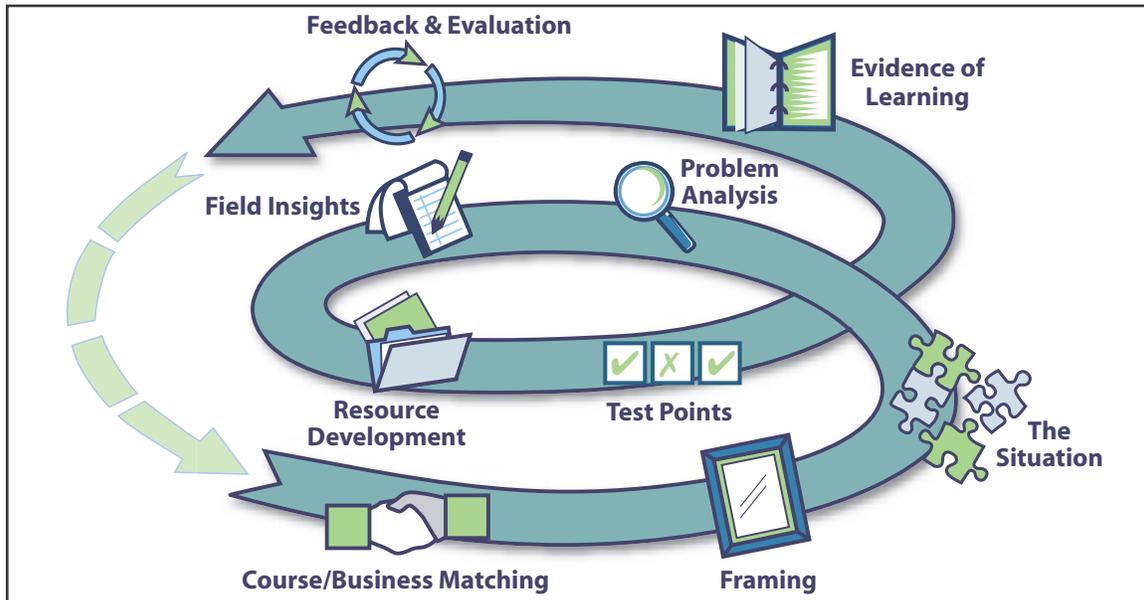# The Stages of the PBCL Cycle

Course/Business Matching

One of the distinguishing features of the PBCL approach is its use of a real-time, real-world business situation as the context for learning. The PBCL Cycle begins with the establishment of the link between the curriculum and the local business partner providing the problematic situation.

In this stage, the instructor and business partner:

- Evaluate if and where course concepts and skills are visible in the business partner's workplace
- Identify and analyze authentic contexts in which these concepts and skills are relevant to addressing problematic situations currently affecting the business partner
- Determine where in the curriculum the problematic situations should form the context for learning

Framing

Once the problematic situation has been selected and positioned within the course, the business partner and instructor work together to:

- Determine student deliverables that will be used to provide evidence of learning
- Define criteria and methods that will be used to assess and evaluate the students' performance
- Develop a plan for effective collaboration that will establish clear roles and responsibilities for the instructor and business partner
- Identify necessary support and tools for completing the project

Note that the task of actually defining the problem, however, is left for the student teams in the next steps of the Learning Cycle.

The Situation

The students are introduced to the problematic situation and the PBCL Cycle process as the instructor, possibly together with the business partner:

- Presents the problematic situation in context using multiple perspectives, a variety of media, and the minimum amount of information necessary to form a foundation of understanding

- Reviews the PBCL process and the PBCL Cycle through which the students, instructor, and business partner will work together

- Invites the students to initiate their role as active, responsible learners by encouraging them to ask questions and to extend their thinking about the problematic situation

Problem Analysis

Each team of students must form a hypothesis to uncover the problem behind the situation. This stage of the PBCL Cycle is structured so that the teams of students:

- Use a variety of tools and questioning techniques to identify and evaluate facts, assumptions, questions to ask, and resources needed to research options

- Negotiate priorities, decision-making criteria, and the formation of hypotheses

- Explore and begin building skills in collaborative teamwork and reflective learning

Field Insights

Now that each team of students has identified a problem to address, their goal in this stage is to achieve a deep understanding of this problem. To accomplish this, students:

- Review primary source documents, internet sites and search results, and content-related periodicals and books

- Conduct interviews of business partners and relevant industry experts via on-site visits or conference calls

- Use a variety of tools and techniques to organize information, share insights, and integrate the analysis of data from multiple sources

Resource Development

As in the business world, research has to stop at some point. This stage of the PBCL Cycle is structured so that each team of students completes its research when the team has enough information to begin proposing solutions. The students:

- Identify gaps and make plans to address missing information or perspectives

- Execute any revisions needed to ensure that the team's information is accurate and relevant

- Form hypotheses about solutions to the problematic situation

✔ ✗ ✔ Test Points

It's time to make decisions and prepare to back them up. In this stage each team of students:

- Performs a final check—their last chance before deciding what solution(s) to propose—of the significance and validity of information and information sources
- Decides what solution(s) they will propose
- Reviews and evaluates the process by which they reached their solution(s)
- Develops strategies for selecting, consolidating and presenting information to support the team's proposed solution(s)
- Creates the presentation, relevant media and support materials
- Considers how the approach to identifying a problem and developing solution(s) demonstrates the significance of course-related concepts and skills

Evidence of Learning

With business partner, instructor, and fellow students as their audience, each student team:

- Presents the problem they've identified and the related solution(s)
- Explains the reasoning behind their identified problem and solution(s)
- Encourages audience inquiry and invites feedback

Feedback & Evaluation

The instructor facilitates a discussion during which all the participants—instructor, business partner, and students—can:

- Determine if revisions are necessary to each team's problem description and proposed solution(s)
- Evaluate individual and team performance
- Reflect on the learning achieved by students, instructors, and business partners and on the PBCL process
- Celebrate the students' success

Instructors and business partners also take the opportunity to:

- Evaluate which, if any, of the proposed solutions might be implemented by the business partner to address the problematic situation
- Determine how the instructor and students might be involved in the solution's implementation
- Recommend changes to course content and instructional approaches
- Plan their ongoing partnership and prepare for the selection of future problematic situations
- Reflect on the value contributed by and distributed among the students, instructor, and business partner