

Challenges in problem-based learning and suggested solutions from Thai medical students' perspectives



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Background

Problem-based learning (PBL) method is used to instigate learning of basic and clinical sciences in an integrated approach. To date there is no publication addressing the issue of common difficulties in problem-based learning of Thai medical students.

Materials and methods

In this cross-sectional qualitative study, we aim to explore difficulties in problem-based learning and probable solutions. We used data triangulation method by getting the information from students, facilitators, and a medical curriculum expert. Data collection was done between June 2016 and May 2017.

Results

A total of 83 of 96 (86.5%) medical students responded to the survey. A majority of medical students (n=58, 69.9%) declared no difficulties. Written feedback forms were collected from a total of 23 PBL sessions. Factors affected PBL process included facilitators, course organisation, and safe and supportive environment (Fig. 1 and Fig.2).

Discussion and conclusion

Three major factors contributing PBL difficulties in Thai medical students included the variation in quality of facilitators, course organisation, and learning environment. Facilitator characteristics seemed to play a crucial role and affected the group learning process. And strategies for sustaining quality in PBL facilitation should be established.

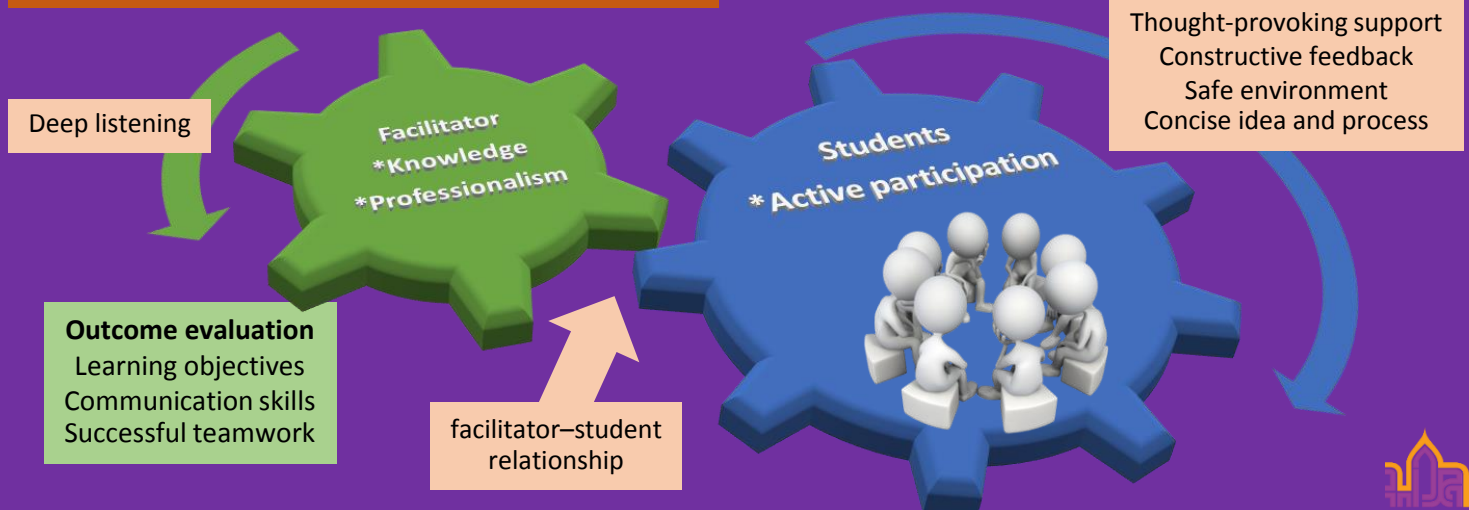
Table 1. Ideal facilitator characteristics from students' perspectives.

| Characteristics | n (%) |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Thinking process support | 39 (28.7) |
| Appropriate feedback | 38 (27.9) |
| Listening skills | 33 (24.3) |
| Learning Environment | 19 (14.0) |
| Being concise | 7 (5.1) |

Figure 2. Learning environment.



Figure 1. Favourable PBL process From medical students' perspectives.



References

1. Khoo HE. Implementation of problem-based learning in Asian medical schools and students' perceptions of their experience. *Med Educ.* May 2003;37(5):401-409.
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