

Twelve Tips for Establishing an Effective Quality Assurance System for Medical Schools

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Abstract- Quality standards must be established and continually improved through innovations and regular monitoring in medical educational institutions. In addition, medical education must be supported by a quality culture, as well as quality assurance systems. Assuring quality in medical education institutions is a serious concern for policymakers. A major problem is that the quality assurance system is not fully implemented locally, and the institutes lack a robust and comprehensive quality assurance system that can function effectively. These 12 tips provide guidance to medical schools involved in the installation of quality assurance systems. Using these tips will allow medical schools to ensure their quality assurance system reflects their overall mission and goals.

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Introduction

The primary goal of medical education is to educate physicians who will promote health for everyone and provide holistic care, not just providing curative treatments (1). Medical educational institutions need a quality assurance system to ensure social accountability and an adequate quality of physicians (2). Quality has been discussed extensively in the literature and is often used by stakeholders to legitimize their vision or interests (3). Quality in higher education can be defined as the conformity of the input, process and output factors of this system to predetermined standards. These standards should be defined according to the society's missions, goals and expectations from the higher education system (4).

According to the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE),

the quality of the academic system is determined by its compliance with prescribed standards and mission (5). If quality is a combination of efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, responsiveness, and productivity, it can be claimed that quality will be the first priority of the higher education systems and should be continuously improved (6). The concept of quality assurance in higher education has received increasing attention from scholars over the past two decades (7-9). Quality assurance as one of the quality management activities is considered an effective tool and strategy for maintaining and improving the quality of educational programs. It has a crucial role to play in promoting excellence (10,11). Quality assurance can be defined as “a planned and systematic review process of an institution or program to determine that acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being maintained and enhanced” (12). Transparency and distribution of results to all

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stakeholders are essential components of quality assurance in higher education (13). It encompasses all of the regulations, guidelines, procedures and standards put in place to preserve and improve education quality (14). Through institutional monitoring, which should include course evaluation, peer review, and assessment, quality assurance can be managed (15). Quality assurance in medical education stimulates future generations of medical graduates about what society needs from healthcare providers. This can focus on the quality of the curriculum and assessment, as well as input, process and output procedures (16). Medical education will evolve from quality assurance to quality improvement with constructive criticism (17). In addition, it will establish systems to continuously review and implement improvements based on a scientific conceptual quality framework (18). Quality assurance includes an effective internal quality control system and external peer assessment (19). Because the interaction between the teacher and student, as well as the overall professionalism and integrity of the academic community, ultimately determine medical education quality, the internal quality assurance procedure is of the utmost importance (18,19). Most countries use accreditation, validation, and audit to ensure external quality assurance (20). The growth of the networks of Community-Oriented Institutions for Medical and Health Sciences and the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) and the World Health Organization (WHO) has contributed to the necessity of quality assurance programs for medical education worldwide. Indeed, the necessity for quality assurance programmes for medical education worldwide has been recognised by WFME, and it has dedicated itself to the project, "International Standards in Medical Education, Assessment and Accreditation of Medical Schools, Education programme" (21). The following 12 tips describe simple steps that can help medical educators establish and implement a quality assurance system in medical schools. The selected tips are based on a synthesis of the available evidence from the scientific literature related to quality assurance. In addition, they are based on the authors' experiences developing quality assurance systems in medical education.

Tip1

Ensure a quality culture and mindset is created and maintained

The quality culture emphasizes organizational-psychological perspectives. This concept thus implies shifting the focus from quality control, accountability, and regulation to institutional autonomy, credibility, and

quality improvement (22). It was introduced more recently to express the idea that quality is not separate from an organization's culture. Quality is determined by organisational culture. In fact, quality culture plays a significant role in quality stability and consistency. Quality culture encompasses quality assurance (artefacts) as well as significant organizational-psychological variables such as values (espoused values), expectations, and commitment to quality (shared basic assumptions) (22). Organizations must also have a quality mindset when installing quality assurance systems. Quality cannot happen randomly or accidentally. It should be planned and designed. Most organizations have trouble finding employees with quality mindsets. Staff need to know how quality affects company performance. Growth mindsets can transform a challenge into an opportunity. A change of mindset brings about a fundamental change in behaviour. It is critical to change a college mindset to ensure quality becomes a college culture and lifestyle.

Tip 2

Work together to build a strong team

The two most significant issues for higher education institutes in the 21st century are leadership and team-building, both interconnected (23,24). The concept of team-building is becoming increasingly critical in the current higher education climate, as organizations seek team-based structures to improve productivity, profitability, and customer service (25). Teams are a collection of individuals with a variety of abilities, backgrounds, and competencies. These individuals share responsibility for achieving a common goal. Effective individuals with experience, problem-solving skills, an open mind to solving the issue, and a focus on action make up successful teams (26). Leading an efficient quality management team is one of the most critical aspects. Team leaders guide groups towards harmony and efficiency. Leaders who lead successful teams recognize that team performance depends on its efforts and actions as a whole.

Tip 3

Conduct an analysis of the situation

Developing quality assurance policies and procedures requires a comprehensive analysis of the situation. Providing proper value requires analysing the external (macroscopic and micro factors outside the organization), the internal environment, and consumer behaviour. There are several methods for analysing a situation, such as 5C (Company, Customers, Competitors, Collaborators and Climate) analysis, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses,

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Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, and Porter's five forces analysis. Situational analysis is effectively accomplished with SWOT analysis (22). To assess quality management and identify an organization's needs, resources, and environment, conduct a SWOT analysis. While it has become a common strategy planning tool in education, it remains one of the most effective methods for identifying an institution's potential. SWOT analysis is simple and fast. Quality strategies can be developed by identifying the factors that affect organization activities (23,24).

