Medical education
The MB BS curriculum Management II: A Paradigm of basic educational concerns.
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Introduction:
In the first part of this trilogy, the management of the planning phase of the medical curriculum was discussed. In this article three areas of curriculum implementation will be presented in a practical and pragmatic fashion. The ideas and processes in the course of implementation are explained in as plain terms as possible for those whose responsibility lies in faithful and effective management of teaching and learning experiences. The three areas are: commitment of teachers, regular feedback on monitoring of implementation and feedback to the academic administration on resource deployment or development without planning for it. Under such circumstances, a teacher takes his job as a (chore) consisting of tasks he has to carry-out. This approach leads to catastrophic results in the curriculum plan. Disruptions and inconsistencies would occur, expectedly or unexpectedly, leading to frustrations everywhere.

In such cases, serious curriculum management must take a firm stand to avoid repetitions and harmful effects on students learning and assessment. Committed teachers take their profession seriously. All their efforts are guided by good educational practices. Top among these is caring for students learning; role modeling; and good preparation for learning experiences. All of us remember our teachers and classify the degree of their commitment & appreciate it; an appreciation that lasts for a lifetime.

1. Teacher Commitment:
What does a really committed teacher do?
When planning the delivery of a course, the curriculum document is consulted to find the place of the unit he/she is responsible for; what has come before and what comes after it. This step will set the stage for the level of delivery and selection of illustrative material. The methods of instruction for his unit, other teachers or demonstrators. Tutors & technologists who participate should be identified. Channels of communication between them should be open and efficient. With the advent of digital communication this is now highly facilitated.

A committed teacher will prepare for his sessions diligently to achieve maximum effectiveness. High on the list is the clarity of presentations and illustrative material, creation of interest and motivation of student’s enthusiasm & supportive attitude.

For the above broad lines it is hoped that all teachers have some training in pedagogy and the use of audio-visual aids effectively. In my own experiences short videos which illustrate a point are highly effective and receive the undivided attention of students. In my humble opinion, teacher’s commitment is the most important of all cornerstones of curriculum management. It is universally agreed that teachers are serious committed people; but it does happen that some may find themselves in this profession...
responsiveness, how well assignments are prepared & how satisfactory tests performance levels are. Teachers’ feedback is valuable for evaluation of resources, methods of instruction adopted & types of students’ assessment. They can provide informed advice on directions of development of the curriculum & provision of resources. Forms can be designed for this purpose & must be used regularly for courses evaluation.

Regular students’ feedback gives insight into the whole of the educational processes, e.g. how closely the plan is followed, difficulty of material presented, accessibility to teachers and availability of learning materials…etc. Some teachers doubt the ability of students to give useful information. Others may feel uncomfortable if they sense that they are being evaluated by students. For these reasons, a positive attitude needs to be developed by creating a non-threatening atmosphere. Students’ feedback forms should be directed to objective evaluation of the courses & assessment and not the teachers. No value judgments should be made.

For this reason Likert scales can be used to evaluate various parameters of the modules’ resources & assessment. There are many formats for students’ feedback around. However, the institution should use its own judiciously designed forms taking into consideration the specific concerns of curriculum management, as well as, cultural factors applicable to the situation. The forms may provide room for free comments. Free comments often draw attention to important students concerns.

One source of error in the data can be due to students’ perception in the assessment of the various parameters. This variation may be due to their background, learning preferences, or lack of understanding of the questions. For this latter reason, translation into their mother tongue should be provided for each question.

When analyzing the feedback, serious discrepancies between the expectations of the institution and the results may be discovered. Before making any decisions, student’s observations may need to be confirmed by focus groups or one-to-one interviews with selected students to confirm or refute major or serious observations. The results of the feedback should be made known to the academic administration and, where necessary, action on resources should be initiated with the financial and administrative structures.

Students’ feedback is useful for development of effective teaching and learning. On occasions, teachers will need to make changes in their style and preparation of their presentations or learning material.

3. Setting of examination:
It is an agreed dictum that no one person should set an examination for many reasons. A group of teachers should start with a plan, a “blue-print” for the examination which determines the purpose of the exam and the methods used for students’ assessment. This step ensures content and constructs validity of the examination. The next step is to look at the examination items. They should be scrutinized for the following:

Relevance to the objectives specified in the blue print
Clarity: language should be simple and unambiguous; checked for spelling and flaws which may confuse the candidate such as using double negative statements.

The level of difficulty should be checked against the objectives of the course.

The items must address essential & important areas of the course.

The format of questions used should note the language abilities of students. e.g. MCQs written in simple language are best for covering vast areas of the syllabus. But they have the disadvantage of triggering memory. They should be coupled with structured answer questions where the student has to express himself in short answers on specific points.

Written tests tend to aim at lower taxonomies of learning i.e. recognition and recall. Every effort
is to be made so that even MCQs are aimed at interpretation and problem solving. If we go by the principle that “assessment drives learning”, the more items aiming at higher learning outcomes, the greater the impact on students learning. It goes without saying that if you test your students on recall they will go and memorize information dished out in the lectures.

**Conclusion:**
This second part of the trilogy on curriculum management has been concerned with major areas of delivery of the curriculum. The monitoring of implementation includes teacher commitment as well as students and teachers’ feedback. The other important area to monitor is the setting of examination papers. Board guidelines for examinations preparation have been discussed.

**References:**