

Organizing a faculty development program on interactive teaching methods: Need, Framework and role of Medical Education Unit

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Dear Editor:

It is quite a valid observation that a good clinician need not be a very good teacher, as a lot goes into the making of a good teacher, including acquisition of the skills to understand the varied needs of a heterogeneous group of students [1]. Here arises the role and the value of faculty development programs, which plays a vital part in transforming a newly joined faculty member to become a competent teacher in the due course [1]. At the same time, it is important to understand that the process of becoming a competent medical teacher cannot be accomplished by attending a few sessions, instead the Medical Education Unit (MEU) has to take the lead in organizing a series of need-driven faculty development programs [1].

One of the biggest challenges encountered by any medical teacher is to effectively engage and involve students in large group teaching sessions. In other words, learning the skills to make the large group teaching sessions interactive is the need of the hour [1-2]. A wide range of methods (viz. brainstorming, buzz, think-pair-share, case-based learning, etc.) have been employed and proven quite effective in ensuring that the teaching happens in an interactive manner [3-5]. The right method can be adopted by the teacher based on the needs (like number of students in class, required logistics, the objectives of the teaching-learning session, etc.) and their confidence in using them.

The MEU of a medical college can take the lead to organize a faculty development program / workshop on interactive teaching methods in collaboration with the curriculum committee members with an aim to sensitize them about the same to improve the quality of teaching and

learning. The first and foremost step will be to identify the need of such a program and this can be ascertained by sharing a questionnaire in the form of a Google form (to make it more effective and fast), wherein the needs of newly joined faculty members or their experience in using interactive teaching methods can be identified. These forms can be analyzed and the areas of concerns of faculty members can be met out after a thorough planning by the members of the MEU, which essentially includes formulation of the specific learning objectives of the session, mode of delivery of content and inclusion / exclusion of an activity based on the importance / time allotted for the topic.

The session can be planned for a one day with pre-session reading material can be shared well in advance and all the newly joined faculty members and the interested faculty members can be selected as a participant. The session can start with a pre-test to get an insight into the understanding of the participants about the use of interactive methods in teaching [2]. This can be further understood by doing a brainstorming session regarding their individual experiences or opinion on interactive teaching methods [4]. Subsequently, different interactive methods can be demonstrated to the participants along with relevant theory about the method in brief in different sessions.

At the end of the day, a post-test feedback can be obtained to understand the improvement in the level of knowledge of the participants. The participants can be asked to reflect upon the

entire sessions and also that which all methods they are planning to introduce in their future sessions.⁵ In addition, participants can also be requested to inform about the potential facilitating and hindering factors in employing these methods in their teaching sessions. Obviously, we should not stop at this and these faculty members can be asked say after 3-6 months to know their experience of using these methods in their classes. Further, refresher sessions also need to be planned and carried out for the benefit of all the faculty members. The Medical Education Unit, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, a constituent Unit of Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth, Pondicherry has been

really vibrant and has organized a series of workshops targeting interactive teaching-learning methods (viz. Brainstorming, Problem-based Learning sessions, etc.) or included these methods in the planned workshops in the last two years.

In conclusion, in the mission to develop a competent teacher, periodic organization of faculty development programs is extremely vital. Moreover, training of faculty members to confidently employ interactive teaching methods in their sessions is a crucial aspect in the curriculum delivery and the institution as a whole should take the responsibility.

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