

## **'Problem Based Learning (PBL) Today and Tomorrow', Facilitate International Conference**

26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Trinity College Dublin

### **Discover University – PBL Inter-disciplinary Project Dr Josephine Bleach & Brigina Crowe, National College of Ireland**

Discover University is a week-long summer programme, which aims to raise young people's personal and educational aspirations by offering them the opportunity to experience a taste of life in National College of Ireland (NCI). Designed for young people aged 14-17 years from disadvantaged and minority communities, the 2010 programme involved a Problem Based Learning (PBL) Project with a theme of 'Community Living'.

Working in small groups, participants were supported by third level students and NCI faculty in using the PBL model (Mergendoller and Thomas 2005). In order to ensure a balance between deep understanding of the issues involved and the development of higher-order thinking skills (Ertmer 2009), the programme was designed to include a mix of research activities, skill development and project work. Having worked on a real life problem from a community organisation, each team showcased their solutions at the end of the week.

The project worked extremely well. Each team used the PBL process to come up with innovative solutions, with participants feeling that their confidence and skills has improved as a result of the programme.

*I learnt how to solve a real life problem by organising and working as part of a team. The experience has taught me how to approach problems systematically and logically, so I have a method of tackling not only other people's problems but mine too*

Difficulties with team work and collaborative project planning highlighted areas where further support and training in PBL methodology for faculty and team leaders were needed.

### **References**

Ertmer, P. (2009) 'An Overview of Problem-Based learning', Unpublished paper prepared for the faculty of National College of Ireland.

Mergendoller, J. and Thomas, J.W. (2005) 'Managing project-based learning: Principles from the field' Available from <http://www.bie.org/tmp/research/researchmanagementPBL.pdf> (Accessed 11-08-2009)