

Aalborg University Principles for Problem- and Project-Based Learning

Problem orientation
Project organisation
Student-directed
Collaboration
Process orientation
Exemplarity

Explore the principles in full: en.aau.dk/about-aau/profile/pbl

What are the PBL principles?

The principles are intended to guide professional judgement and invite reflection rather than provide fixed solutions.

The principles are not rules but values that take shape in and through teaching practice.



From principles to practice – through dialogue and dilemmas

This one-pager supports dialogue among teaching staff about the revised AAU PBL principles in relation to local teaching practice.

The principles are understood as pedagogical values and points of orientation, and they are interpreted and applied differently in the development, organisation, and execution of learning activities across the degree programmes.

Why do dilemmas and questions arise?

When principles guide practice rather than provide fixed solutions, dilemmas arise as part of reflective professional judgement.

In practice, dilemmas highlight situations where PBL principles might pull in different directions.

There are no clear cut solutions – only informed and reflective choices.



Explore the principles in full



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Facilitating local dialogues

Dialogue on dilemmas in PBL practice

- discussing your teaching practice in relation to AAU's PBL principles.

Suggested dialogue format:

1. Individual reflection (2 min)
2. Group dialogue (10-12 min)
3. Wrap-up (2-5 min)

Focus on exploration rather than agreement.

What is a dilemma?

A dilemma highlights a situation where different, yet equally legitimate considerations need to be balanced through reflective judgement rather than resolved through clear-cut solutions.



Potential dilemmas might include:

Students are given freedom to make their own choices

—
Students' freedom is regulated by the thematic framework of the module and the intended learning objectives

Students need opportunities to learn from their own mistakes

—
Students are expected to produce a product within a given time frame

The problem should be close to the students' interests and horizon of experience to support involvement

—
The problem must demonstrate sufficient academic depth and societal relevance

Reflection questions

- Where do you believe dilemmas might arise when PBL principles are put into practice?
- What would you prioritise - and why, considering your local context?
- What are the potential benefits and risks of making different choices?



Taking the dialogue further

- Use one principle and one dilemma as a starting point for collegial dialogue
- Integrate dilemma discussions into staff meetings or programme development
- Share dilemmas across study boards or programmes
- Treat variation in practice as a professional resource rather than a problem



The principles are intended to initiate reflection and professional judgement in context.

Explore the principles in full

