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LEARNING BY PROJECTS: theory and practice in Brazilian teachers education

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In this article, we share some of our experiences and lessons learned from a practical implementation of Carl Roger's approach of Project Based Learning, as well as, we discuss the Ausubel's principles of "meaningful learning", which underlies this theory, in a situation involving future High School maths teachers. Our declared goal was to train and encourage these students, who often worked full-time and arrived to the evening classes, to apply Project Based Learning effectively in their own future teaching practice. In our research, which was conducted during the second semester of 2013 in the Federal Institute of Alagoas, we analysed the progress of these students based on their productions (presentations, reports, peer- and self-assessment, etc.) and on the data collected in a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The preliminary results indicated that the students took more responsibility for their own learning, showed an increase in self-efficacy and procedural knowledge and developed a positive attitude towards applying Project Based Learning in class. However, we also observed deficiencies in the gain of conceptual knowledge that required to be addressed in the course design before embedding this approach in the curriculum.

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