully. Teachers can finally consider having their students fill out reflections about their learning experience, including what they have learned about the content and the research process (Kahn & O’Rourke, 2004).

* 1. **Empirical Studies**

It turns out from the literature that a plethora of research, such as Walter (2016), Aksela and Amp; Haatainen (2019), Zhang (2007), Mario and Amp; Callum (2019), Stewart (2007), Boudersa (2015), Noorah (2017), Elsafty, Elsayad, and Amp; Shaaban (2020), Parisa and Amp; Taghi (2016), Abdul Rahman et al., (2017), Zaman (2018), and Alkhatnai (2017) Mahdy (2020), has proved the effectiveness of PBL in improving students’ motivation. Nevertheless, in Morocco, there seems to be little or no study that explored the relationship between PBL and students’ motivation types, namely extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and attitude motivation. The researchers of the present study, therefore, attempt to fill in this gap in the Moroccan context by examining such a relationship in the context of Moroccan high schools.

1. **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research is a scientific approach to finding answers to a research question, solving a problem, or developing new knowledge. This can be done through a planned and orderly collection, organization, and analysis of information with the ultimate purpose of making the research useful in decision-making. Systematic research can be conducted using three basic techniques: data collection, data analysis, and report writing (Sajjad, 2016).

* 1. **Research Design**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) state that the research design outlines the methodology of the study and provides a strategy for collecting data that can address the research questions. The current study is built on a mixed-methods design. It is both quantitative and qualitative.

* 1. **Research Sample**

The researchers of the current study created a group of twenty students from five classes of second-year baccalaureate level, studying at Kacem Amine High School, using the convenience sampling technique. The current research focuses only on one high school where participants are convenient and easy to reach.

* 1. **Research Instruments**

Two main tools are used in the present study. The five-point Likert questionnaire is used to answer the research question quantitatively, whilst the semi-structured interview is used to collect qualitative data to check the association between PBL and students’ motivation types: extrinsic, intrinsic, and attitudes.

* 1. **Data Collection Procedure**

Participants are given a project titled "Eco Dream" to conduct. It is a five-week project that begins on December 9th, 2021 and ends with a culminating presentation in January 2022. The project problem is about the effect of trash output and gasoline use on health and the environment in the city of Sidi Slimane. It is based on what the participants have studied before about sustainable development. After filling out a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, the participants are invited to sit for a semi-structured interview so that they help answer three important open-ended questions.

* 1. **Data Analysis Procedure**

Following the main objective of the current study which is to explore the association between PBL and students’ motivation types namely extrinsic, intrinsic, and attitude motivation, Pearson's correlation coefficient and Cronbach's alpha, statistical tests, as well as the thematic analysis will help analyze the data.

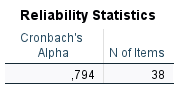
1. **DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS**
   1. **Questionnaire Findings**

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire is carefully designed to measure high school students' motivation toward learning English through PBL. The 38-item questionnaire comprises two important sections. The first section is about the relationship between PBL and motivation types. It shows three questions about extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and attitude motivation. The second section is about PBL as a learner-centered method. It includes one question about students’ involvement in the learning process. Each of the questions contains a set of items that students have to rate on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), depending on their perception of the particular statement. After the questionnaire is done, Cronbach's alpha coefficient test and Pearson's correlation test are used to measure the questionnaire items.

* + 1. **Internal Reliability of the Questionnaire Sections**

Cronbach's alpha coefficient test measures the questionnaire for estimating a set of scales' internal consistency or reliability. A reliability coefficient of.60 or higher is acceptable in most research. The table (15) below describes the reliability of the entire questionnaire items.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire



According to the reliability statistics in Table 1, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the entire questionnaire items in the present study is α=.794, which is acceptable in most social research situations. This indicates that there is good internal consistency among all the questionnaire items, and they all reliably measure the same dormant variable.

* + 1. **Project-Based Learning Relationship with Student’s Motivation Types**

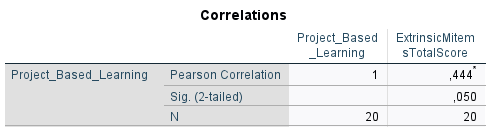
PBL, based on the literature review, is a form of student-centred learning related to problem-based learning (Fragolis, 2009). Besides, learners are highly motivated when they do a project because they play a pivotal role in making the entire planning process for their project (Efstratia, 2014). PBL can also improve students’ motivation types for learning and create a motivating environment where everyone can assume responsibility for their learning (Brown, 2001). The level of correlation between PBL and motivation types will be seen along the following lines.

