5th Global Conference on Innovations in Education
12 - 14 November 2026
Nottingham, UK

Problem-Based Learning in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: A Narrative Synthesis of Emerging Evidence from Digital Pedagogies and Student-Centred Learning

Oluseye Jegede[1], Olubukola Jegede[2], Olufemi Afolabi[1], Ambrose Amenshiah[1]

[1]Global Banking School, Leeds Campus, United Kingdom
[2]Arden University, Leeds Campus, United Kingdom

Abstract

Higher education institutions are increasingly expected to produce graduates equipped with critical thinking, collaborative problem-solving, self-directed learning and digital competencies required in contemporary knowledge economies. These expectations have accelerated the adoption of student-centred pedagogies, among which Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has emerged as one of the most influential instructional approaches. This paper presents a narrative synthesis of recent empirical studies investigating the implementation of PBL across diverse educational contexts, with particular emphasis on higher education and technology-enhanced learning environments. The synthesis integrates evidence from studies examining PBL-supported digital modules, interactive e-learning resources, formative assessment strategies, research methods instruction and curriculum innovation. Five dominant themes emerged across the literature: the transition towards learner-centred pedagogy; authentic problem-solving as the foundation of meaningful learning; development of higher-order thinking and transferable skills; integration of digital technologies with PBL; and institutional challenges affecting sustainable implementation. Collectively, the evidence demonstrates that PBL consistently enhances student engagement, critical thinking, research competence, collaborative learning, self-directed learning and academic achievement when supported by carefully designed instructional resources and appropriate facilitation. However, successful implementation depends upon curriculum alignment, lecturer preparedness, technological infrastructure and assessment reform. The paper concludes that PBL should be regarded not merely as an instructional strategy but as a comprehensive pedagogical framework capable of supporting educational transformation in higher education.

Keywords: Problem-Based Learning; Higher Education; Student-centred Learning; Digital Learning; Critical Thinking; Narrative Synthesis