



Role of Suez Canal University, Faculty of Medicine in Egyptian Medical Education Reform

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Abstract

There are currently 22 public and 2 private medical schools in Egypt, which graduate around 10,000 physicians annually. While Kasr Al-Eini (Cairo University) is the oldest one; established in 1827, the Suez Canal Faculty of Medicine (FOM/SCU) is the first to adopt an integrated, student centered, problem- and community-based curriculum since its inauguration in 1978. Apart from Port Said medical school, which was established in 2013, the remaining medical schools either generally adopt the conventional teacher-centered and subject-based curricula or starting to introduce changes in their curricula in order to fulfill the National Academic Reference Standards (NARS), published in 2008 by the National Authority of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education (NAQAAE). This authority was established in 2006 as part of the reform agenda of the education system in Egypt. All institutes are mandated to comply with the set national standards and apply to NAQAAE for national accreditation. FOM/SCU was the first higher education institute in Egypt to obtain national accreditation in 15 May 2010 and also the first to be re-accredited in August 2015. The principal reason for this achievement is the implementation of innovative strategies by FOM/SCU that perfectly match the NARS, which were issued 30 years after the inception of FOM/SCU. Many traditional schools are now trying to implement some of these strategies, and these trials are applied either as separate parallel innovative programs (Mansoura, Ain Shams, and Menoufia), integrated modules (Zagazig, Armed Forces College of Medicine), or new curriculum (Alexandria). FOM/SCU, through its WHO collaborating center in the field of medical education and its department of medical education, offers help to all schools in Egypt in this regard. In parallel, FOM/SCU members have also offered training and consultations to numerous medical schools in other countries, including Syria, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia. © 2016 King Saud bin AbdulAziz University for Health Sciences. Production and Hosting by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

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1. Introduction

There are 24 medical schools distributed all over Egypt; two of them are private sector schools. The earliest establishment dates back to as early as 1827

when the Cairo Faculty of Medicine (Kasr Al-Eini) started, thus being the oldest and biggest school in Egypt and the whole Eastern Mediterranean region. Expectedly, it also has the largest number of graduates and yearly student admissions. The most recently established one, in 2015, is the Helwan Faculty of Medicine.

Among all the medical schools in Egypt, FOM/SCU is the first one to adopt an integrated, student centered, problem and community-based curriculum since its inauguration in 1978. Most other medical schools have adopted the traditional teacher-centered and subject-based

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curricula. However, many of them have recently started to introduce changes in their curricula in order to comply with the National Academic Reference Standards (NARS) in medical education, which were established in 2008.

2. Higher education reform in Egypt

A large national conference addressing higher education reform was held in February 2000, and a declaration for action was issued, and endorsed by the government. The declaration identified 25 specific reform initiatives. The World Bank agreed to provide the required financial support for a number of these initiatives.¹ The Egyptian higher education reform strategy included 25 projects addressing all the reform domains, and the implementation was planned over three phases until 2017. Priority was given to projects addressing important issues as enhancement of higher education, leadership development, quality assurance and accreditation, and information and communication technology.² The medical schools submitted proposals in topics mainly related to higher education enhancement, and quality assurance and accreditation projects (QAAP).³

Since 2004, medical schools began working on their QAAP's, and the outcomes of these projects were: establishing updated school databases, conducting institutional self-studies and establishing management and monitoring systems for ongoing quality assurance. Action plans were prepared based on SWOT analysis of the self-studies.

Inspired by the global trend of assuring quality in education and to cope with the higher education reform strategy, and motivated by the National Conference on Higher Education in 2000, the national move of educational reform gained larger momentum in June 2006, when the Egyptian parliament issued a law for the establishment of the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE).

In parallel to establishing NAQAAE, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) allocated a special fund to support higher education institutes which have already prepared their internal quality assurance systems; in order to help them get ready for accreditation. All institutes were invited to apply for the fund on a competitive basis.

3. Role of NAQAAE in complementing education reform in Egypt

The mission of NAQAAE is to assure the quality of Egyptian educational institutions, and to ensure that their academic performance matches their mission

statements and objectives. It also ensures public confidence through an independent, impartial and transparent review process.⁴

To achieve its mission, NAQAAE has set 16 accreditation standards, which are comparable to the accreditation/quality assurance standards adopted in various parts of the world. The standards are primarily set to motivate the improvement of the quality of learning in Higher Education (HE) institutes. The 16 standards were shortened down to 14 in 2013 to avoid redundancy. The standards are divided into two sets, one related to institutional capacity and the other related to educational effectiveness^{4,5} (Annex 1).

Among other responsibilities of NAQAAE is approving the National Academic reference standards (NARS) for different higher education programs. The medical NARS, which were issued by NAQAAE in 2009, have been developed in order to serve as an external reference for designing and upgrading the educational programs of medical schools. They represent the minimum academic quality requirements which the government regards as appropriate and reasonable in order to protect the interests of the students and the community. The key points in the medical NARS are⁶:

- Using some degree of integration in the medical schools' curricula.
- Applying innovative educational strategies.
- Stressing on primary health care.
- Implementing self-learning.
- Applying elective courses/studies.
- Emphasizing life-long learning.
- Establishing medical education departments and/or educational development centers (EDCs).

4. Role of FOM/SCU in initiating medical education reform in Egypt

The Faculty of Medicine, Suez Canal University (FOM/SCU) was established in 1978 by Professor Zohair Nooman and Professor Esmat Ezzat as the first innovative medical school in Egypt. The establishment of the faculty was guided by the recommendations of the Fayoum symposium, in the beginning of 1978, which was attended by delegates from medical schools in Egypt and representatives of the different health authorities. Then, the Faculty founders conducted many meetings with experts in medical education, community leaders, and MOH authorities in the Suez Canal region, in addition to international medical educationalists.

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