* + 1. **Project-Based Learning Relationship with Extrinsic Motivation**

Pearson's correlation is a statistical instrument used to find correlations between variables. It helps show the significance of the results. The significance level is measured by using the p-value, which is a number varying between 0 and 1. A p-value of (p =.05) and less demonstrates that there is a positive correlation, while a p-value of more than (=.05) shows that there is a negative correlation between the dependent and independent variables (Patel, 2009). In the current research, the correlation coefficient test explored the relationship between PBL and motivation types, namely extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and attitude motivation.

The correlation between PBL and students’ extrinsic motivation was measured to answer the research question of whether **there is a significant correlation between PBL and students’ extrinsic motivation.** The correlations in Table 2 show that the value of the correlation test is r =.444, and the value of the significance level is 0.05. Needless to say, the correlation findings present that PBL and students’ extrinsic motivation are positively and significantly correlated. Thus, the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between PBL and students’ extrinsic motivation is accepted.

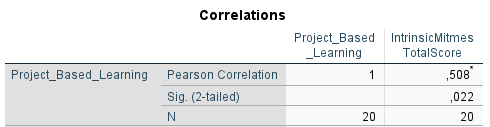
Table 2: Correlation Findings of PBL and Extrinsic Motivation

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* + 1. **Project-Based Learning Relationship with Intrinsic Motivation**

Intrinsic motivation is about the inside capabilities that drive a learner to complete specific tasks successfully. These unseen abilities are increased by different factors, one of which is PBL. Table (3) below describes the level of correlation existing between PBL and students’ intrinsic motivation.

Table 3: Correlation Findings of Project-based Learning and Intrinsic Motivation

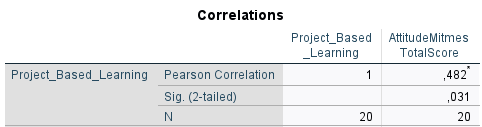
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The correlation test was used to measure the mean of the total score of both PBL and intrinsic motivation to find an answer to the research question of whether **PBL and students’ intrinsic motivation are significantly correlated.** According to the findings of the correlation test, the correlation coefficient value in Table 3 is r =.508, and the p-value is 0.022. In other words, the correlation findings reveal that PBL and students' intrinsic motivation are positively and significantly correlated. Accordingly, the hypothesis stating that there is a significant relationship between PBL and students' intrinsic motivation is accepted.

* + 1. **Project-Based Learning Relationship with Attitude Motivation**

An attitude is the feelings, behaviours, and ideas that learners construct towards an object or a person. It plays a critical role in setting goals, solving problems, participating in learning, and affecting motivation. There is research that suggests that enjoyable learning methods, such as PBL, should be used in the classroom to develop students’ attitudes and motivation. Therefore, PBL and students’ attitude motivation are measured statistically to determine if there is any significant relationship between the two variables. The findings are described in table 4.

Table 4: Correlation Findings of Project-Based Learning and Attitude Motivation



The correlation Table (4) shows that the correlation coefficient value is r =.482, and the p-value is 0.031. Put simply, the findings reveal that PBL and students’ attitude motivation are positively and significantly correlated. Hence, the hypothesis expecting that there is a significant relationship between PBL and students’ attitude motivation is accepted.

* 1. **The Semi-Structured Interview Findings**

The purpose of the semi-structured interview is to gather qualitative data. The reason behind adopting this research tool is that when the two research methods are brought together in one study, they help provide in-depth insights and more details concerning the conclusions to be made. Further, the qualitative research method contextualizes the quantitative findings because the quantitative research method only produces statistical data without an explanation of how those numbers came to be. In addition, opting for two separate research methodologies to gather and examine data on the same subject might help the researcher draw reliable and valid conclusions (El Ghouati, 2018). The present research method is meant to collect data about the association of PBL with students’ motivation. Six participants are interviewed based on the following open-ended questions:

* **How did you feel while doing the project activity? Why?**
* Did you enjoy the project activity? If yes, how? If not, why?
* **Did you like the project activity? If yes, why? If not, why**?

The findings indicate that none of the respondents seemed to refute the importance of PBL in motivating them. Nearly all of the interviewees expressed feelings of happiness and excitement because PBL seemed to help them reinforce the knowledge received in the classroom. Driss clarifies that "the project activity renewed my inner energy for participation." Khadija adds that "the project activity was a motivating experience for me." This is further confirmed by Rachid and Ahmed, who claimed that the project activity motivated them to learn and be self-reliant. The same is expressed by Latifa, who explains that "the project activity made me not just keen on participating in the learning process, but it also helped me solve problems with my classmates outside the school."

