

Not through confusion or fear: motivational approaches for preparing Physician Associate students for post graduate study and beyond.

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Abstract

This review paper explores the underlying principles of motivating Physician Associate students during both matriculation and progression points of post-graduate study. Pertinent notions of the teacher student relationship and its complexities are examined against the literature, aligned to constructionist learning theories. The impact of such motivational expressions by Higher Education teachers sets the scene for future approaches to deep learning that can impact upon safe and compassionate clinical practice. Educational novices are viewed to be in the ideal position within Higher Education and external stakeholders to explore and design an articulated curriculum that is fit for the 21st century healthcare economies. The correlation between effective motivation and enthusiasm is considered in line with student experiences and expectations resulting in safe effective patient care. The paper suggests that Higher Education teachers would better meet student expectations with more awareness of student entry level behaviour.

Keywords: Physician Associate, higher education, matriculation, progression, motivation, curriculum, teacher-student relationship.

Introduction

The Physician Associate (PA) is a relatively new and developing role within the United Kingdom healthcare economy; however, these practitioners are not higher education novices. The model of curricula for the PA remains nebulously designed and is based upon fragmented Higher Education Institution (HEI) integration and an underlying Competency Framework (2012) that forms the basis for a two-year post-graduate diploma. Students matriculating onto a PA post-graduate diploma are expected to hold a relevant higher

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education first degree and with preferable healthcare experience. These pre-requisites are seen in some circles as an augury for academic success or competence; possibly because of the perceived alignment of subject specific content in awards such as biochemistry within the Medical model. There are specific examples where, through collaborative partnerships with external stakeholders, *namely NHS partner organisations*, that an alternative approach can foster opportunity, and furthermore, enhance professional diversity.

Background

The relative infancy of the PA role within both the UK Higher Education (HE) sector and healthcare does highlight the opportunity for a new foundation of PA centric research; the purpose of this review paper is to critically examine custom and habit practices that *may* have been inherited by PA educationalists. One such area and the focus of this narrative pertains to aspects of the Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) and motivation at matriculation and progression points in relation to PA post graduate study. Although there is an opportunity to consider motivation in PA students from a student perspective, it is widely acknowledged that much research exists from this viewpoint. This therefore allows potential examination of teacher positioning when employing untested motivational behaviours.

Within contemporary education and practice, it is evident anecdotally, that there is a collective dissonance of both encouraging and threatening ‘motivational terms’ employed by teachers at matriculation and progression points. These include, but are not exhaustively listed in table 1.

Table 1.	
•	The leap from degree to post-graduate is <i>significant</i>
•	Watch, listen and learn
•	This course is hard; you'll have no social life
•	You need to up your game in order to pass and qualify
•	If you think theory is tough, wait 'till you get out to practice
•	12 months from now, you'll be doing this for real
•	Kiss goodbye to friends and family
•	Pull your socks up!
•	Get off your high-horse
•	Wind your 'neck' in
•	There will be <i>divorces</i> that occur during this course

Regardless of whether these terms can be considered positively or negatively motivational in nature, there is the potential that within HE academia they can produce an *ignition of behaviour* and change the attitude or approach of students. In line with this, Rately (2001) states motivation attaches emotion to action, thus creating, as well as guiding purposeful behaviour. Such behaviours are adoptive and align to the tenets of high quality and safe compassionate care. Viewing human motivation in this way provides an opportunity to create a knowledge base surrounding the multiple ways to help adults plan, make choices about and give direction to their learning, sustain learning and complete learning. In light of this, HEI's are well positioned to initially embed a deep learning behaviour, developing a strategy for future Continued Professional Development practices. The aforementioned examples of Teacher motivational terminology might be seen as goal-based actions: the futility to expect that in simply reducing social time will increase study time and therefore, deeper learning. However, Eccles and Wigfield (2002) acknowledge the importance of goals but highlight that little attention is paid to the values that people attach to the goals and related activities. Taking this into consideration and comparing it with the example and implications for post graduate study, Visser-Wijnveen, Stes and Petegem (2014) make reference to 'interest' and 'effort' as key indicators that influence the teacher values.

Therefore, to propose a motivational theme to students, which is based upon supposition and not fact, is in effect reductionist and too simplistic, moreover, to ignore the values that students place upon their own life goals is somewhat obtuse.

