**Completing the cycle:
Dissemination of educational
research as a Threshold Concept in
Pharmaceutical Sciences**

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Outline of the session

- What were we interested in?

- What are threshold concepts?

- How did we uncover threshold concepts in Pharmacy education research?

- What does this mean for Pharmacy education research at UBC and beyond?

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Context

- **UBC Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences**
  - opened in 1946
  - offers undergraduate (BSc(Pharm) and PharmD degrees) and graduate (MSc and PhD) training
  - has ~ 70 faculty and 1000 students
  - has undergone enormous change in the past 5 years
  - the time was right for investigating our practices

- **The Office of Educational Support and Development (OESD)**
  - formalized in January 2013
  - comprises a staff of 4
  - provides strategic support in the areas of curriculum and pedagogical practices, faculty development, program assessment and evaluation, and scholarship of teaching and learning

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What are threshold concepts?

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Threshold Concepts

"The portals to understanding a discipline or field"

(Meyer & Land, 2003)

- A concept is considered threshold if it leads to a qualitatively different view of the subject matter, often challenging existing knowledge

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Characteristics of Threshold Concepts

Troublesome

Transformative

Irreversible

Integrative

Bounded

Reconstitutive

Discursive

Liminal

Examples of the threshold concept must be transformative and involve movement in a liminal space. They are likely to be characterised by many, but not necessarily all, of the other features.

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Characteristics of threshold concepts in SoTL

Four key characteristics were highlighted in Andrea's study:

- Troublesome
- Liminal
  - Reconstitution, Integrative
- Transformative
  - Discursive, Irreversible
- Bounded

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How did we uncover threshold concepts in Pharmacy education research?

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Methodology, Methods, and Analysis

- Phenomenological Inquiry
- Purposive sampling leading to a representative sample
- Data sources
  - Semi-structured interviews (26 interviews)
  - Researcher Journal
- Qualitative data analysis
  - Transcription and thematic coding based on the TC characteristics

(Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Glasser & Strauss, 1967; van Manen, 2010)

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Two Major Findings

Existence of two solitudes:

- Distinctly different understanding of SoTL between research track and teaching track faculty
- Teaching and learning work not considered scholarship
- Few used the language of SoTL
- Research track faculty equated SoTL with good to excellent teaching

(Albon, 2014)

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Two Major Findings

One Threshold Concept:

- Lack of confidence in completing the cycle of research related to:
  - Basics of research design and methodology
  - Conventions and language
  - Understanding the literature
  - Places to disseminate, particularly peer reviewed publications
  - Mentorship and support

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Implications for Pharmacy education research

Faculty development needs:

- Building knowledge
  - Ongoing knowledge development and accountability
- Building confidence
  - Leveraging knowledge from different disciplines
  - Collective responsibility
- Specific activities related to faculty development (Building networks and communities of practice, mentorship opportunities, basics of research design and methodology, recognition for work, internal support)

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References and Resources

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