

# Optimizing Medical Education

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Learning depends on several factors but a crucial step is engagement of the learner. Medical students experience a variety of learning activities in the environment of the medical school/ college. The environment is usually complex and unique & its most important determinant is curriculum. The learning environment is primarily affected by curriculum. The learning environment is not only an important determinant of curriculum but is also a striking index of the behaviour of both students & the trainers because teaching is not only related to giving information & sharing experiences but producing a contextually or /and environmentally related learning as well.

Curriculum's most significant manifestation is the environment both, educational & organisational, which includes everything that is happening in the medical school/college.

A good learning environment is vital for the delivery of quality training. There has been a proven connection between the environment & the valuable outcomes of the students' achievement, satisfaction & success. Positive environment & positive outcome appears to go together.

As the learning environment affects students motivation & achievement it is important to get feedback from the students on how they are experiencing their learning environment on a regular basis & the results should be used to guide strategic planning & the institutional focus of optimum utilisation of available resources.

The undergraduate MBBS curriculum in India is still in the traditional mode. Generally it is teacher centred, discipline based, information gathering & hospital based with no option or elective module.

But education is a dynamic process & it needs to change its pattern to suit the changing demands of the health care system of the society & the nation. A continuous improvement in the educational environment of a curriculum is possible only by defining its strengths & weaknesses. Thus monitoring the perception of students about the educational environment is critical as successful management of any change is only possible with systemic feedback.

Every now & then we cannot change the curriculum but the feedback obtained can also be used to optimise the same curriculum to suit majority of the students & to accommodate each & every student. For higher quality of learning it is required to enrich learning environment by identifying its weaknesses. So more importance should be given to perception of students to improve educational environment as perceptions are associated positively with learning approach, learning outcomes & attitude towards studying.

So the principal areas for further development of educational environment could be teaching methods, teachers behaviour with students, the classroom atmosphere, the social & academic environment, support system during stress, commitment of the institute towards students with facilities like favourable accommodation, mentorship programmes etc. It is also the need of the hour to create a non threatening environment in the classroom teaching & to give more opportunities to the students for self learning by incorporating new methods of teaching learning and assessment.

Worldwide perception of students has been used to know the educational environment in variety of circumstances. To quote a few, in Melaka Manipal Medical College Manipal India, students' perception of the learning environment was studied and based on the feedback received. Problem Based Learning sessions were implemented in the curriculum. Also short term students research projects were introduced to make the students independent learners. Personal and Professional development sessions were implemented and the number of summative examinations were reduced to reduce stress (1).

Students' perception was also utilised to compare traditional curriculum with the Early Clinical Exposure program in Iran (2) & with Problem Based Learning in Saudi Arabia (3). Students perception was used in a medical school of UAE experiencing curricular transition from discipline based to organ based curriculum and the students not only reinforced the justification of the course organisers about the new curriculum but also identified remedial interventions in the form of new strategies in assessment (4). In this issue of Panacea we have included an original research article

## EDITORIAL

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depicting educational environment of NKPSIMS & RC Nagpur, the students' perception about the learning environment and to identify our strengths & weaknesses.

### References:

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