Motivation

The application of insouciant statements as a perceived motivator, without an evidence base is in direct opposition to the views of Wlodkowski (2008) who argues that there are core characteristics that constitute a *motivated* teacher. These are referred to as expertise, empathy, enthusiasm, clarity and cultural responsiveness and are viewed as learnt skills that can be improved upon through practice rather than personality traits. Teacher espoused statements pertaining to motivation or encouragement, might be confusing to some students who can not conceive of such a situation or even the translation of meaning. Moreover, the use of fear, in what is very obviously a power-based relationship offers neither guidance nor a pathway to learner-success; such use of fear might form a foundation for clinical practice that prevents the ability to question hierarchical power in clinical decision-making. Whilst acknowledging this constitution of motivation, Visser-Wijnveen, Stes and Van Petegem (2014) suggest that motivation is conceptualised through four main areas: theories on expectations for success, theories on task value, theories on the integration of expectancies and values and theories on the integration of motivation and cognition, therefore examining the correlation between the teacher's expectation on performance and the value placed upon the teaching activity. These perspectives suggest that motivation is a construct that is influential upon context, theorising that motivation comes from within self-efficacy and enthusiasm.

Both of these concepts, self-efficacy and enthusiasm, relate to intrinsic motivation that is expressed in an outward behaviour. Successful teaching means that the teacher has to acquire the necessary aptitude to produce designated levels of performance allowing those expressed feelings to convey to the learner; this process requires the teacher to care about, value and empathise with the student. Wlodkowski (2008) advocates that it is the illustration of the teacher's emotions during teaching that captivates the audience; however, emotion should be used to reflect enthusiasm for a subject and not to translate the notion of fear through the enhancement of the power relationship. This reinforces the importance of the teacher to

portray authentic positive emotions and enthusiasm as well as demonstrating expertise to allow the learner to imitate the teacher's emotions and attitudes toward the subject area. This is confirmed by Littleton (2013); a positive and authentic teacher will help the learner to *scaffold* their own knowledge, expertise and progression. The use of the scaffold analogy is not accidental; the framework that students construct meaning upon is fragile and tessellated and the interjection of a teacher suggested framework threatens student agency in the process. Only in recognising and valuing the agency of students can a teacher hope to motivate students in a way aligned to their own societal position; therefore, the blanket application of teacher formed beliefs denies student agency. Moreover, such suppression may stifle opportunities for personal strategic development in relation to resilience, a prerequisite of NHS values surrounding raising awareness. The connection of agency to constructivist learning, and the meaning-making (Petty, 2009) system that people use is part of a recognition and assimilation approach that is inherently at risk *when teachers define* the expectations of learners. The recognition of agency and the potential to enable and facilitate students in defining or forming their own approaches to motivation, success and expectations is central to the development of professional identity (Trede, Macklin and Bridges, 2011) and underscores the responsibility of the teacher at what is at a critical time of study.

It can therefore be seen that *student engagement* in learning is seen as a complex process influenced by many factors (Leach and Zepke, 2011) and under this universally recognised umbrella-term, are the following activities: student motivation (Schuetz, 2008), the way teachers conduct themselves and how they relate to the student (Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005), institutional structures and cultures (Baeten *et al.* 2010), and the socio-political context in which education engagement takes place (McMahon and Portelli, 2004). These aforementioned factors support the constructionist perspective that education involves students constructing their own knowledge, inferring that students are *learning agents*.

The TSR requires the necessity of a motivated teacher that Visser-Wijnveen, Stes and Van Petegem (2014) recognise as a key principle to successful teaching; nevertheless, regardless of the viewpoints upon the nature of the teacher-student relationship, it can be asserted that such relationships are a contemporary factor in HEI's and that as such, there exists a risk to the relationship through the discourses found within. Teachers in HEI's may have feelings of

caring for or *taking care of* Students (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014), however, the often-cited independent nature of HE study implies independence and self-organisation. There may be an inherent dissonance within healthcare education where professional duty is conflicted against teacher espoused motivational strategies. Given the emphasis placed upon independence and adult learning approaches, academics may reposition their line of responsibility within the care context to more pragmatic motivational strategies that are predominantly revealed through the *propinquity* that exists within the classroom environment.

