



WAYS TO USE DiBL | WHITEPAPER 2 OF 6

Dilemmas

How scenario-based choices build deeper understanding, critical thinking, and lasting behaviour change.

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Executive Summary

The hardest challenges in professional and educational life rarely have a single right answer. Ethical dilemmas, strategic decisions, interpersonal conflicts: these require not just knowledge, but judgement. Yet most learning approaches train recall, not decision-making. Participants are given information, then tested. What they rarely get is practice making difficult choices under realistic conditions.

DiBL Dilemmas change that. By placing participants inside branching, scenario-based situations where their choices have visible consequences, Dilemmas create the conditions for genuine reflective learning. They are uniquely powerful for workshops, team alignment sessions, professional ethics training, and any context where the goal is not just understanding, but changed behaviour.

This whitepaper explores the learning science behind scenario-based and dilemma-based learning, explains how DiBL Dilemmas work in practice, compares them to alternative tools, and provides a practical guide for facilitators wanting to run their first Dilemma session.

The Challenge: When Right Answers Are Not Enough

Traditional learning formats, lectures, e-learning modules, knowledge checks, are well designed for one thing: transferring information. They are far less effective at developing the judgement, empathy, and decision-making capability that complex real-world situations demand.

The problem is transfer. Research consistently shows that knowledge acquired in abstract settings does not automatically translate into changed behaviour in context. A nurse who passes an ethics module does not automatically make better ethical decisions at the bedside. A manager who completes a conflict resolution course does not automatically handle difficult conversations more effectively.

The missing ingredient is practice: specifically, the experience of making choices in realistic, consequence-laden situations. Facilitators working in these spaces face a dilemma of their own: how do you create that practice without the cost, risk, or logistics of real-world simulation?

Role play helps, but it is uneven in quality, difficult to scale, and uncomfortable for many participants. Case studies provide context but lack interactivity. Video scenarios engage but do not require commitment to a choice. DiBL Dilemmas offer a third path: a structured, interactive scenario format that is accessible, scalable, and designed from the ground up to generate the kind of reflection and dialogue that produces lasting learning.

The Learning Science

Dilemma-Based and Scenario-Based Learning

Scenario-based learning (SBL) situates learners in realistic, contextualised situations where they must make decisions and experience consequences. A substantial body of research supports its effectiveness, particularly for complex skills and professional contexts (Clark, 2009; Jonassen, 2011). The key advantage over traditional instruction is that SBL activates procedural knowledge: the "how to act" knowledge most relevant in professional and social situations, rather than just declarative knowledge.

Dilemma-based learning, as developed by Egenfeldt-Nielsen and colleagues at Serious Games Interactive, extends this further. Rather than scenarios with clear right answers, dilemmas present situations where reasonable people might disagree: where values, priorities, and perspectives genuinely conflict. This design choice is intentional. Research shows that cognitive conflict and productive uncertainty are powerful drivers of deeper learning (Piaget, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978).

Branching Narratives and Consequential Choice

The branching structure of DiBL Dilemmas, where decisions open different paths and reveal different outcomes, mirrors how consequential decisions actually work in the real world. Unlike linear scenarios that expose everyone to the same content, branching creates genuine investment: your choice matters because it leads somewhere different.

Research on gamebooks and branching narratives in education (Dettori et al., 2023) demonstrates that the experience of owning a decision, and facing its consequences, significantly enhances engagement and post-experience reflection compared to passive observation of the same content.

Social Learning and Facilitated Reflection

DiBL Dilemmas are not designed to be played alone. The social dimension, the fact that participants see how their peers have voted and where the group diverged, is central to their power. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development reminds us that learning happens in the gap between what we can do alone and what we can do with guidance and peer support. Seeing that someone you respect made a different choice than you, and understanding why, is one of the richest learning moments possible.

