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ST JOSEPH'S INSTITUTION ENHANCES STUDENTS’ CREATIVE THINKING WITH REPUBLIC POLYTECHNIC'S PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING APPROACH

RP’s programme culminates in The Big Deal Project competition for SJI’s students

SINGAPORE – 22 March 2003 – St Joseph’s Institution (SJI) is working with Republic Polytechnic (RP) to impart Enterprise and Business skills via the Problem-based Learning (PBL) approach to its students. 118 Secondary Three students were selected to participate in weekly project lessons running from 6 February to 22 March 2003. These were geared towards enabling the students to solve business-related problems, culminating with a final session where each team’s business proposal would be judged in a competition.

Republic Polytechnic is the first polytechnic in Singapore to fully adopt the PBL pedagogy. The PBL approach takes a student through a process of problem-solving, honing the individual’s skills of observation and analytical thinking. Through this RP – SJI Collaboration project, SJI seeks to broaden the abilities of its students in business and enterprise skills as well as to think creatively out of the box.

“This is the first experience with the PBL approach but already, feedback from our students have been very positive. The project has provided our students with an avenue to expand the horizons of their learning as well as focus their energies on a very practical area of activity – entrepreneurship.” said Mrs Goh Poh Kenn, SJI’s Deputy Principal of Curriculum [ ]

Through the seven weekly sessions, the students are given a series of enterprise-related real world problems for them to work on. New knowledge is created as the students employ the PBL approach to solve the problems raised and derive ‘learning issues’ which require further probing. After identifying the issues, the next stage is ‘Self-Directed Learning’ where the Internet and books are tapped as resources for valuable information. Finally, backed by research, all ideas are listed on a 'Group Ideas Template' and presented to their peers.

As one of the participants, Choi Siu Joon, noted, "Ultimately, we take a greater responsibility for own learning; learning from our own discoveries and brainstorming sessions, a change to the learning approach we have in school everyday.”

Commented Chang York Boon, an academic staff at the Centre for Innovation and Enterprise, “At The Republic's Centre of Innovation and Enterprise, we hope to see more students interested in using the PBL approach as it strongly reinforces real world concepts in a very practical way. Through our interaction with SJI, we can see that our programme is highly effective in enabling students to face the relevant issues of today and to know how to address these.”

At the end of six weeks, each of the four groups will present a business marketing proposal for ‘What’s The Big Deal?’ competition. This event on 22 March will see the teams showcase all their skills and knowledge gained from this project. This competition will be jointly assessed by a panel of six judges comprising Republic Polytechnic’s school directors, the Principal and Deputy Principal.
of SJI and two venture capitalists. The winning team will win for themselves the “Innovation and Enterprise Trophy” in honour of the late Mr Teo Cheng Guan, a leading banker and strong supporter of SJI

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