Networked Learning – An Omnipresent but Unrecognized Quality Improvement Tool
[Solution for Complex Adaptive Systems]

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Aim
Networked learning is a learning modality that builds connections between people, information and tools, so they can support one another’s learning, professional development and quality improvement interventions.

Problem Statement
In the modern digital and networked world, active participation within a digitally mediated network of collaboration and discovery (networked learning) has become an essential element of all experiential learning modalities - including quality improvement education. Furthermore, participation in networked learning is a form of active experiential learning. Such learning can enhance potential of individuals and teams to successfully implement quality improvement projects, make them sustainable and generalize outcomes in other contexts.

Methodology
Literature review and online ethnography.

Problem Statement
Increasing evidence shows that if properly implemented, collaborative networked learning can enhance QI education efforts.

Yet, networked learning has not been seriously analyzed in the U.S. CME/CPD research literature. The first JCEHP article that officially analyzes networked learning was published in 2015.

Discussion
The three main reasons for limited acceptance of networked learning are:

- Networked learning is a complex, social phenomena that utilizes collaborative technology. Therefore, successful implementation of networked learning requires paradigm shift in how education is perceived, in addition of good technological framework and agile support.
- Historically siloed, profession and specialization specific learning guilds were preventing networked learning or reducing it on very limited, profession specific and content focused networks.
- Research culture. Evidence-based medicine, built around randomized control trials (RCT) and systematic reviews based on RCT, have proved to provide a robust base for very specific clinical interventions. There is a tendency to use same research modalities in educational context. However, networked learning as a multidimensional, social concept cannot be properly analyzed through positivist or reductionist research methods. Therefore, numerous attempts have failed to prove benefit of networked learning.

Trends
The existing trends suggest that all three reasons limiting networked learning may be neutralized soon. Raising focus on quality improvement and interprofessional learning promotes team learning, and breaks barriers between silos. Networked learning connects former silos in one well-connected learning organization.

The health care system is a Complex Adaptive System, and we are becoming increasingly aware that collaborative networked learning is match for that environment.

At this moment, we can see there is a focus on networked learning as connection between people and tools, while in some pockets connections between people and people become dominant.

Simultaneously, strong collaborative technological frameworks are being implemented. They are used regularly in our private life and higher education; there are significant increase of usage in professional practice and quality improvement interventions.

Therefore, our know-how on managing the complexity of network learning is getting increasingly better. Furthermore, implementation of networked learning can be supported by numerous positive examples from other professions; primary, secondary and higher education; and other countries (e.g., U.K., Canada, Australia).

Conclusion
Networked learning, although omnipresent in our private and professional life, is still in its early form. Although numerous positive examples are evident, additional rigor is needed to utilize full benefits of this learning modality.

Limitations
The main limitation of this research are its small scale, limited access to proprietary health care networked communities. Since learning is a social endeavor, and utilization of networked practices is influenced with societal and cultural factors, further research should show how stakeholders as individuals and groups (organizations, professions, government) perceive it.

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Bibliography