What DiBL Dilemmas Is

DiBL Dilemmas is a live, facilitated scenario tool that places participants inside branching situations where their choices shape the experience. Each participant votes on choices from their own device; the results are shared in real time; and the scenario advances based on collective or individual decisions. Facilitators guide the reflection between branches, making visible the diversity of thinking in the room.

Dilemmas are fundamentally different from quizzes. There is no single correct answer. Instead, participants explore a space of competing values, weigh trade-offs, and develop their reasoning: often discovering that the most interesting learning comes from the moments of disagreement.

Key Capabilities

- **Scenario-based interaction** Participants make choices within a narrative or conceptual challenge, driving reflection rather than rote recall.
- **Real-time engagement** Everyone contributes through their own device, voting and influencing how the scenario unfolds.
- **Branching consequences** Decisions open different paths and reveal consequences that fuel discussion and deeper understanding.

- **Facilitated reflection** Structured to encourage conversation and critical thinking, not competition.
- **Flexible use cases** Workshops, ethics training, strategic alignment, team development, classroom learning, and more.

Quiz vs. Dilemma: Choosing the Right Approach

One of the most common questions from new DiBL users is: should I use a quiz or a dilemma? Both use the same Dilemma building block in DiBL, but the design intent and learning outcome are fundamentally different. This comparison, developed through workshops with Borns Vilkar, helps clarify when to use each approach.

Dimension	Quiz-Based Learning	Dilemma-Based Learning
Core format	Questions with correct answers	Dilemmas with multiple valid perspectives
Cognitive mode	Remember and choose	Reflect and decide
Truth model	One truth: right or wrong	Multiple truths: trade-offs
Social dynamic	Competition (who knows more)	Collaboration (what do we think together)
Engagement type	Engagement through challenge	Involvement through personal stakes
Primary purpose	Assessment first: test what people know	Learning first: develop how people think

In practice, the most effective DiBL sessions often combine both: a quick quiz to activate prior knowledge, followed by a deeper dilemma that asks participants to apply that knowledge to a situation with no easy answer. The quiz tells you what people know. The dilemma tells you how they think.

How DiBL Compares

DiBL Dilemmas occupy a unique space: live, facilitated, branching scenario tools designed for group learning. Here is how they compare to the most common alternatives.

Tool	Strengths	Where DiBL goes further
DiBL	Purpose-built for live facilitated learning. Branching scenarios, real-	

time voting, facilitator controls, three ready-to-use dilemma templates, and the ability to connect dilemmas to brainstorming and simulations in one session.

**Mentimeter /
Wooclap /
AhaSlides**

Strong for live polling, word clouds, and simple Q&A. Widely used for audience engagement in presentations.

These tools have no branching or consequence logic. They show what people think but cannot simulate the experience of making a decision and facing an outcome. DiBL is built for decisions, not just opinions.

Twine

Powerful open-source tool for building branching text narratives. Highly flexible, used by game developers and educators.

Twine is an authoring tool for self-paced, solo experiences, not live facilitated group learning. It has no real-time participation, no facilitator controls, and no group-level analytics.

**Articulate
Storyline / Rise**

Industry-standard e-learning authoring with branching scenario support. Rich media, SCORM output, LMS integration.

Storyline scenarios are asynchronous and individual. They lack live participation, group voting, and facilitator-led discussion. DiBL Dilemmas create a shared social experience: the learning happens in the room, not on a screen alone.

Inkle Writer

Browser-based interactive narrative tool. Good for building text-based choice stories, used in education for engagement.

Designed for solo, asynchronous experiences. No live facilitation, no real-time group data, no structured reflection. DiBL is a live facilitation platform.

The core difference: most tools create a scenario as a solo, asynchronous experience. DiBL treats it as a live, facilitated process: a structured experience with a before, during, and after that happens in the room, with a group, guided by a facilitator. It is the difference between delivering content and developing judgement.

The Three Dilemma Templates

DiBL includes three ready-to-use dilemma templates, each designed for a distinct facilitation purpose. Launch any of them directly from the case builder with no build time required. Use them as a starting point and adapt them for your context.