Likewise, what is truly worth mentioning is that the participants acknowledged the positive impact of the project activity on their views of themselves and English learning, in general. Rachida reveals that "I liked the project activity," explaining that "It changed my view of myself, for I, simply put, had the chance to take part in solving the project problem." Khadija declares that the project activity was a good experience for her because it was her first time conducting a project and using teamwork mode inside and outside the walls of the school. "I very much enjoyed the project activity because it positively changed my perceptions towards learning," claimed Latifa. Likewise, Driss, Ahmed, and Rachid exhibit positive attitudes towards the project activity, confirming that such a new experience made them change their attitudes toward their teacher and his new teaching style. This gives evidence that PBL seems to have magical power in changing students’ attitudes toward English.

1. **DISCUSSION**

The results of the present study are in line with the literature, which considers that PBL positively affects students’ motivation. According to Kwietniewski (2017), PBL promotes motivation because it allows students to be responsible for their learning and helps them deal with real-world problems. To explain, PBL can stimulate students' learning enthusiasm, increase their motivation, and develop collaborative learning. What’s more, a major advantage of PBL is its opportunity for differentiation and scaffolding, which are considered the key enablers of motivation. These opportunities support teachers in meeting the needs of their students and create a motivating environment for learning (Efstratia, 2014; Mahmoud et al., 2024). Additionally, Al-Balushi and Al-Aamri (2014) consider PBL an inquiry-based learning method offering a chance for educational reform where learners are provided with a real learning environment that contains authentic and motivating problems within real-world practices. It reflects an inclusive and motivating learning environment where students use different disciplinary concepts and experiences to find answers to authentic problems. PBL is also referred to as a progressive active-learning and student-centred method that motivates students to acquire knowledge and skills over a long or medium period of time and resolves a real-world problem (Wurdinger et al., 2007). To clarify, learners are involved in constructing knowledge and successfully and collaboratively handling a project problem because PBL is a learning method that encourages collaboration in which all learners are motivated to participate in the shared outcome (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). The freedom and challenge students have to deal with to find answers to the problems that arise in putting together a plan to construct their projects drive them to be highly motivated in tackling such problems (Blumenfeld et al., 1991).

The outcome of the current research is also supported by the previous studies conducted by Walter (2016), Aksela and Haatainen (2019), Zhang (2007), Mario and Callum (2019), Stewart (2007), Boudersa (2015), Noorah (2017), Elsafty, Elsayad, and Shaaban (2020), Parisa and Taghi (2016), Zaman (2018), and Alkhatnai (2017). These studies found that PBL promotes students' motivation in the learning process. In other words, this learning method allows for more students’ responsibility for their learning and involves them in the investigation of real-world problems, which increases their motivation. It also stimulates students' learning enthusiasm and develops collaborative learning. According to these studies, students who experience the PBL are found to develop positive impressions of themselves, their teachers, and their classmates. This learning method also develops their enjoyment of the learning process because the project activity is motivating, appealing, and entertaining. Besides, PBL has a significant impact on students' readiness for self-directed and autonomous learning. Through this learning method, students reach high levels of self-management skills, which are critical enablers for motivation in the learning process.

1. **CONCLUSION**

In light of the results of the current study, students' motivation and learning methods are interrelated; the learning methods can either increase or decrease students' motivation. PBL is one of the learning methods proven to motivate students to learn. It is, therefore, recommended that teachers, especially those teaching second-year baccalaureate students at Kacem Amine High School, should adopt PBL in the process of teaching. This is due to the fact that PBL creates a motivating learning environment where students eagerly participate in the learning process. Thus, for teachers to successfully implement PBL, it is advisable to adhere to specific guidelines and instructions as shown in the following lines: 1) the project problem should be real and related to the content of the textbook, 2) teachers should incorporate an embedded project problem that arises from student brainstorming, 3) they should also help their students design a plan for the project by assigning roles for the participants in the project, setting deadlines for the project, and selecting the materials to use and places to visit to collect data, 4) and they should, now and then, monitor their students to check whether the implementation of the project is going as it has been planned or not. In a nutshell, only when teachers adopt PBL in their practices in accordance with the specific guidelines and instructions can students’ motivation increases and the learning of English, in general, improves. However, there is a limitation to the present research, which is related to the insufficient sample size for statistical measurements. Because of the students' unavailability, the researchers found difficulty in creating a group of participants from different regions of Moroccan high schools and bringing them together at a scheduled time. The findings, therefore, cannot be generalized to all high schools across Morocco. Accordingly, further research is preferably needed to explore the PBL and its relationship to motivation, this time, recruiting a representative sample from different high schools all over Morocco, which might allow for overgeneralization of the findings.

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