Online Faculty Development: 
Experiences of a Journal Club Discussion

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ABSTRACT

Online learning has been found useful for faculty development programs in health professions education. The purpose of this paper is to report the online journal club discussion on the article “Health Professionals for a new century: transforming education to strengthen health systems in an interdependent world” published in The Lancet in 2010. This online discussion was conducted from 15th – 30th August 2012 in the MEU- India Google group. The discussion was divided into two parts and moderated by the authors of this paper. Sixteen medical educators participated in the discussion and there were 63 posts in the two weeks that the paper was discussed. The discussion indicated that there were gaps between health professions education and health needs. Translation of social accountability into action is an important step to bridge this gap. One of the uses of advances in information-technology is to have an online journal club discussion, which could be an effective tool for faculty development.

Keywords: Health Professions Education, Journal Club, Lancet, Medical Council of India (MEU-India), Online

INTRODUCTION

Online learning has been found useful for faculty development programs in health professions education (Anshu, et al., 2010). Even though Information and Technology has advanced considerably, yet online learning is still a relatively new concept in developing countries including India (Vyas et al., 2010). The MEU-India Google group was created in 2007 as a tangible outcome of the first National Conference in Medical Education conducted by All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, India. The purpose was to provide an online platform for health professionals across India for discussions, sharing of ideas and networking. Over the years this group has grown along with the growth of the national conference which has become a yearly conference and is now called the National Conference in Health Professions Education. This group currently has 2151 members representing health professionals from various corners of the country. Invited members from outside India also form a part of this group.

One of the initiatives to improve quality was to have structured online journal club discussions on a contemporary relevant paper from the health professions education literature. The objective was to provide a platform for focussed

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discussions on contextual, relevant issues in the health professions education, encouraging sharing of the rich experiences which the participants brought with them.

The purpose of this paper is to report the online journal club discussion on the article “Health Professionals for a new century: transforming education to strengthen health systems in an interdependent world” published in The Lancet in 2010 (Frenk et al., 2010). This article was written by members of the Education of Health Professionals for the 21st century, a global independent commission and became a landmark paper in Health Professions Education. It builds on the Flexner report addressing the issues in social accountability; Identifies gaps in health professions education and training to meet health care needs; Proposes Instructional and Institutional Reforms to bridge this gap suggesting a move towards transformative learning; Recommends enabling actions to overcome barriers to bring about the proposed reforms; and Highlights the role of future doctor/health professionals (Frenk et al., 2010).

Methods

The online journal club discussion was conducted from 15th – 30th August 2012 in the MEU- India Google group on the paper “Health Professionals for a new century: transforming education to strengthen health systems in an interdependent world” published in 2010 in The Lancet.

This paper was chosen for the online discussion to update the faculty participants on the contemporary, contextual issues raised in this paper as well as to better prepare the faculty for active participation in the upcoming National Conference in Health Professions Education in September 2012 which had the theme as “Social Accountability: Responding to societal needs through Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Health Professions Education”. The purpose of the online discussion was also to share experiences and thoughts related to the concepts in the paper on transforming Health Professions Education.

The discussion was divided into two parts and moderated by the authors of this paper.

- Part I- from 15th August till 22nd August 2012.
- Part II –from 23rd August till 30th August 2012.

The guiding Question for Part I was posted on 15th August 2012 while the question for Part II was posted at the end of discussion of Part I.

PART I

Guiding Question for Discussion

Q1. Related to the concepts in the paper, what is the role of Institutional Design (Structure) in ensuring the social accountability in health professions education? This may include areas of:

- Teaching and Learning,
- Student Assessment,
- Curriculum Design and Program Evaluation,
- Others such as selection criteria, etc.

Required Reading from the Lancet article

a. Executive Summary: Page 1-11.

PART II

Guiding Question for Discussion

Q2. Related to the concepts in the paper, what is the role of Instructional Design (Educational Processes) in ensuring the social accountability in health professions education? This may include areas of:

- Teaching and Learning,
- Student Assessment,
- Curriculum Design and Program Evaluation,
- Others such as selection criteria, etc.
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