15 – Binary Dilemma

Pose one tough choice between two paths. Participants vote individually from their own devices, then the facilitator reveals how the group split. The facilitator screen shows the percentage division and the different consequences of each choice, giving the room a shared basis for reflection and debate. Use when you want to surface genuine disagreement on a real decision, or when you need a fast, high-impact opening to a discussion.

[Preview template](#)

16 – Perspective Dilemma

Before making a choice, participants are assigned a role: a manager, a frontline worker, a patient, a regulator. They read the scenario and vote from inside that perspective. The reveal shows how different roles divided, making visible how position and lived experience shape decision-making. Use when you want to build empathy across functions, surface hidden assumptions, or prepare a group to handle real stakeholder complexity.

[Preview template](#)

17 – Scenario Dilemma

A scenario unfolds across a series of connected dilemmas. After each vote, the facilitator reveals how participants split and the session advances along the branch the majority chose. Consequences from one choice shape the next dilemma, creating a sense of narrative momentum and cumulative consequence. Use for longer sessions where you want participants to feel the downstream effects of their decisions, not just the immediate outcome.

[Preview template](#)

Start from a Template

All three templates are available in the DiBL case builder. Sign up free at dibl.eu/sign-up, open the case builder, choose a template, write your prompt, and you're ready to run your first dilemma in minutes.

In Practice: How to Run a DiBL Dilemma Session

Before the Session

The most effective Dilemmas are grounded in situations that feel real and relevant to participants. Generic ethical dilemmas engage less than scenarios drawn from participants' own professional context or lived experience. Choose or build a scenario that reflects genuine tensions your participants actually face. Ensure there is no obvious "right" answer: if everyone would choose the same path, it is not a dilemma. Plan your facilitation questions for each branch point. Consider whether to use individual voting, to surface diversity, or group consensus, to build shared understanding.

During the Session

The power of a Dilemma session is in the pause. Each choice point is an opportunity for facilitated reflection, not just a voting moment. After each vote, reveal the distribution before advancing. A 60/40 split is more interesting than a 95/5 split: both are valuable. Ask the minority voice to explain their reasoning before moving on. Minority perspectives often contain the most important insights. Use the branching to show consequences, then ask: "Does this change anyone's thinking?" Keep the pace dynamic. The scenario should feel like a journey, not a survey.

After the Session

Post-dilemma reflection is where the learning consolidates. Build time for it. Ask participants: "What surprised you about how the group voted?" and "What would you do differently in a real situation?" Export the voting data to document where the group aligned and diverged: valuable for team development and organisational learning records. Consider a follow-up Dilemma in a subsequent session with a raised-stakes version of the same scenario.

Real-World Examples

Grænseforeningen: Cultural Identity and Belonging

Graenseforeningen used DiBL Dilemmas to facilitate nuanced conversations about cultural identity, borders, and belonging with diverse participant groups. Traditional dialogue formats tended to produce surface-level agreement or avoided genuine disagreement. The Dilemma structure gave participants a safe framework to commit to positions and hear different perspectives without confrontation.

The branching format proved particularly effective at surfacing how different life experiences lead to genuinely different, but equally defensible, choices. Participants

reported that the experience of "seeing the room divide" was one of the most memorable aspects of the session.

KU Health: Ethical Decision-Making in Practice

KU Health engaged staff with ethical scenarios designed to align team thinking on real-world health practice challenges. Rather than presenting ethical guidelines in a lecture format, the Dilemma sessions placed staff inside realistic situations drawn from their own practice: including cases involving conflicting patient interests, resource constraints, and professional boundaries.

The live voting and branching consequences made abstract ethical principles concrete and personally relevant. Post-session surveys showed significantly higher reported confidence in applying ethical reasoning to novel situations, compared to staff who had completed the standard ethics module.