Professional Taxonomy

The infancy of the PA role within the UK does lead to the potential situation of expert/novice academics, inasmuch that whilst highly clinically proficient practitioners, they will likely be at the same time, academically novice within the realms of curriculum development and design, including teaching, learning activities and assessment activities. It can be argued that most clinical teaching practices are still underpinned through the adoption of teacher-led pedagogical methods, reinforcing a transmission approach (Calkins and Light, 2008). It is possible that the breath and depth of both tacit and practical knowledge forms the foundation of the expert/novice approach to teaching and learning from a highly clinical perspective and that the expert/novice teacher imparts and transmits information via didactic teaching methods. Lipp (2007) cautions this approach because it can be viewed to be difficult to summarise and articulate. Moreover, this further suppresses the learner resulting in the student becoming the passive recipient, thus depriving the learner and teacher from recognising the importance of the social-constructivist nature of learning (Light, Cox and Calkins, 2011). This paradigm of learning requires exertion, especially when these social interactions lead to an individual's cognitive development, thus emphasizing the interplay between the learner and others, with the inter-dependence between the social milieu and the individual as key to a higher order learning process (Sanders and Sugg Welk, 2005). Such notions of developing higher-order learning processes can be enhanced through the use of academic, critical and professional reflection as this can stimulate a deeper learning approach when addressing uncertainties, discrepancies and dissatisfactions, enabling agency and control over their own practice (Moon, 2006). Mezirow (2003) believes in individuals

fostering a perspective transformation approach accepting knowledge transformation as opposed to knowledge transmission.

Transition of Taxonomy

New teachers entering higher education can find the process of developing skills and confidence in teaching challenging due to the a sense of loss of expertise in clinical skills and practice (Smith and Boyd, 2012). This phenomenon has even been expressed as ‘grief-like’, with the loss of a previous clinical expert status, replaced with being a novice in HE. This may not be seen in relation to PA academics, as the current trend to remain clinically competent is universally accepted as good practice and this may be reflected in the recertification process. Whilst it is recognised that academic identity within Faculty members is mainly derived from a discipline-based and stratified culture (Clarke, Hyde and Drennan, 2013), there is also assumption that this is based in known knowledge, standards for effective performance, patterns of publication, professional interaction and social and political status (Becher, 1989). Indubitably, Clarke, Hyde and Drennan (2013) recognise that each discipline has its own perception of success as a vehicle for prestige; this could be challenging for the PA academic, as their role is still relatively fragment within the UK healthcare system and not overly represented in the HE arena. It can be argued that professional identity is viewed as an on-going process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004; Day, 1999) and the PA role complimentarily aligns with this, as it is a role still deciding upon its own definition and philosophy. As the role develops, then the discourses influencing expert/novice academics will develop the social-self in new ways.

HE Alignment

It can therefore be acknowledged that teaching is not an innocent process recognising the interplay of the cultural, psychological and political complexities of learning. Indeed, Brookfield (1995) identifies this complex interplay recognising that power further complicates all human relationships. Gopee (2010) portrays there is a strong evidence-base present in support of two overarching broad theories to teaching, the andragogical approach and the pedagogical approach. It is envisaged that the expert/novice teacher will develop the appreciation of HE positioning itself towards the andragogical approach suggesting adult

learners have their own set configurations of learning whilst also recognising the extensive collection of self-experience, values and intentions to learn. This new understanding of the paradigm of andragogy and appreciation of the suppositions surrounding how adults learn will undoubtedly question preconceived ideas and present dichotomous tensions in the development of learning, teaching and assessment. The essence of the andragogical approach is the incorporation of initiating teaching as well as facilitation to enable the student to maximise their learning journey; in as much that the students' lived experience and exposure to learning has a unique influence on how the student will then receive and respond to new experiences and knowledge. Similarly, Shor (1992, p202) articulates that the "first responsibility of critical teachers is to establish what students know, speak, experience, and feel, as starting points from which an empowering curriculum is developed". Although it is hard to argue the validity of this, maybe a slight amendment is required; that is, the first responsibility of teachers is to establish what they know, share and speak, especially during matriculation and progression points.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this review paper has demonstrated the complexity of an emerging role in the UK health education arena. Moreover, it has explored the potential for inherited practices from more established HE academics and the influence this can have upon novice PA teachers; with the potential for the impact of such 'motivational' approaches during matriculation and progression, reaching beyond qualification. Teachers in HE employ a range of approaches to motivate and engage with students, however, not all of these are based within evidence and as such may influence student expectations and life-long study; this is especially pertinent when considering that PA's have a pivotal role at the forefront of patient care. The interplay within the TSR has to be managed; being both respectful of the student need for autonomy and care, yet also the professional duty to protect the public, given the unregulated nature of the PA profession. Preparing graduates to assimilate into current NHS workforce structures whilst empowering them to influence current cultures and practice are seen as crucial roles of HEI's. Therefore continuing to employ insouciant remarks at critical stages of development threatens the maturity of the critical-thinking practitioner and moreover, the equilibrium of professional distance to enhance safety within clinical practice and educational attainment. PA academics, often educational novices, now have the

opportunity to define their profession within HE through research and the development of an articulated curriculum.

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