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Learner Engagement in Postgraduate Anaesthesia Speciality Training

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Received 21 March 2017; received in revised form 23 March 2018; accepted 28 March 2018

Abstract

Purpose: Research has shown continuing medical education improves doctor performance, new educational approaches improving educational outcomes and individual reflection can help identify learner needs positively improving clinical performance. This study addresses:

1. How do doctors on postgraduate anaesthesia specialist training programme engage across Postgraduate Medical Education teaching sessions?
2. What are the enablers and barriers to learner engagement?
3. Using the benefits of a balanced and informative mixed method approach to identify how Learner Engagement can be affected by clicker technology in this specific group.

Methods: A triangulation convergent mixed method approach using 1. Semi structured interviews were conducted with Non Consultant Hospital Doctors 2. A quantitative in class engagement measurement Tool was applied using observers with and without audience response systems. The IEM tool was used in 20 Postgraduate Medical Education sessions. A mixed methods approach was used to integrate findings. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately and integrated. Equal weighting was given to both strands.

Results: 8 semi-structured interviews were undertaken and 20 sessions incorporating Didactic lectures, CaseBased Discussion and clicker technology. Most frequent IEM scores for the instructor behaviours were '1'[Talking to the class] in all three formats. Most frequent scores for the student behaviours were '3'[Listening to the instructor or a talking student/looking at slides or board] in DL and CS (70.1% and 61.3% respectively), '4'[Talking to the instructor/reading something to entire class or writing something on the board] in CBD (49.2%). The 4Rs of learner engagement: readiness, reflection, recap and retain are core building blocks of LE before during and after a teaching session.

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Peer review under responsibility of AMEEMR: the Association for Medical Education in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hpe.2018.03.010>

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Discussion: Postgraduate medical learners engage through the 4 Rs of LE. The wellbeing of the learner cannot be underestimated and is a major influential factor in Learner Engagement. Clickers influence engagement through the enablement and enhancement of the 4Rs.

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Keywords: Audience response system; Clicker; Learner engagement; Motivation in learning; Postgraduate medical education

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1. Introduction

Lifelong learning is a core attribute of the modern doctor and the literature has shown that it improves doctor performance.^{1,2} It is known from the literature that the effectiveness of workplace learning programs such as postgraduate medical education (PME) is directly linked to learner motivation.³ The need to create an active learning environment that favours engagement and critical reflection is vital to successful learning.⁴

Key Terms: Postgraduate medical education (PME) for this study takes the form of one hour didactic lecture in the early hours of the morning before ward rounds. Learners include Non Consultant Hospital Doctors (NCHDs) and consultants in anaesthesia. Instructors are most commonly consultants or fellow NCHDs.

PME is a traditional undefined approach to teaching a large, varied group of postgraduate doctors and multidisciplinary team members would be considered by many in the medical education field as out of date. New educational approaches – such as the use of technology can improve educational outcomes.² Individual medical practitioner reflection helps identify the learners own needs which positively improves clinical performance.² Currently there is ongoing research into optimization of the clinical learning environment in PME. However less attention has been paid to identifying key elements of PME namely -learner engagement (LE) and motivation.

1.1. Background

This literature review provides a critical analysis of the major theoretical, empirical and methodological trends and developments that have contributed to our understanding of LE and motivation.

Within this large body of emerging research there is little consensus on definitions of some core concepts. This presents a challenge to researchers. There are numerous descriptions of what defines learner engage-

ment, motivation and interaction (See Box 2 for a list of definitions adopted in this study). According to Kuh learner engagement (LE) is, the time and effort learners invest in studies and other activities to achieve student success.⁶ The distinction between involvement and engagement has been teased out by Heaslip.⁷ Engagement refers to both student and institutional activities that lead to desired outcomes of all the stakeholders whereas involvement refers to student activities only.⁷ This important distinction allows for the identification of factors that underlie motivation to learn, which may in turn lead to engagement. Motivation is the translation of a person's basic psychological needs and drives, filtered through their view of the world, toward an action with an anticipated result.³ Engagement is multifaceted and complex, consisting of behavioural, emotional and cognitive processes.⁸ Some authors believe that “*We do not have a comprehensive picture of student motivation as they manifest across their educational career*”.⁹ Current research encompasses primary, second level and undergraduate learner engagement. It has neglected learner engagement in PME.^{1,2}

Kuh's definition of learner engagement is, the time and effort learners invest in studies and other activities to student success.⁶ Engagement refers to both student and institutional activities that lead to desired outcomes of all the stakeholders whereas involvement refers to student activities only.⁷ Motivation is the translation of a person's basic psychological needs and drives, filtered through their view of the world, toward an action with an anticipated.¹⁰

Methods of measuring learner engagement are predominately quantitative: examples include the in class engagement measure tool (IEM)¹¹ and tools measuring vigor, dedication and absorption.¹² These tools consist of observational scoring systems. However, the research has not included qualitative, or mixed methodologies in the exploration of learner engagement and this is a shortcoming. Approaches used in the medical field to improve engagement include problem

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