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Using knowledge building principles as evaluation and design rubrics for the continuing education and professional development curriculum at the Faculty of Medicine/UofT.

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Abstract

Statement of the issue/problem:

This poster considers how to use knowledge building principles as both evaluation and design rubrics for the continuing education and professional development (CEPD) curriculum at the Faculty of Medicine/UT. A recent review (Hebert et al, 2005) of educational programmes offered by the Office of CEPD revealed that despite a strong evidence base for pedagogical models and programmes that extend beyond knowledge transmission (Davis et al., 1995; Tompson et al., 1999; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993), the majority of courses reviewed (61/98) relied on didactic methods of instruction. As well, evaluation of the courses was limited primarily to student/learner satisfaction. A challenge in any educational context is design and evaluation of learning for deep understanding. In a health care context, deep understanding is inextricably linked to practice change. This poster considers how Scardamalia's (1999) knowledge building principles might be used to evaluate and re-design aspects of the CEPD curriculum.

How your research will address the issue/problem:

The central tenets underlying all activity in a knowledge building community are that knowledge is socially constructed and the collective purpose of the community is to improve the community's conceptual artifacts, ideas, theories, diagnoses, innovations, etc. (Bereiter, 2002). In this case, the conceptual artifact under scrutiny is a new curriculum model that would integrate knowledge building pedagogical principles in the evaluation and design frameworks. This research is exploratory and uses key informant interviews with the Director of CEPD and co-author of this paper, Dr. Ivan Silver, and Information Systems Analyst and co-author of this paper, Laure Perrier, as the main sources of data. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted and analysed with an eye to determining the opportunities and challenges using KB principles in this context.

What you have learned/progress to-date:

The CEPD curriculum at UT is distributed – in other words, multiple stakeholders create courses that are accredited through the Office of CEPD but the content is developed externally not internally. As a result, there are no comprehensive offerings in the form of long-term certificate programmes. Rather the curriculum is an amalgam of courses spanning a range of specialties and sub-specialties in the health sciences. Evaluation of CEPD is limited to satisfaction and individual learner outcomes. Finally, the majority of course offerings are of one to three days, and sustained learning and/or practice change is difficult to achieve.

Major project goals: what do you hope to achieve/accomplish?

The main goal of this qualitative study is to glean insights from key informants at the Office of CEPD, Faculty of Medicine/UT about the opportunities and challenges of cultivating a knowledge building curriculum in the health sciences. Specifically, we will investigate how knowledge building principles may be used to evaluate and design for sustained learning and practice change for adult learners and practitioners. Finally, we will explore how to close the gap between the best evidence for curriculum design and delivery and the results yielded from a recent audit of the curriculum (Hebert et al., 2005 study) using knowledge building principles as evaluation and design rubrics.

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