

PROJECT BASED LEARNING FOR LOW MOTIVATED STUDENTS

Visola Tursunova

Lecturer, Diplomat university, Uzbekistan

Abstract: This article explores the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching students with low motivation. The study examines how engagement in real-life projects can increase learners' interest, foster collaboration, improve critical thinking, and enhance problem-solving skills. The findings indicate that PBL helps low-motivated students take responsibility for their learning and participate more actively in the educational process. The article also discusses practical strategies for implementing PBL, assessment criteria, and recommendations for improving learning outcomes. Overall, Project-Based Learning is suggested as an effective approach to support and motivate disengaged learners.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning (PBL), motivation, low-motivated students, active learning, innovative teaching methods, collaboration, learning effectiveness.

Introduction: In contemporary education, student motivation plays a crucial role in determining academic success and lifelong learning engagement. However, many learners demonstrate low motivation due to various factors such as lack of interest, limited self-confidence, ineffective teaching approaches, or minimal relevance of educational content to real life. Low-motivated students are often less involved in classroom activities, show reduced academic performance, and may develop negative attitudes toward learning. Therefore, educators and researchers continuously seek methods that can enhance students' intrinsic motivation and support their active participation in the learning process.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) has emerged as one of the most innovative and student-centered instructional approaches aimed at improving learner engagement. PBL emphasizes hands-on activities, real-world problem solving, and collaborative teamwork, allowing students to play an active role in constructing their knowledge. Through project tasks, learners are encouraged to explore authentic challenges, apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts, and develop essential 21st-century skills such as communication, critical thinking, and creativity.

Recent studies suggest that PBL can be particularly effective for learners who struggle with motivation, as the approach increases their sense of autonomy, relevance, and responsibility for outcomes. Despite its potential, implementing PBL for low-motivated students requires thoughtful design, continuous guidance, and appropriate assessment strategies.

This article investigates how Project-Based Learning influences the motivation and academic engagement of low-motivated students. It further discusses the pedagogical implications, challenges, and recommendations for teachers aiming to adopt PBL in diverse educational settings.

Materials and methods: This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in enhancing the motivation and academic engagement of low-motivated secondary school students. A quasi-experimental research design was applied, as it provides the opportunity to measure the influence of the independent variable—PBL instruction—on the dependent variable, students' motivation, under real classroom conditions without full randomization of participants.

The research was conducted at a public secondary school located in an urban area. The sample consisted of 30 students aged 12 to 14 who were identified as having low levels of motivation toward learning. The identification process was based on teacher evaluations, academic performance records, and results from a standardized motivation questionnaire administered



before the intervention. The students were divided into two groups: the experimental group, which received PBL instruction, and the control group, which followed traditional teaching methods. Both groups were taught the same curriculum content by the same instructor to reduce external influences and ensure equivalence between the groups.

Several research instruments were used for data collection. A validated motivation questionnaire, measuring intrinsic and extrinsic factors, was administered as a pre-test and post-test to detect changes over the course of the experiment. In addition, a structured classroom observation checklist was employed to document students' behavior, levels of participation, cooperation in group work, and overall engagement during the lessons. To assess the quality of the learning outcomes, students' project tasks were evaluated using a performance rubric that emphasized creativity, problem-solving ability, communication skills, and correct application of theoretical knowledge.

The intervention lasted for eight weeks. During this period, students in the experimental group were actively engaged in collaborative projects based on real-life problem scenarios relevant to the subject content. The teacher acted primarily as a facilitator, guiding the students through stages such as topic selection, research planning, implementation of project tasks, and final presentation of results. This method allowed students to take ownership of their learning, develop team collaboration skills, and apply knowledge in practical contexts. In contrast, the control group continued learning through conventional methods such as teacher-centered lectures, note-taking, and textbook exercises, which provided a basis for comparison.

For data analysis, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were applied. Quantitative data obtained from the motivation questionnaire were statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-tests to evaluate significant differences in motivation levels before and after the intervention. Meanwhile, qualitative data from classroom observations and student reflections were subjected to thematic analysis to identify emerging patterns related to engagement, behavioral change, and perceptions of the learning process.

Results and discussion: The findings of this study indicate that Project-Based Learning (PBL) had a significant positive impact on the motivation and engagement of low-motivated students. The results of the motivation questionnaire showed that students in the experimental group achieved higher post-test scores compared to their pre-test results, demonstrating increased intrinsic interest and a stronger desire to participate in learning activities. Conversely, the control group demonstrated only minimal improvement in their motivation levels.

Classroom observations further supported these results. Students in the experimental group were more actively involved in group discussions, displayed improved cooperation with peers, and were more confident in expressing their ideas during lessons. Their participation rates increased steadily throughout the intervention period, indicating a strong connection between collaborative project tasks and sustained engagement. In contrast, the control group remained largely passive during lessons, with limited interaction and a lower sense of enthusiasm.

Additionally, evaluation of the project deliverables revealed notable improvement in students' problem-solving abilities, creativity, and ability to apply acquired knowledge in real-life situations. The majority of students in the experimental group demonstrated progress in key 21st-century skills such as communication and teamwork. These findings suggest that PBL provides a learning environment where low-motivated students can develop academically, socially, and emotionally.

The results of the study highlight the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning as an instructional strategy for addressing low motivation among students. Unlike traditional teacher-centered lessons, PBL creates opportunities for students to apply knowledge through meaningful, real-world tasks, which enhances their sense of responsibility and curiosity. This aligns with



motivational theories emphasizing autonomy, relevance, and competence as key drivers of student engagement.

The improvement in students' collaborative behavior and classroom participation reflects the importance of peer interaction in shaping positive attitudes toward learning. Group projects allowed students to feel valued and supported, which contributed to increased confidence and willingness to take part in activities. Moreover, the findings suggest that PBL can improve essential learning skills that extend beyond the classroom, preparing students for future academic and career success.

However, the study also revealed several challenges related to implementing PBL with low-motivated learners. Some students initially struggled with taking initiative and managing their tasks independently. This indicates that teachers must provide consistent guidance and support during the project process to ensure all students remain engaged and avoid falling behind. Time management and assessment criteria require thoughtful planning to ensure optimal outcomes.

Despite these challenges, the positive results demonstrate that PBL has strong potential as an effective pedagogical approach for motivating disengaged learners. The findings encourage teachers to integrate project-based instruction into their regular practice to support diverse learning needs and foster an active, student-centered classroom environment.

Conclusion: The findings of this study demonstrate that Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an effective instructional approach for improving the motivation and academic engagement of low-motivated students. The intervention showed that when learners are given the opportunity to work collaboratively on meaningful and real-life projects, they become more responsible for their learning, more confident in expressing their ideas, and more willing to participate in the educational process. The observed increase in intrinsic motivation and active involvement among students in the experimental group highlights the importance of student-centered teaching practices in modern education.

Furthermore, the application of PBL contributed to the development of essential skills such as communication, problem solving, teamwork, and creativity—competencies that are vital for success in both academic and future professional settings. By linking theory to practice, PBL not only enhanced students' understanding of subject content but also fostered a positive attitude toward learning as a lifelong process.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study acknowledges certain challenges associated with PBL implementation, particularly in managing group dynamics and supporting students who initially lack independence or self-regulation skills. Therefore, ongoing guidance from teachers and careful planning of project tasks are crucial to ensuring that all students benefit equally from this method.

Overall, this research confirms that PBL can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool to engage low-motivated learners and improve their academic experiences. Future studies with larger sample sizes and longer intervention periods are recommended to further validate these findings and explore additional strategies for optimizing the effectiveness of PBL in diverse educational contexts.

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