

HANDOUT: CBL integration in NCD Short Courses

Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) is an **educational approach**, aiming to support learners to collaboratively develop skills to engage with complex societal challenges. It combines:

- NCD knowledge enhancement
- Skills development and reflection
- Interprofessional and interdisciplinary learning
- Transdisciplinarity: Community engagement

CBL can be integrated in course design in various ways, and adapted to fit a shorter or longer duration, as long as it takes learners through three stages: 1) Engage, 2) Investigate, and 3) Act.

Phase 1: ENGAGE

This phase prepares students to identify a group challenge by connecting short course learnings to a Big Idea and to (interprofessional and interdisciplinary) group work. At the start of the phase, students meet their group members and start engaging with each other and the topic. At the end of the phase, they have identified their group challenge.

Recommendations to design CBL into NCD short courses

- Make sure there is one Big Idea for all students. This is a crucial concept or 'lense'/angle, e.g. health equity & justice or health literacy;
- Allow time for the students to engage with this Big Idea. If necessary, integrate some education on this;
- Divide learners into small groups (group size can vary depending on the total number of learners, 3-4 is ideal);
- If necessary, integrate some education on interprofessional and interdisdisciplinary collaboration;
- Allow time for the students to engage with their group members;
- Allow time for the students to brainstorm group challenges. This challenge is connected to the group's strength and the Big Idea. It should address a complex NCD issue; it should not be possible to come up with a single solution right away, but should require more investigation to better understand it.
- Plan a session where learners present their group challenges to the whole group. You can decide to grade this piece of work.
- You could add a short writing assignment in which students individually reflect on the collaboration process. You could ask them to set a personal goal related to skill development, which the students can again reflect upon at the end of the course.

Phase 2: INVESTIGATE

This phase is about in-depth investigation to better understand the challenge and also investigate possible (elements of) solutions. Students will mostly work in their groups, but teachers can decide to organize plenary sessions for guidance.

Recommendations to design CBL in NCD short courses:

- Before the course starts, decide whether you want your learners to gain experience in using certain methods, such as conducting a literature study, an interview or Focus Group Discussion. If so, make sure to build in teaching on these methods.
- Decide to ask students to submit Group Deliverables, to monitor their progress, such as an Investigation Plan or Investigation Progress Report. This allows you to provide formative feedback.
- You can add an individual writing assignment in this phase, such as a paper, for which learners do individual work that contributes to the group work. You can ask them to provide peer-feedback.
- Encourage learners to think creatively. Tell them that it is okay to make mistakes. It is even possible for learners to adjust their challenge, based on their investigation findings. This is part of learning.

Phase 3: ACT

This phase is where everything comes together. Students work towards the 'answer' or solution to their group challenge. These should be as actionable as possible, as concrete and realistic as possible. A solution can be a campaign, or a framework, and it might not always be possible to test or validate this in the act phase. It should still be as close to implementation as possible, e.g. by having incorporated feedback by the people it concerns (transdisciplinarity).

Recommendations to design CBL in CD short courses:

- Make sure that students know what they are working towards, and how their work is being assessed.
- Make sure to explicitly appreciate students' efforts.
- Allow time for reflection, both as a group and individually (through writing assignments).