

What if they aren't playing our game?

Education theories, curriculum intent
and learner goals re-examined

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The grand educational designs

- Many impressive curricular innovations in medical education



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The grand educational designs

- Many impressive curricular innovations in medical education ... in theory



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The grand educational designs

- Many impressive curricular innovations in medical education ... in theory
 - “The difference between theory and practice is that in theory there is no difference between theory and practice but in practice there is a huge difference”



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“The best laid plans”

- We develop our educational designs based on expectations of how students should act



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“The best laid plans”

- We develop our educational designs based on expectations of how students should act
 - They will conduct themselves in professional manner



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“The best laid plans”

- We develop our educational designs based on expectations of how students should act
 - They will conduct themselves in professional manner
 - They will function as adult learners



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“The best laid plans”

- We develop our educational designs based on expectations of how students should act
 - They will conduct themselves in professional manner
 - They will function as adult learners
 - But also that they will trust us completely and put themselves in our hands for molding into physicians



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“The best laid plans”

- We develop our educational designs based on expectations of how students should act
 - They will conduct themselves in professional manner
 - They will function as adult learners
 - But also that they will trust us completely and put themselves in our hands for molding into physicians
 - They have the same goals with respect to the curriculum



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“The best laid plans”

- We develop our educational designs based on expectations of how students should act
 - They will conduct themselves in professional manner
 - They will function as adult learners
 - But also that they will trust us completely and put themselves in our hands for molding into physicians
 - They have the same goals with respect to the curriculum
 - To help them become great physicians



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The idealized curriculum

- We build our curricula to maximize learning when those assumptions are true



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The idealized curriculum

- We build our curricula to maximize learning when those assumptions are true
 - The “implicit” curriculum



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The idealized curriculum

- We build our curricula to maximize learning when those assumptions are true
 - The “implicit” curriculum
 - Set up conditions so that IF they really do what we want them to they can't HELP but learn what we want them to learn



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The idealized curriculum

- We build our curricula to maximize learning when those assumptions are true
 - The “implicit” curriculum
 - Set up conditions so that IF they really do what we want them to they can't HELP but learn what we want them to learn
 - Constructed discovery learning



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“The best laid plans”

- Eg, Problem Based Learning



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“The best laid plans”

- Eg, Problem Based Learning
 - *In theory:*
 - Curiosity driven learning
 - Learn the thinking process by struggling through the process



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“The best laid plans”

- Eg, Problem Based Learning
 - *In theory:*
 - Curiosity driven learning
 - Learn the thinking process by struggling through the process
 - *In practice:*
 - Get diagnostic “answer” from previous year’s class
 - Focus on acquisition of key content to be learned
 - Get through it in two sessions so can use Friday to study



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What if their goals for themselves in our curriculum
are different than our goals for them?

(What if they are gaming our game?)



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Learners as problem solvers



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Learners as problem solvers

- We count on students' ability to construct knowledge about the world based on problems



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Learners as problem solvers

- We count on students' ability to construct knowledge about the world based on problems
- But not just true for FORMAL problems WE give them



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Learners as problem solvers

- We count on students' ability to construct knowledge about the world based on problems
- But not just true for FORMAL problems WE give them
- Also true for the “problem” of the curriculum



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Learners as problem solvers

- We count on students' ability to construct knowledge about the world based on problems
- But not just true for FORMAL problems WE give them
- Also true for the “problem” of the curriculum
 - What are the rules of this system?
 - What is really valued and what is not?
 - What is rewarded and what is not?
 - What are my goals in this context?



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Learner goals in medical education

- Plenty of evidence their goals are different than ours



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Learner goals in medical education

- Plenty of evidence their goals are different than ours
 - Anecdotally
 - Cheating
 - PBL experiences
 - “Is this on the test?”
 - Richard Tiberius story of improved course without improved marks



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Learner goals in medical education

- Plenty of evidence their goals are different than ours
 - From the literature
 - Lingard research on “successful case presentations”
 - Kennedy research on “credibility preservation”



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What if their goal for themselves in our curriculum is to get through medical school as efficiently as possible and with the best record possible so they can get the residency of their choice and finally learn how to be a doctor?



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How are we contributing?

