TITLE: Inside Out: Exploring the Assumptions that Drive Us as Educators

ABSTRACT BODY:

Topic Short Description: This interactive session will help participants to cultivate skills of observation, reflection and inquiry in order to explore the critical assumptions they hold about good teaching and learning. Working from a constructivist framework, conceptual tools such as the ladder of inference will be employed in order to uncover habits and thought patterns that may no longer serve us as educators. A deeper awareness of our own assumptions will allow us to articulate and dedicate ourselves to important driving principles of educational design.

Our reactions to our observations of various teaching and learning scenarios (including clips from a popular TV show) will be used to uncover our fundamental assumptions. Caution: we may discover that some of our assumptions and stated principles are at odds with actual practices! Appreciating the discontinuities between what we value and what we actually do will provide rich material for discussion and learning. A deeper understanding of our own assumptions will allow us to be more intentional in designing educational programs and assessment methods that are principle rather than format-driven. Using the example of a large group lecture format, participants will work in small groups to apply principles of good teaching and learning to improve the traditional lecture format. Finally, participants will commit to one small principle-based redesign in their own educational environment.

While this session will focus primarily on helping participants examine their own individual assumptions, we will also touch on the ways that the implicit assumptions transmitted through the informal and hidden curricula can impact the success of any given educational intervention.

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Facilitator: Elizabeth Gaufberg MD MPH

Learning Objectives: As a result of this session, participants will:

1. Deepen awareness and understanding of their own assumptions about teaching and learning
2. Convert assumptions into stated principles of educational design
3. Be able to distinguish between format-driven and principle-driven educational design
4. Commit to a modest redesign of some aspect of one’s own teaching and learning activities based on stated principles
5. Hone skills of observation, reflection and inquiry

Session Plan: I. Rationale (5”)

- Understanding our own assumptions will allow us to be more intentional in designing educational programs that are principle driven
- Understanding how our assumptions might align with or differ from those of our colleagues is essential for us to work together effectively.
- Understanding the assumptions embedded in our institutional culture(s) is essential for curricular success

Define terms: Assumption, Belief, Principle, Constructivism

II. Preparation for Examining our Assumptions (15”)

We will present the following conceptual tool, metaphors and communication skill as a foundation for exploring our assumptions.

Tool: Chris Argyris’ Ladder of Inference – a common mental pathway of increasing abstraction often leading to misguided assumptions/beliefs. This conceptual tool will be explored using a vivid example from daily life (assumptions about the driver who cut you off in traffic)

Metaphors:
- QWERTY Keyboard – As with our use of the original typewriter keyboard into the digital age, we persist in practices
that may no longer be useful to us. (Med Ed analogy: persisting with block rotations even as length of stay has become shorter and chronic illnesses are more prevalent)

-Five Blind Men and the Elephant – We have limited perception and perspective. Our colleagues and students are important to help us to gain perspective and appreciate a fuller picture.

**Communication Skill:** Reflective Listening/Humble Inquiry – the art of careful listening and asking open, honest questions. This form of inquiry serves to deepen understanding of our own and others’ assumptions. Presenters will model humble inquiry with a volunteer from the audience, and seek audience feedback.

**III. Linking Reactions to Assumptions (15*)**

Exercise:
ER Clip #1 – First day on surgical rotation. What do your reactions to this educational session tell you about your assumptions about teaching and learning? How can you state your assumption as a principle of educational design?
Pair-share using humble inquiry with large group report out.

**IV. Converting Assumptions to Principles to Use in Educational Design (15*)**

Exercise:
ER Clip #2 -- Two tours of the ER with different educators
Educators use same format, but what are the different principles of educational design that are modeled?
Identify principles

**V. Applying our Principles (10*)**
Table brainstorm. What principles of educational design can be used to improve on the traditional lecture format?
Large group report out.

**VI. Bringing it home (15*)**
Free write for 2-3 min about one small principle-driven educational redesign you can undertake at your home institution. Share with partner using humble inquiry. Large group report out.


Pratt, D Good Teaching: One Size Fits All? New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2002 pp. 5-16.


http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/twenty-ways-make-lectures-more-participatory

**Level of Audience:** Mid-career

**Focus of Presentation:** Continuum

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