

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

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Editor's Introduction

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As the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning* (IJPBL) enters its twentieth year, the Spring 2026 issue gives us a unique and global look at the impact that problem-based learning (PBL) has had and continues to have throughout the world. We start by memorializing the work and life of John R. Savery whose impact on PBL research has been foundational, including authoring an article in the very first issue of this journal (Savery, 2006). His legacy will continue to echo both in the field as well as with those whose lives he touched. Members of our current and prior editorial board—Krista Glazewski, Woei Hung, Xun Ge, and Peggy Ertmer—share their thoughts and memories honoring John Savery in an in-memoriam article.

As we reflect on John Savery's wide-reaching impact on the study and implementation of PBL throughout the world, we also celebrate the contributions of other PBL researchers across the globe. We examine the impact of PBL through the lens of different cultural contexts representing the countries of Indonesia, Türkiye, Khazakistan, and South Africa. Given the importance of real-world application in PBL, it is fitting that we focus on how authentic problem solving is operationalized and, perhaps more importantly, impacted by the cultural contexts in which such learning occurs.

The second article in this issue (Usta et al., 2026) examines middle school students' problem-solving skills an eighth-grade mathematics curriculum. Thirty-nine students in the northern region of Türkiye participated in a learning unit focused on probability with an experimental group taught through PBL and a control group taught through traditional instruction. Results were analyzed using nonparametric statistical tests. Findings indicate that students in the PBL group demonstrated stronger problem-solving performance than those in the control group, suggesting that PBL can effectively support students' mathematical problem-solving processes.

Our next article (Smakova, 2026) takes us to Kazakhstan and examines English language teachers' perceptions of implementing project-based learning in Kazakhstani secondary schools and explores the level of administrative support for this approach. Using qualitative and quantitative data from 103 EFL teachers, the findings indicate that teachers are generally familiar with PjBL principles and report support from school leadership. However, classroom practices often do not fully align with PjBL principles, suggesting a need for additional professional development and encouragement to support effective implementation.

Wagner & du Toit (2026) explore university students' experiences learning research methods

in South Africa through an interdisciplinary, project-based collaboration involving psychology students, urban planning students, and a science council partner. Using qualitative data from focus groups and interviews, the researchers identify three major themes: learning research in real-world contexts, experiences with multidisciplinary teamwork, and the professional and personal development of emerging researchers. The findings suggest that interdisciplinary project-based learning with external partners can enhance students' understanding of research methods and provide meaningful real-world learning opportunities.

The final article in this issue (Affandy et al., 2026) examines the global implementation of problem-based learning in science education through a systematic literature review of research conducted across multiple countries. The findings indicate that PBL can enhance students' critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, but its effectiveness depends on factors such as instructional design, teacher training, and the availability of resources. The review also highlights the importance of adapting PBL to local cultural and social contexts and recommends more flexible, context-based curricula and evaluation strategies to support effective implementation.

We hope that you enjoy and benefit from this Spring 2026 issue of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning* and wish to thank the contributions of the authors and editors.

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