Reviewer’s report

Title: Comparison of expectations and beliefs about good teaching in formal postgraduate medical education: a qualitative study.

Version: 1 Date: 30 April 2014

Reviewer: Adam Sawatsky

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting qualitative study comparing the similarities and differences between teachers and residents in their expectations and experiences within an academic day release program. They have an interesting question, but the study has some flaws and the manuscript is not well-written.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1) The title discusses that the comparison is being made within "formal postgraduate medical education" which is very broad, when in fact they state that the setting which they were studying was an "academic work release program." I am not sure that they did sufficient analysis/abstraction and/or theory-building beyond what appears to be a more thematic analysis approach to be able to make theory on postgraduate medical education as a whole. The title should reflect the exact setting that they are studying, and not make claims about abstraction to the level of postgraduate medical training.

2) The authors seem to answer their first two research questions, but do not seem to address the third research question. They do not display in the results how participants deal with disagreements, and briefly talk about it in the discussion.

3) The Methods section lacks a description of the setting in which the research was conducted to give the reader a framework for understanding what is being studied.

4) Overall, the results section lacks an organization. I expected a summary statement of the 4 domains that were identified, and then a clear organization of the structure within those domains, including similarities and differences between the two groups. It was very hard to follow this data, and needs better organization in the manuscript.

5) The discussion seems a bit informal (see "at first sight," and then "a closer look.") It does not discuss a clear summary of the work, and seems to make some unfounded claims. They tie in theoretical background work, but do not tie it to ongoing research in the area.

6) In the strengths and limitations section, the authors state: "We intended to follow up on this complexity..." This sounds like they did not follow-up. If they did not, they should state why.
Minor Essential Revisions

1) Citations are cited out of order (see introduction section)

2) There are multiple points throughout the manuscript in which the authors fail to use parallel structure when using coordinating conjunctions (commas, and, or). For example, sentence 2 of the abstract, "alignment of expectations about teaching" and "a supportive learner-teacher environment" are not parallel. For other examples, see a) abstract results section, sentence 2; b) discussion section, sentence 4 (starting: "A closer look.").

3) I did not understand from reading the paper exactly what an academic day-release program was and why that was the setting chosen for studying learner-centeredness

4) In the introduction, second paragraph, last sentence, the authors state that it is plausible that a "not balanced" relationship can be negative for professional development. Please outline support for that comment (3 articles were cited).

5) In the methods section, the authors discuss the use of a Cohen's d statistic. I am not familiar with the use of this statistic in qualitative work, and when I reviewed of the use of this statistical measure, I do not understand how they might have used it in this case. Some more explanation of why they used it and how they used this data would be helpful.

6) Table 2 is awkward to read, and does not contain the total number of participants in each category.

7) On page 11, the last sentence refers to table 2. I think it was meant to say table 3.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests