

Essentials of Faculty development programs in medical education

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Medical teaching is a demanding and complex task. With the recent advances in medical education, there is a need for well trained faculty to produce quality graduates.

Faculty development is a planned program for the medical faculty with the purpose of enhancing teaching effectiveness and prepare them for potential new roles associated with curriculum changes. It improves an individual's knowledge and skills in teaching, educational research and educational administration and prepares the institution and its faculty members for their various roles¹.

Faculty development has a critical role to play in promoting excellence and innovation in teaching, instructional design and curriculum development, scholarship activity, leadership, administration, organization and professional development of a medical teacher.

Several newer methods of teaching, learning and assessment tools are implemented to cater the needs of students. It is essential for teachers to be aware of the new developments and suitably adopt them in our medical education system.

The role of a teacher has undergone dramatic changes. He/she is expected to possess relevant skills and abilities to plan the curriculum, make rational use of media technology and design good assessment strategy, effective feedback policy with greater interdepartmental collaboration for effective teaching and learning. These skills can be mastered through faculty development programs.²

Comprehensive faculty development is one which encompasses the following,

1. Professional development that orients new faculty members to the university and their various faculty roles.
2. Instructional development with teaching improvement workshops, peer coaching
3. Leadership development to improve effectiveness in evaluation and advancement of medical education.
4. Organizational development that addresses policies and procedures that encourage and reward teaching and

continued learning.

These could be organized in the form of workshops, seminars, continued medical education, shadowing, individual activities, peer mentoring, monthly educational publications etc.,

Students, teachers, principal, management committee, parents, alumni association, university, medical council of India, health ministry and non government organizations are some of the stake holders of faculty development programs who provide valuable inputs in facilitating educational experiences. Faculty development should address both individual and organizational needs.

While designing a practical and sustainable faculty development program it is important to do a pilot survey, set objectives, select team members, type of faculty development program, duration of teaching hours, time slot for each session, how often to plan, place of study, organizational support followed by feedback from the participants and the decide how and when to check for the effectiveness of the implemented faculty development program.

A systematic review of faculty development initiatives to improve teaching by Steinert Y³ has opined that faculty development programs will result in improved teaching performance and outcome for students. Wikerson W⁴, strategies for improving teaching practices stated that faculty development programs had high satisfaction rates, brought about attitudinal change among faculty, gains in knowledge and skills with changes in organizational practice and student learning in par with Kirkpatrick's outcome model.

Evaluation of existing faculty programs can be done using end of session questionnaires, pretest, posttest, interviews, follow up surveys and statistical analysis.

Presently under the medical council of India, the faculty development programs in practice are the basic and advanced medical education training courses and MEU's co-ordinators training course. There are some set backs for these programs that need continued support,

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