MEDIA RELEASE

REDISCOVERING EDUCATION THROUGH NEW THINKING IN PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

Singapore, 5 March 2007 – The art of ‘active learning’ championed by problem-based learning or PBL for short will get its boost when academics and scholars meet in Singapore for the International PBL Symposium 2007. The symposium will be held at Republic Polytechnic from 7 to 9 March 2007 with Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister of State, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Manpower as the Guest-of-Honour.

Adopting ‘Re-Inventing PBL’ as its theme, the symposium seeks to improve ways in which PBL could be better received and adopted worldwide. Republic Polytechnic as the organizer of this international symposium hopes to provide an effective platform for scholars to present critical reviews of PBL methodologies, new perspectives on PBL and paradigm shifts within PBL.

Commenting on the symposium, Professor Low Teck Seng, Principal and CEO said, “PBL has been embraced by many prominent institutions worldwide as a main-stream instructional pedagogy. As such, the upcoming symposium will be a great and timely opportunity for educators and experts to discuss and review current and new PBL methodologies and perspectives. Why use PBL is no longer relevant. The question that we will be addressing at this meet is how to use PBL better.”

The 3-day symposium will be addressing key aspects of PBL relevant to strategic management level as well as faculty staff and facilitators:

Teaching Practices in PBL
- Effective strategies that trigger deep and active learning.
- Maximising collaborative learning in group settings.

Design of PBL Curriculum
- Designing inter-disciplinary curriculum.
- Designing subject-specific curriculum.
- Assessment strategies.

Epistemology Underlying PBL
- Curriculum built on epistemological theories.
- Critiquing the relevance of knowledge.
- Measuring knowledge.

Staff Development
- Staff development programmes to support PBL.
- Evaluation of staff development programmes.
- Evaluating staff competence in facilitating PBL.

Technology and Innovation
• Innovative trends in technologies that support PBL.
• Technologies that promote a culture of inquiry.
• Technologies that address logistical requirements of PBL.
• Technologies that measure student learning.

To encourage sharing session and hands on application, the symposium is also incorporating a practical element where participants will be able to experience first-hand use of PBL. The interactive session – ‘PBL Tutorial’ will have delegates submitting a problem so as to trigger and facilitate a discussion.

“The symposium will be an eye-opener for many, especially those who are seeking to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of PBL. Though the methodology is widely used in institutes of higher learning, PBL is just as relevant and applicable to primary or secondary schools, training centres and even at workplaces,” added Mr Glen O’Grady, Director, Centre for Educational Development.

Republic Polytechnic is the only polytechnic and institute of higher learning in Singapore that has fully adopted the PBL approach. An alternative to traditional classroom, the PBL unique application helps to enhance content knowledge and foster the development of communication, problem-solving, and self-directed learning skill. Typically done in small discussion groups of students accompanied by a facilitator, students are expected to discuss the problems, define what they know, generate hypotheses, derive learning goals and conduct research. Results will then be presented and discussed in the following session where it will used to solve the problem.

The symposium is expected to draw about 550 participants from 15 different countries. Leading PBL experts from all around the world - Republic Polytechnic (Singapore), Erasmus University Rotterdam (Netherlands), The University of British Columbia (Canada) and Coventry University (United Kingdom) have been scheduled to deliver keynote addresses and to set the direction for the various presentations, tutorials and workshops.

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About Republic Polytechnic
The first educational institution in Singapore to adopt the Problem-Based Learning approach for all its diploma programmes, Republic Polytechnic has five schools offering nineteen diploma courses in Information & Communications Technology, Engineering, Applied Science, Technology for the Arts, and Sports, Health & Leisure. Republic Polytechnic is committed to nurturing innovation and entrepreneurial learning in an environment that develops problem-solving process skills and a life-long learning attitude. Its holistic, broad-based curriculum, covering culture, enterprise development and cognitive processes, prepares students for an active and meaningful role in society. Republic Polytechnic strives for excellence by achieving various national and international accreditations, including People Developer Standards, ISO9001, ISO14001, OHSAS 18001, Singapore Quality Class, Singapore Innovation Class, and the Singapore Health Awards (Gold). For more information, visit http://www.rp.sg.