Republic Polytechnic launches Problem-based Learning Institute

Institute will support growing interest in PBL in Asia-Pacific

Singapore, 7 March 2012 – Republic Polytechnic (RP) today announced the official launch of its Problem-based Learning Institute (PBLI). The Institute will leverage Republic Polytechnic’s faculty expertise in Problem-based Learning (PBL) to become a preeminent training and research organisation in the region.

When Republic Polytechnic (RP) was established in 2002, it became the first educational institution in Singapore to adopt a PBL approach for all its diploma programmes. PBL is a unique pedagogical approach based on the idea of “learning by doing”, that aims to instil problem solving and teamwork skills in students.

To date, RP’s Centre for Educational Development (CED) has worked on a wide array of training and consultancy projects with both local and overseas institutions. These include local institutions such as the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), the Singapore Air Force, the Singapore Police Force, The Singapore Navy, Transit Link Pte Ltd, and overseas institutions such as Parramatta Marist High School (Australia), Monash University (Australia) and Kumamoto National College of Technology (Japan). In just the last two years the team at RP has trained over 700 individuals, and the training and consultancy projects have covered areas such as problem-crafting techniques, facilitation of lessons, as well as curriculum development and assessment.

The PBLI, which will now manage projects such as these, aims to cater to the growing demand for PBL training in the region. It will provide differentiated, PBL-oriented training programmes and consultancy services. Backed by rigorous research in PBL and practical knowledge gleaned from actual implementation of the pedagogy across multiple domains, the Institute is advantageously positioned to assist others who are interested in studying and practising PBL.

The Institute will also play an important role in fostering and facilitating collaborative research on PBL and learner-centred education amongst practitioners from around the world. This research will help to continuously build upon and enhance teaching methods across a wide spectrum of subjects and disciplines, benefitting students who are taught using the PBL pedagogy, including those at RP.
Commenting on the PBL approach, Mr Greg Whitby, Executive Director of Schools, Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta, said: “PBL is a game changing approach to contemporary learning and teaching. It has at its heart the simple understanding that students can be stretched, teachers can integrate discipline and knowledge and that every learner is different.”

Mr Glen O'Grady, Director, RP Centre for Educational Development (CED), who will also head the PBLI said: “The Institute is a culmination of the passion we have for PBL, and our experience with PBL across a wide array of disciplines, coupled with our extensive research has enabled us to share and advise organisations and individuals interested in PBL. As such, the Institute represents a significant step forward in RP’s contribution to the scholarship and practice of teaching and learning in Singapore and in the region.”

The PBLI was officially launched at the Problem-based Learning Symposium, being held at RP from 7-9 March 2012. A book titled, ‘One-Day, One-Problem, an Approach to Problem-based Learning’ authored by RP academics and published by Springer was also officially launched at this Symposium. The book focuses on empirical research gathered over the past 10 years on the effectiveness of PBL in a Singaporean context, and it contains chapters about issues relating to the quality of problem triggers, scaffolding, and tutor behaviour in a One-Day One-Problem learning environment.

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About Republic Polytechnic
The first educational institution in Singapore to leverage Problem-Based Learning approach for all its diploma programmes, Republic Polytechnic (RP) has six schools and two centres offering thirty nine courses in Infocomm, Engineering, Applied Science, Technology for the Arts, Sports, Health & Leisure, Events and Hospitality, Enterprise, and Communication. 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 international and national accreditations, including ISO9001, ISO14001, OHSAS 18001,SSS40, Singapore Quality Class, People Developer, Innovation Class, and Service Class. For more information, visit http://www.rp.edu.sg.

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