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Creative Tuition: how problem based learning facilitators view their expert knowledge.

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Introduction: Research highlights the important contribution tutor facilitators make to the structure/dynamics of problem based learning. This paper focuses on the extent to which PBL facilitators share and apply expert OT knowledge and skill with students.

Objectives:- Present key findings in relation to the perceived role of the facilitator; whether tutors challenge PBL philosophy by sharing expert knowledge and skill with students.

Methods: Qualitative phenomenological approach was adopted using semi-structured interviews. An Interpretative Phenomenological Approach was used to analyse data. Purposive samples of eighteen academic tutors on 3 OT programmes in the UK universities were recruited.

Results:- 14 of the participants experienced difficulties adapting to the theoretical requirements of PBL, questioning the reality of pure facilitation. Data shows:-

- belief that students have an expectation that tutors will share specialist knowledge.
- tutors transition from clinician to academic driven by their desire to share expert knowledge.
- unreasonable to expect a tutor not to share expert knowledge.
- need for tutors to instruct, guide and correct students in line with their expert knowledge.

Different groups are exposed to tutors with different clinical specialisms. Sharing expert knowledge becomes dependent on the allocated tutor. Motivating tutors to teach presents an issue of consistency in terms of sharing expert knowledge, resulting in students being disadvantaged. Questioned about using expert knowledge to assist students, 13 participants stated they would intervene to help students, to rescue them when stuck. 5 tutors believe that effective PBL is dependent on collaboration between students and tutors. Students should take responsibility for self-directed learning, guiding themselves out of difficult situations, identifying a pure facilitative role for the tutor.

This research shows ambiguity in relation to the tutors' role.

Implications for OT Education: Some PBL theorists argue that past experience/expert knowledge is irrelevant for effective PBL facilitation. Others have argued that tutors should be viewed as valuable learning resources and that expert knowledge, experience and clinical background be utilised by students. This study suggests tutors change their conceptions of teaching with difficulty, with a small number of facilitators willing to forgo their expert knowledge in order to be pure facilitators. The literature does suggest that expert tutors are beneficial, especially early in the presentation of the material.