Reviewer's report

Title: Student approaches for learning in medicine: What does it tell us about the informal curriculum?

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Reviewer: Madeleine Abrandt Dahlgren

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Major Compulsory Revisions
The aim of this study is to establish the extent to which students in a graduate-entry medical program use various learning approaches to assist their learning and preparation for examinations, apart from those resources offered as part of the formal curriculum. References are made to the formal, informal and hidden curriculum of medical education as influencing students' learning.

It is well-known from decades of studies of learning in higher education that the hidden curriculum in terms of assessment methods has a decisive influence on students' learning. The assessment impacts on students approaches to learning before the learning, in that it decides what the students choose to read, during the learning in that the assessment impacts on the approach to learning in terms of deep or surface orientation, as well as after the learning in that the assessment impacts on the retention of knowledge. 'Learning to pass/ prepare for the examinations' is hence not as unproblematic as the authors seem to suggest. I recommend a revision of the introduction where these issues are problematised. I also find it strange that the impact of the hidden curriculum is not commented on at all, particularly since 80% of the students found the formal curriculum overwhelming. This might indicate that students apply instrumental approaches to learning, where informal curriculum activities like accessing previous examinations and using former student notes are signs of strategic or surface orientations to learning. I recommend that the discussion and conclusion is revised, taking theses aspects into account.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests