

# Striving Towards Excellence in 'Student Engagement': Sharing Experiences

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In the recent past, there has been a significant shift in the educational methodologies from conventional teaching and learning ideologies to the well-received student-centred integrated curriculum. As supported by substantial results, it empowers students to take hold of their learning and actively participate in shaping their educational experience at the medical college. The idea of student partnership and engagement has been established to develop stronger and more effective learning communities. This model of education supports the objective of a medical college to build students who not only excel in higher education but encompass all the traits of their road to becoming a well-rounded professional.<sup>1</sup>

The vision and mission of a medical college must revolve around 'students' as they are the main beneficiary of the system. The intensity of emphasis about "students' engagement" had been splendidly increased as the curriculum of the medical colleges is being shifted from traditional to integrated.<sup>2</sup>

Our efforts have been started with the broadening of students' engagement particularly by working with academic societies as 'representatives' and giving them support for making a community of learners. After the incorporation of students' participation in academic committees, their capabilities to lead are polished. These efforts are proving to be positive for enhancing learning and helps in improving the whole atmosphere of medical college.<sup>3</sup>

By involving students in curriculum development/revisit, better skills are articulated in students and an excellent outcome-based curriculum is being shaped.<sup>4</sup> This

encourages reflection, critical thinking personal development in students.

Students' engagement in faculty development and promotion policy (e.g. through their regular feedbacks) proved itself as an effective quality enhancement tool and a key to faculty development. They provide faculty with a leadership position in mentoring, teaching modules, advisory activities, mastering medical education, development of new clinical and teaching programs, administrative positions, medical boards, etc.

Stakeholders must support peer programs to greatly enhance the students' experience. With well-structured learning activities such as peer learning and assessment, presentations, PBLs, and SGDs to name a few, followed by rigorous and up to date feedback, the student-centred curriculum establishes a framework for supporting students' engagement in the curriculum with the collaboration of the faculty. Supporting peer programs, whereby allowing students to discuss, evaluate, and teach amongst themselves has proved to be invaluable in enhancing the students as well as the faculty's learning experience. The most inspiring way to learn is known to be from the people around you and fellows who are at par with one's learning needs, shortcomings, and strong points. The adoption of peer-led teaching approaches in the form of peer-led projects builds a collaborative effort at the part of faculty and students equally.<sup>5</sup>

Given the deserved and invaluable representations in academic and extracurricular committees, a sense of belonging is generated among medical students to the curriculum and the institution. Inbuilt talent is honed, polished, and prepared to take on any problem that may befall them allowing them to be confident in their own abilities to overcome it.

Our medical university was seeking for the reform in the domain of assessment policies. The transformation

was made possible by student feedback (especially after formative assessments) which was taken by the program evaluation committee after every module and combined block assessment. It made a pathway to make a marvellous change in our curriculum.<sup>6</sup>

An increasing shift of teaching and learning burden on the students, allows them to shoulder the responsibility of their own learning. It helps them to point out their strengths and weaknesses in an unparalleled way which is priceless for the augmentation of their efficient academic development. It allows the students to find in themselves the qualities of leadership, teamwork, and maintenance of good relations whereby the facilitation of instructors plugs in the gaps and provides them with the encouragement, the resources, and the rewards and recognition they rightly deserve.<sup>7</sup> Inclusion in research projects from an early stage in their professional career allows the students to gauge for the innovator in them and allows them not only to gain from the vast pool of knowledge but to contribute to it.

To conclude, the student partnership is always satisfying and highly rewarding. We truly believe that the future is bright for the students' involvement at the

college level, and the community will be constantly improving as a result.

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