Reviewer’s report

Title: The Influence of Objectives, Learning Experiences and Examination Blueprint on Medical Students’ Examination Preparation

Version: 2 Date: 2 August 2005

Reviewer: Marcel D’Eon

Reviewer’s report:

General
I thank the authors for their work in responding to the previous review. They did a thorough job and were able to improve the paper considerably.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. I am still concerned by the confusion over the intended, informal, and hidden curricula. There is little explanation and definition that clarifies and distinguishes among these concepts to satisfy me. The use of the terms in the paper has not helped me to see a clear difference.
2. The conclusion is bolder than the study would warrant. Whereas some features of the intended curriculum were examined in comparison to features of the informal curriculum the research was not exhaustive and claims about the entire intended and informal curriculum are over-blown in my estimation.
3. The final paragraph, added in response to my initial review, is still wanting. First, the term ‘heretical’ is a bit strong. Is it educational dogma that learning objectives be used? Actually, no. There is a school of thought (a minority) that learning objectives are too rigid and stifle real education. Second, much self-directed and curiosity based/serendipitous learning is done without learning objectives. The conclusions expressed are not warranted and may reflect the authors’ opinions rather than a strict interpretation of the limited data. A more defensible conclusion would suggest that a great deal more research is required to know anything at all about what is going on!

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Reject because too small an advance to publish

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I have no competing interests.