Unit 1: Introduction: What is problem based learning

In a traditional learning environment a tutor is responsible for departing all of their wisdom and knowledge to learners during classes. Once the learning material has been delivered the student is then given questions or problems by the tutor to assess their level of knowledge in the subject area.

Problem based learning is an approach in which a problem is presented to the learner at the start of the course rather than at the end. The problem can be defined by a facilator or the learner themselves. The learner is then responsible for searching for the relevant knowledge required to solve the problem. The student is responsible for their own learning. This is known as a constructivist approach to learning.

Think about times when you got a new phone or television. You did not need a tutor to teach you how to use this. You learned how to use it by, viewing youtube videos, online reviews, reading the relevant information in the manual and through trial and error.

 The same applies for a constructivist learning. Learning a new skill is alot more complex than learning how to use a new phone. However the same concept can be applied. Rather than a tutor giving the information they think you need. The learner is guided to find that information they actually need.

In a problem based learning environment there is a facilitator rather than a tutor who guides the learners in identifying and applying the relevant knowledge to their learning situation. The learning situation is a problem and the knowledge that is constructed is that which is required to develop a solution. In a problem scenario there may be a number of solutions or a combination of solutions required to solve the problem. Learning is conducted collaboratively.

Problem based learning has been proven to develop the following skills in learners:
- Critical thinking – the ability of the learner to make clear reasoned judgements
- Problem solving – a skill requiring a person to apply an ordered/structured process to solve problems
- Team work - the learners ability to work as part of a team and with others
- Self directedness – the learners motivation to drive their own learning

Within your organisation Problem based learning (PBL)can be used to:
- Create a learning culture in your organisation
- Encourage continuous learning and reduce the 'drop off' associated with traditional forms of training
- Encourage self motivated learners
- Provide an immediate, measurable return on time invested in training.

As a facilitator of PBL your objective is to create an environment to encourage people to work together and be self motivated to solving a problem. The focus must be on the learning process undertaken to do this rather than the outcome. This process can be applied to a wide variety of problems.

This course will allow you to facilitate problem based learning in your organisation. It will consist of eleven units ranging from 15 minutes to 1 hour long. Each unit will be comprised of a number of lessons, each lesson will be 5-10 minutes long.

Unit 1: What is problem based learning
Unit 2: Preparing your organisation for PBL: How to develop a learning culture and self directed learners
Unit 3: Selecting a problem for PBL for business professionals
Unit 4: The PBL process
Unit 5: The roles in PBL
Unit 6: Supporting clarifying terms and defining the problem
Unit 7: Supporting brainstorming and developing learning objectives
Unit 8: Supporting self study: constructing knowledge for PBL learners
Unit 9: Supporting Solution synthesis in PBL
Unit 10: Supporting Reflection and reapplication
Unit 11: Assessing PBL
Unit 12: Your portfolio of assignments and using them for PBL

The units are centred around the PBL process and supporting learners at each stage of the process.