Roskilde Kommune: Bornelineal (Early Intervention)

Roskilde Municipality developed a scenario-based training tool for teachers and pedagogues working with early intervention for children at risk. Professionals work through a series of dilemmas about when and how to intervene: balancing a child's welfare against family privacy, professional judgement against institutional procedures, and early signals against the risk of overreaction.

Each scenario takes 8 to 12 minutes. Development time: 2 to 3 months. The holistic approach builds on practitioners' existing expertise, using dilemmas to sharpen professional judgement rather than dictate correct answers.

Green Rooftops Cyprus: From Dilemma Game to Policy Recommendations

The Green Rooftops "Rooftops Reimagined" initiative demonstrates how a carefully designed dilemma game can move beyond engagement to directly influence urban policy. Over five facilitated 3-hour sessions, participants from diverse backgrounds engaged with a two-part dilemma structure that produced 10 concrete policy recommendations, published in the Green Roofs Cyprus Insights Report 2025.

The dilemma format proved essential to this outcome. Rather than a standard survey or consultation, the game forced genuine trade-off thinking: participants had to weigh affordability against climate impact, community benefit against property rights, and short-term costs against long-term resilience. The voting data revealed where genuine tensions existed, and the branching consequences showed participants the ripple effects of policy choices.

Post-session facilitation was critical: "Why did we consistently choose the Building Manager but not the Senior Citizen?" This question, grounded in live voting data, opened a conversation about whose voices get heard in urban planning and what that means for equity. The recommendations that emerged directly reflected this learning: policies bundling financial incentives with accessibility guarantees, explicit community benefit requirements, and intergenerational consultation frameworks.

Getting Started with DiBL Dilemmas

Building your first Dilemma in DiBL is straightforward. Sign up at dibl.eu, open the case builder, and choose one of the three ready-to-use dilemma templates. Or use the visual branching editor to map your own scenario: each choice leads to a consequence page, which can lead to another choice or resolve the scenario.

Start simple: a two-branch dilemma with one consequence stage is enough to generate powerful facilitation material. You can add complexity over time as you become more comfortable with the format.

Your first Dilemma in 3 steps

- **1. Scenario** Choose a situation your participants genuinely face, with at least two defensible paths.
- **2. Build** Use the DiBL visual editor to map choices, consequences, and reflection points.
- **3. Facilitate** Run it live – let the group vote, reveal results, and guide discussion between branches.

Learn more: dibl.eu/dilemmas

Key Takeaways

Traditional learning builds knowledge but rarely develops judgement. DiBL Dilemmas fill the gap by giving participants practice making consequential choices.

Scenario-based and dilemma-based learning produce stronger transfer to real-world behaviour than abstract instruction (Clark, 2009; Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2026).

The branching structure creates genuine investment: your choice matters because it leads somewhere different.

Unlike tools such as Twine, Articulate, or Inkle Writer, which create self-paced solo experiences, DiBL Dilemmas are designed for live, facilitated group learning.

Three ready-to-use templates, Binary, Perspective, and Scenario Dilemma, cover the most common facilitation needs. Launch from the case builder in minutes.

The most valuable learning often comes from the moments when the room divides: surfacing and exploring different perspectives is the core of the facilitation.

Continue Reading

Build It Yourself

Ready to build a dilemma in DiBL? Our builder guide walks you through branching setup, Flow view, and the Name/Value/Text data system step by step.

→ Whitepaper 8: Building Dilemmas, How to Build with DiBL Series.

More in the Ways to Use DiBL Series

- Whitepaper 1: Brainstorms, Facilitated brainstorming with simultaneous digital input
- Whitepaper 3: Presentations, Interactive, facilitator-led content delivery
- Whitepaper 4: Quiz & Mini-Games, Knowledge checks with scoring and gamification
- Whitepaper 5: Simulations, Multi-round scenarios with variables and consequences
- Whitepaper 6: Survey & Polls, Real-time data collection and evaluation

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