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**PBL TEACHES THE
 ATTITUDE REQUIRED
 IN WORKING LIFE.**

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING: LEARNING IS KEY

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WHAT DO A STIMULUS, TEAMWORK AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS HAVE IN COMMON? THEY ARE ALL ESSENTIAL PARTS OF A PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING (PBL) ENVIRONMENT.

A PBL environment was launched at the Rauma Faculty of Business and Culture more than ten years ago. The first steps were taken within the English-language Degree Programme in International Business and Marketing Logistics and the Finnish-language Degree Programme in Business Logistics. In autumn 2010, the method was also refined for the Degree Programmes in International Business and in Business Administration.

PBL IS A PHILOSOPHY
 Problem-based learning is not just a learning environment and a teaching method – it is also a philosophy. Students learn how to approach different problems and to solve these systematically. There are fewer traditional lectures than usual. Conversely, problem situations and cases are presented to students right at the beginning. They can start acquiring information and building knowledge once they have identified the problem

and its relevant perspectives. Learning takes place by doing and applying knowledge.

A GUIDED PROCESS
 The process consists of sessions. The first session involves opening up the stimulus or problem case by presenting it in the form of a story or a description of the situation, for example. Student teams outline and delineate the problem area and then specify their learning objectives. Learning objectives are

related to the details and aspects of the topic that are as yet unknown or only understood very vaguely. During knowledge-building sessions, each student team seeks answers to specific questions. During presentation sessions, the teams present the problem areas identified in the stimulus and relevant new information, solutions and results, as well as what they have learnt from the case.

The stimuli are typical working life cases: exploring a new topic, i.e. pure information acquisition; strategy building; role-play, such as a pay negotiation; or a business cooperation project.

RESPONSIBILITY WITH THE LEARNER

Learners have considerable responsibility for their own learning. They are required to keep an open mind and be highly motivated and committed to achieving the best possible outcome, i.e. learning. This operating model is a lot of work for students, but it is also efficient and meaningful.

Students work in teams and this means that the process also highlights the significance of teamwork and cooperation and interaction skills. Team members switch roles and responsibilities with every new stimulus, so that every student gets a chance to lead the team. Peer assessment is an essential part of the learning process: team members assess each other's work and results.

THE TEACHER FACILITATES

The teacher's role in problem-based learning is more along the lines of being a facilitator, a tutor who helps teams absorb information, steers them in the right direction, gives feedback and assesses their performance. The teacher is no longer the (one and only) source of information; instead, students search widely for information and gain insight on their own. The tutor needs to have solid hands-on expertise.



You can also see it this way, if you scrape beneath the surface. Rauma-based teacher tutors Petteri Teppola and Tapio Pirkanaho (left), with Jaana Vase, Director of Education, and Pathinee Tekajarin, Coordinator of the Degree Programme in International Business, explain what problem-based learning actually means, what it involves and what benefits it has brought to learning.

A challenge involved in the teacher's different role is whether the individual has the courage to take a step into the unknown as a teacher. How to motivate students and help them learn? Suddenly the teacher is relying more on his or her character than knowledge.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF WORKING METHODS

The PBL method cannot be transferred to a new operating environment as such; instead, this requires internalising and applying the philosophy – making the process your own. The method evolves and develops all the time. The Rauma Faculty still invests in further development work. One of the most important aspects is developing teacher tutors' facilitation skills and awareness of their own role. For instance, it is a good idea for a teacher to meet the teacher team immediately after a course, when experiences are still fresh in the mind.

Students' final reports and feedback are also very helpful for planning purposes. In order to enhance the efficiency of students' teamwork, the Faculty is planning to conduct personality tests, which can be used as a basis for dividing students into suitable teams.

ONGELMAPERUSTEINEN OPPIMINEN JÄLJITTELEE TYÖELÄMÄN TOIMINTATAPOJA

Liiketoiminta Rauman kampuksella lanseerattiin ongelmaperusteinen oppimisympäristö (PBL eli Problem Based Learning) yli kymmenen vuotta sitten. Ensiasteleat otettiin International Business and Marketing Logistics ja Liiketoiminnan logistiikka -koulutusohjelmassa. Syksyllä 2010 menetelmä jalkautui myös Kansainväliseen kauppaan sekä Liiketalouteen.

Raumalla työskentelevät tutoropettajat Petteri Teppola, Tapio Pirkanaho sekä kansainvälisen kaupan koulutusohjelmavastaava Pathinee Tekajarin ja koulutusjohtaja Jaana Vase pohtivat, mitä Problem Based Learning oikeastaan tarkoittaa, mitä se pitää sisällään ja mitä etua se on tuonut oppimiseen.

PBL ei ole vain opetusmenetelmä. Se on filosofia, joka heijastaa koko oppimisprosessia. Opiskelijan ja opettajan roolit muuttuvat. Opiskelijalla on vastuu omasta oppimisestaan. Opettaja toimii ohjaajana auttaen oppijaa tiedon omaksumisessa ja oppimiseen motivoinnissa. Opiskelijat oppivat miten lähestyä erilaisia ongelmia ja systemaattisesti ratkaista niitä.