

MEDICAL EDUCATION

Medical Education Development in the Arab Region Suez Canal University Role and experience

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Although education of medical sciences had started in Egypt in the early 19th century (Kasr Al-Eini - Cairo University- is the oldest Arab Medical School; established in 1827) using the apprenticeship model of teaching learning, yet introducing new educational strategies in the late seventies of the 20th century by Suez Canal University in Egypt and Gezira University in Sudan, then Tikrit University in Iraq had made a huge difference in perceiving "Medical Education" as an academic science that should be taught and learned independently by both under and post-graduate students. The Suez Canal Faculty of Medicine (FOM/SCU) was the first to adopt an Integrated, Student-Centered, Problem-Based and Community-Based curriculum since its inauguration in 1978 [1].

In Egypt, as in all Arab countries, Health Professions Education (HPE) used to be practiced by health professionals who have no formal training in education. Faculty members are the cornerstone of the educational process. To enhance HPE, the Egyptian National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency and the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office of the World Health Organization (EMRO-WHO) recommended that an urgent plan should be developed for training HPE faculty staff in medical education [2].

In 2001, the first Medical Education Department was established in Egypt and the Arab Region at the Medical School of Suez Canal University. The mission of this department had been extended to cover the whole Arab region where Medical Education as an independent science and specialty was not known. To spread out the

message to all health professionals working in education or training positions in the Arab world, a non-traditional teaching/learning mood should have been looked for and used. In March 2004, the Medical Education Department at the Faculty of Medicine Suez Canal University launched the "Joint Master of Health Professions Education", an international distance learning program administered by Suez Canal University and Maastricht University that serves 22 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region in addition to the whole world (www.themedfomscu.com and <https://she.mumc.maastrichtuniversity.nl/joint-master-health-professions-education-jmhpe-0>). In 2008, the "Diploma of Health Professions Education" www.dhpescu.com was established to meet with the increasing Egyptian national demand for qualified medical educators who can cope with the recent advances in medical education and accreditation requirements. In 2010, the "Joint Diploma of Health Professions Education", a program administered by Suez Canal University in Egypt and Lahaye International University in the Netherlands had been launched that served Iraqi health professionals exclusively. In 2011, the "Arabic Diploma of Health Professions Education" in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) had been launched to serve the Syrian Health Professionals under such war conditions. Hundreds of senior-level faculty in health professions education graduate annually from these four medical education, distance learning, programs, including presidents of medical universities, deans and vice-deans of health professions education institutions, chairpersons, and full professors.

To do so, the Medical Education Department of Suez Canal University faced a lot of challenges like upgrading of resources, accreditation requirements, and coping with the stress of providing local, national, regional, and international medical education programs.

Distance education is a helpful means to address these challenges by qualifying faculty members as well as health professionals without having to leave their jobs or their countries. A slogan was raised: "We bring the study to the students instead of bringing the students to the study". The programs provided through the MED-FOMSCU are prototypes of interprofessional education in health care and health professional education that targets professionals of different backgrounds (medical, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy and physiotherapy).

The alumni of the programs educate other educators in their institutions and make a real impact on health professions' education in their home institutions. Part of the mission of the department of medical education at Suez Canal University is to help establish other academic medical education departments in the Arab region. A dream come true when this became a quality standard in the National Academic Reference Standards (NARS) [3] in Egypt. Same thing happened in the Gulf Region and most of the Arab countries as a necessity rather than to be a luxury.

Through all this, a number of very important areas in medical education had been significantly enhanced like: Curriculum development, Teaching/Learning strategies, Students' assessment, Program evaluation, Learning Environment, and Leadership and Management in Health Professions Education. Still, a more hard work to be done to measure up to the well-known medical institutions in the world.

In the meantime, we have to figure out a more solid ways for communication and collaboration among the health professions education institutions in the Arab region. The Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office of the World Health Organization (EMRO, WHO) had played a significant role in endorsing this, and we hope it will continue playing such role in the future. Recently, and in 2017, the "Egyptian Society

for Medical Education" [esmeegy.wixsite.com.esme](http://esmeegy.wixsite.com/esme) was established to help enhance medical education in Egypt and the whole Arab world.

References

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