- “Competing” curricular challenges
- Lack of guidance and support



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Curricular challenges



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Curricular challenges

- Huge amounts of information to assimilate
- Highly competitive environment
- High stakes, low frequency challenges
- New culture, new language, new rules, new identity



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Lack of guidance and support



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Lack of guidance and support

- We do not really discuss with them (much less negotiate with them) what this is all about



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Lack of guidance and support

- We do not really discuss with them (much less negotiate with them) what this is all about
 - Little discussion of what they think it is to be a doctor
 - Or what it does take (Why are we doing this to them?)



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Lack of guidance and support

- We do not really discuss with them (much less negotiate with them) what this is all about
 - Little discussion of what they think it is to be a doctor
 - Or what it does take (Why are we doing this to them?)
 - Mixed messages about what we think it is
 - Eg, the competing discourses of diversity and homogeneity (Frost)



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Lack of guidance and support

- We do not really discuss with them (much less negotiate with them) what this is all about
 - Little discussion of what they think it is to be a doctor
 - Or what it does take (Why are we doing this to them?)
 - Mixed messages about what we think it is
 - Eg, the competing discourses of diversity and homogeneity (Frost)
 - Mixed messages about student vs. professional in training
 - Differing rights and responsibilities



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Contextuality of behaviour

- Everything we call cheating on high stakes exams we would call good practice in the clinic
 - Anticipating challenges and putting supports in place
 - Seeking collaboration and multiple perspectives on problems
 - Admitting don't know and looking it up rather than guessing
 - Double checking rather than assuming you are right



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So now what?



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So now what?

- Two potential courses of action
 - Reorganize our thinking about “best” curriculum using another perspective
 - Make the implicit curriculum more explicit



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Another planning perspective



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Another planning perspective

- Should not just ask:
 - What will create best learning opportunities if the play our game?



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Another planning perspective

- Should not just ask:
 - What will create best learning opportunities if the play our game?
- Should also ask:
 - To what would this grand design reduce if they DON'T play our game?



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Another planning perspective

- Should not just ask:
 - What will create best learning opportunities if the play our game?
- Should also ask:
 - To what would this grand design reduce if they DON'T play our game?
 - And would they still learn what we want them to if they play their game instead?



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Another planning perspective

- Should not just ask:
 - What will create best learning opportunities if the play our game?
- Should also ask:
 - What would this activity look like in the hands of overextended students who are just trying to survive us?



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Another planning perspective

- Should not just ask:
 - What will create best learning opportunities if the play our game?
- Should also ask:
 - What would this activity look like in the hands of overextended students who are just trying to survive us?
 - Is there a better design for learning under these conditions?



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Engaging them in our game



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Engaging them in our game

- Change our rules so they can play our game
 - Eg, integrated and programmatic programs of assessment



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Engaging them in our game

- Change our rules so they can play our game
 - Eg, integrated and programmatic programs of assessment
- Develop formal discussion venues with/for students
 - Eg, Brian Hodges story about PBL student attendance
 - Eg, conversations about carrying the professional standard



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Theory and practice



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Theory and practice

- Deceptively simple ideas
- Distressingly difficult implementation



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Theory and practice

- Deceptively simple ideas
- Distressingly difficult implementation
 - Must become explicit about our own beliefs
 - Hard not to talk out of both sides of our mouths
 - eg Frost work on competing discourses



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Theory and practice

- Deceptively simple ideas
- Distressingly difficult implementation
 - Must become explicit about our own beliefs
 - Hard not to talk out of both sides of our mouths
 - eg Frost work on competing discourses
 - Must hold the line against the pull of content
 - Hard not to look at things they can't do
 - eg, transition to medical school courses



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Cheating is wrong

- We should treat the symptom



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Cheating is wrong

- We should treat the symptom
- But we should also think of it as a “sentinel event”
 - An egregious marker that our students are NOT playing the same game we are



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Theory and practice



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Theory and practice

- Bring in smart, effective problem solving, adult learners
 - Then complain that they don't play our game our way



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Theory and practice

- Bring in smart, effective problem solving, adult learners
 - Then complain that they don't play our game our way
- Build in powerful distractions and competing priorities
 - Then complain that they care more about those things



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Theory and practice

- Bring in smart, effective problem solving, adult learners
 - Then complain that they don't play our game our way
- Build in powerful distractions and competing priorities
 - Then complain that they care more about those things
- Leave the most important stuff implicit
 - Then complain that they don't get it



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Education theories, curriculum intent
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