

Fulfillment of the expected roles of a medical teacher: Role of the Medical Education Department

Shrivastava, S. R.¹ & Shrivastava, P. S.²

Abstract

The effective delivery of medical education to the aspiring students is a tough ask and it extends way beyond the delivery of knowledge. This is primarily because of the expectations of the community in terms of accountability, advances in the field of medicine, and the wide range of challenges which a student has to go through in the training period or the system has to face in terms of training number of students with the existing resources. In order to respond to these challenges, it is a must that the teachers keep improving their skills in all the roles expected of them and there arises the need to have a dedicated Medical Education Department (MED) within the institute. In conclusion, the constitution of a medical education department is a must in each and every medical institution. The department can play an important role in strengthening the teaching-learning, research activities, and improving the services profile of all the departments.

Keywords: Teaching, Educational research, Medical education

Introduction

The effective delivery of medical education to the aspiring students is a tough ask and it extends way beyond the delivery of knowledge (Castillo, et al., 2014). This is primarily because of the expectations of the community in terms of accountability, advances in the field of medicine, and the wide range of challenges which a student has to go through in the training period or the system has to face in terms of training number of students with the existing resources (Castillo, et al., 2014, Batool, et al., 2018). In order to respond to these challenges,

it is a must that the teachers keep improving their skills in all the roles expected of them and there arises the need to have a dedicated Medical Education Department (MED) within the institute (Batool, et al., 2018, Davis, et al., 2005).

Role of Medical Education Department

It is expected that the MED has to fulfil multiple roles, with regard to research, teaching-learning, conduction of faculty development programs, planning & implementation of curricular reforms, evaluation of newer initiatives, etc. (Davis, et al., 2005, Ali & Shamim, 2014). Establishing a culture of performing educational research could be one of the most important contributions as almost all the faculty members are carrying out research in their own specialty and research in education has been ignored (Batool, et al., 2018, Ali & Shamim, 2014). The department can help in guiding researchers about the methodology to be adopted and publishing the findings of the study to ensure its wide distribution. The department can help the teachers to improve their teaching skills and students' engagement in both large & small-group teaching session (Davis, et al., 2005, Ali & Shamim, 2014, Varpio, et al., 2014).

¹Medical Education Unit Co-ordinator and Member of the Institute Research Council, Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College & Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth – Deemed to be University, Ammapettai, Nellikuppam, Chengalpet District, Tamil Nadu, India

²Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College & Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth – Deemed to be University, Ammapettai, Nellikuppam, Chengalpet District, Tamil Nadu, India

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava
MD, FAIMER, PGDHHM, DHRM, FCS, ACME.
Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth (SBV) – Deemed to be University, Thiruporur - Guduvancherry Main Road, Ammapettai, Nellikuppam, Chengalpet District, Tamil Nadu - 603108, India

Email: drshrishri2008@gmail.com

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In addition, it can aid in the designing of educational materials (like modules in e-learning, course materials of new courses, etc.), planning and implementation of new innovations (such as simulation or standardized patients, use of online tools, etc.), and strengthening of the assessment framework (Castillo, et al., 2014, Batool, et al., 2018). Further, the process of curriculum development (such as fellowship course or certificate course, etc.) and evaluation of the same can also be streamlined by the active inputs of the medical education department. In the long run, the MED can empower the faculty members to effectively discharge all the roles expected of them by means of the conduction of workshops or sensitization programs (Ali & Shamim, 2014, Varpio, et al., 2014). Moreover, the department of Medical Education can help the faculty members from other departments on various issues of teaching-learning, promotion of evidence-based learning and for nurturing their academic careers to become medical educationists in the future (Davis, et al., 2005, Varpio, et al., 2014).

Setting up a Medical Education Department

The process to set-up a MED in an institute might vary between different institutions, nevertheless it generally includes support from the dean & other administrators, appointing a coordinator who is qualified to perform the job, formulate the vision-mission and the profile of activities which will be strengthened by the department (Varpio, et al., 2014, Al Shawwa, 2012).

Administrative structure of a Medical Education Department

The organization of a Medical Education Department depends on whether it is within the medical school or within the university. It is generally headed by the Dean of the institute and is manned by a team of qualified personnel with varied professional backgrounds (educationists or medical teachers). These personnel should be a combination of junior and senior staff, and should also be assisted by technical and supporting staff (Davis, et al., 2005, Al Shawwa, 2012). The department will have a Coordinator, who will be the functional in-charge of all the medical education related activities. The size of the team is variable and it is preferable to have those people who possess some qualification in medical education (viz.

PhD in Education and/or Medical Education, MD with master and/or PhD in Medical Education).

Medical Education Unit

The Medical Education Unit of Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, a constituent college of the Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth, Puducherry, has been functioning for more than 10 years. The Unit is actively involved in carrying out different faculty development programs, conduction of revised basic course workshops, curriculum implementation support programs, sensitization programs on different teaching-learning methods, etc. Moreover, the Unit has always taken the lead in planning and successful implementation of the competency-based medical education for undergraduates and the foundation course, and is thus helping the faculty members to be more equipped to discharge their roles and responsibilities effectively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the constitution of a medical education department is a must in each and every medical institution. The department can play an important role in strengthening the teaching-learning, research activities, and improving the services profile of all the departments.

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