Tip 4

Determine quality policies and procedures

When implementing an effective quality assurance system, a quality manual is probably the most critical step. It documents and publicizes the organization's commitment to improving its quality. For continuous improvement, your quality manual must fulfil all stakeholders and organizational requirements, policies and procedures. To ensure that your quality policies support the college's strategic direction, it is crucial to verify your organization's context and processes prior to developing the quality manual. It is imperative to define the policy so that continuous improvement can be achieved. In other words, the organization needs to revise it whenever necessary to guarantee that any changes to the context, stakeholders or requirements are reflected in the quality manual. In addition, the organization must ensure that the quality manual is understood, implemented, and maintained by all academic staff (25,26).

Tip 5

Determine stakeholder roles and responsibilities

If you identify the roles, responsibilities, and interests of the key stakeholders, it will be easier to communicate and work with them. It is possible to define and allocate stakeholder roles and responsibilities quickly with responsibility frameworks. Stakeholders are those interested in or affected by evaluation results. They should be involved in planning and implementing quality assurance activities.

Tip 6

Develop a framework for quality assurance

Through this Quality Assurance Framework, a range of mechanisms will be provided to aid in setting direction, supporting delivery, managing risk, monitoring and reviewing practice and outcomes within the medical education system, making sure the voice of all

stakeholders is heard, and our stated priorities are met. Framework development that is "fit for purpose" ensures that a system, policy, or program is designed and operationalized according to local needs. In fact, there are many different quality assurance frameworks, but all share the same goal: assuring that products and services adhere to specific quality standards. In order to ensure quality, it is important to find a framework that meets your organization's specific needs. As a guide, the framework will show you where your call centre will develop a roadmap to get there (27-29).

Tip 7

Develop standards

Different standards have different criteria and expectations, as well as different levels. The variations may reflect both the focus of the accreditation system (e.g., quality assurance or quality improvement) and the context of the education programs being accredited (e.g., in development or well-established). A standard framework established internationally may be most appropriate for accreditation systems that focus on international benchmarking or comparison. However, the standards may lack local validity or applicability based on heterogeneity across jurisdictions and their specificity. In contrast, context-specific standards may not offer comparability. Standards are generally defined, formulated, and issued as part of the standard development process (28,30).

Tip 8

Develop indicators

Standard achievement can be assessed by observing or measuring an indicator. In the context of quality assurance, they can signal an aspect of quality. They provide a simple and reliable means of evaluating success, reflecting on changes. A quality institute uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators. In most agencies, qualitative indicators are emphasized. There is some distinction between Input, Process, and Output Indicators among quality assurance systems.

Performance indicators and quality indicators are two types of metrics used to evaluate different aspects of an educational institution. Performance indicators tell us how well an institution is achieving its goals, such as the number of graduates or the amount of research output. Quality indicators show how good the quality of education and services provided is, such as student satisfaction or faculty qualifications. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are the most important indicators, which are easily measurable and trackable, and help us

monitor the institution's progress and identify its strengths and weaknesses (28,31,32).

Tip 9

Provide adequate resources

Planning resources and capacity is one of the most significant steps in quality system development. Resource management is harnessed to plan and allocate resources across a diverse workforce of internal and external contributors. There are various types of resources, including physical (or tangible) resources, as well as human resources, including secretarial, executive, marketing, technical, and financial personnel. A variety of tools and technologies are available to support quality assurance in medical education. Best to decide individually as to which strategies are most appropriate and implement them (33).

Tip 10

Train and empower academic staff

The academic staff need to understand how an organization defines quality and the importance of maintaining high standards. You must conduct ongoing training to help academic staff understand quality. Micro and macro training levels should be included. During micro training, academic staff learn the exact steps to perform their jobs in a standard format. Provide them with specific details about job and service standards. Organizational policy mission and vision are taught to the employees on a macro level. The academic staff must demonstrate their understanding of quality standards. They should be able to recognize non-standard work, identify errors, and rectify them (34).

Tip 11

Establish a quality assurance committee

Quality assurance committees guide quality assurance systems. They should identify any areas of improvement and develop plans to address them. The committee should conduct regular system follow-ups and evaluations (35). Individuals with relevant experience and expertise should serve on this committee. Internal and external quality assurance and audits are crucial to identifying noncompliance and ensuring the quality assurance system functions.

Tip 12

Ensure reporting and documentation is completed on time

Quality assurance requires reporting and documentation. Documentation should be kept current

and reviewed regularly. Efforts should be made to make it easy for all stakeholders to access and understand. It is critical to ensure documentation accurate and up to date by making it clear and concise. It is crucial to keep all stakeholders fully informed by reviewing, updating, and simplifying quality assurance system documentation regularly to ensure accuracy and efficiency.

Medical education plays a critical role in quality healthcare. Numerous stakeholders have realized that improving healthcare cannot be done without a high quality of medical education. These 12 tips describe steps that managers and administrators can take to establish a quality assurance system for a medical school effectively. It should enable the institution to monitor and improve medical education and ensure it meets professional standards. It is also important that the system ensures that students are provided with the best possible experience while learning at the institution. Thus, the institution will produce medical professionals with high qualifications. Consequently, the system should be able to provide the institution with information about student performance and identify areas for improvement, so that it can tailor its curriculum and delivery methods accordingly.

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