# APPROACHES TO LEARNING ADOPTED BY STUDENTS IN THE GRADUATE ENTRY MEDICAL PROGRAMME AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

**Dianne Manning**



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# DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Education (in the field of Tertiary Teaching), in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other University.

**Dianne Mary Manning**

day of November 2007

# ABSTRACT

The new Graduate Entry Medical Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand widens access to study and aims to change the learning process. Content is integrated horizontally and vertically and the learning is organized around facilitated, problem-based learning (PBL) tutorials. This study investigated the approaches students have adopted to learning in the curriculum. Questionnaire data, PBL tutorial observation and focus group discussions revealed that uptake and adaptation were not the same for different groups of students. Those who were most mature in age showed the greatest tendency towards self-directed learning behaviour, while many students were unable to make appropriate use of the available time and resources. Although most students believed that they were able to integrate disciplinary information, they valued the psychosocial content areas less than the biomedical sciences. The attitudes, skill and identity of the facilitators were important for engaging students in the PBL process. These findings suggest that the social context of the learning may impact on the ability to access knowledge and develop a professional identity.

**Key words:** Medical curriculum**,** integration, graduate entry, problem-based learning, sociocultural context.

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