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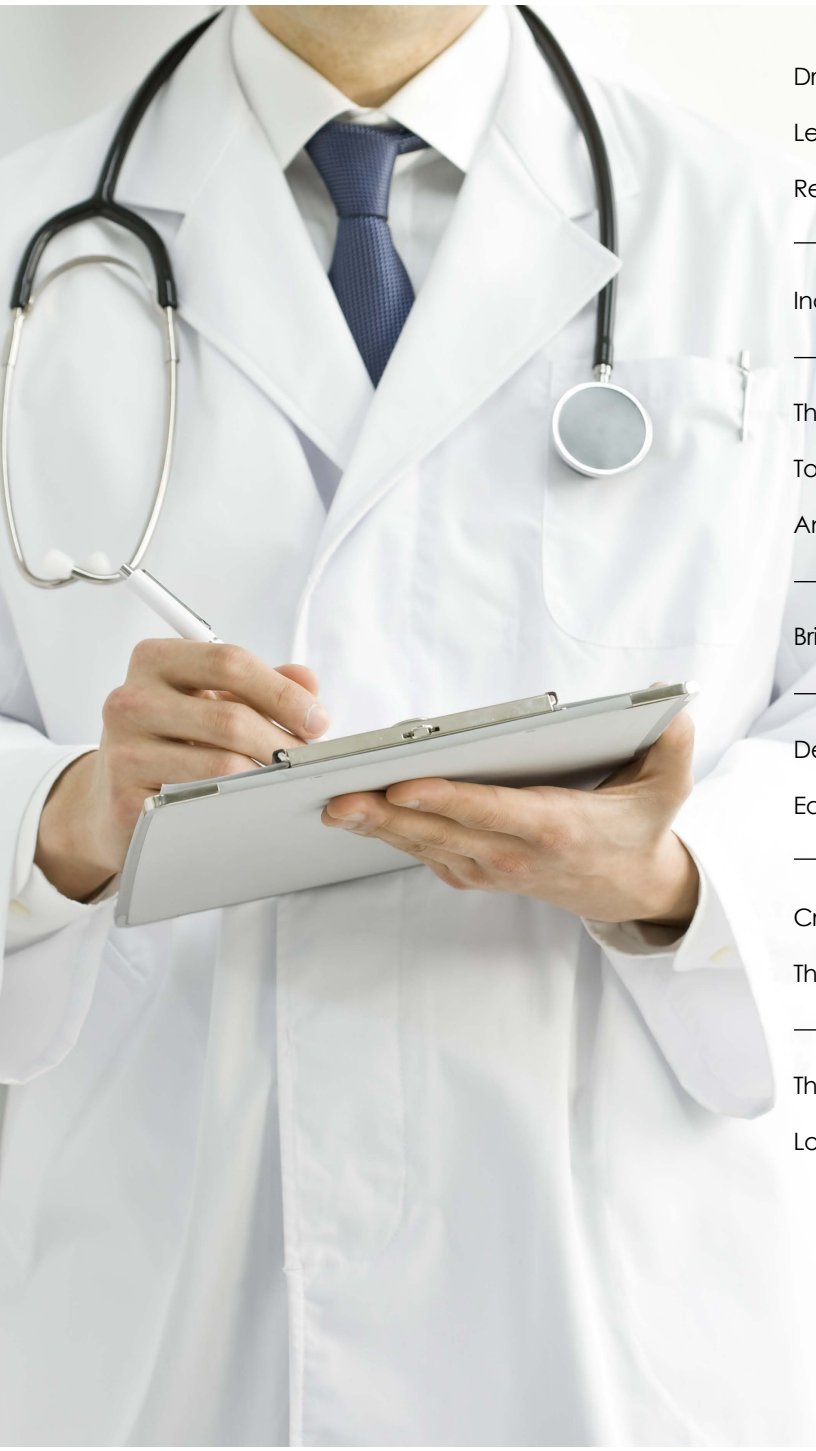

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Manimekalai K

Institution
MGMCRI, Puducherry

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Abstract:
Medical education in India has undergone significant transformation, particularly with the introduction of structured faculty training programs and competency-based frameworks. Originating in well-resourced Institutes of National Importance (INIs), these reforms have often proved challenging to implement uniformly across institutions with larger student loads and limited faculty. This article critically examines the practical gaps between theoretical frameworks and real-world teaching environments. It highlights faculty concerns, institutional disparities, and the questionable effectiveness of mandatory training modules, ultimately advocating for context-sensitive, flexible reforms rooted in ground reality.

Key Words:
Medical Education, Faculty Development, CBME, Implementation Gap, India

Corresponding Author:
Dr. K. Manimekalai; E-mail: pharmacology@mgmcri.ac.in

Introduction

What is Medical Education? Medical education is the structured process of training individuals to become competent, ethical, and skilled healthcare professionals. It encompasses the science of teaching, learning, assessment, and curriculum design tailored for medical students, residents, and practicing professionals. In India, structured medical education training for faculty gained momentum in elite institutions, particularly Institutes of National Importance (INIs), where small student batches and abundant faculty allowed for innovation.

However, as we reflect on its evolution and the current scenario across India's medical colleges, many questions arise about the feasibility, uniformity, and effectiveness of medical education programs in practice.

Historical Perspective

The structured approach to medical education in India found its roots in INIs like All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) in Chandigarh, and Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER) in Pondicherry. These institutes, with student intakes of only 50–60 and over 30 highly qualified faculty (including MDs, MSs, MSc-PhDs, MD/MSc postgraduates, and post-MSc PhDs), served as fertile grounds for educational experimentation.

Short-term Medical Education Units (MEUs) were introduced, often running for 7–10 days. These courses were innovative and refreshing, designed to move beyond traditional lecture-based teaching and explore:

- Competency-based learning
- Adult learning principles
- Bloom's taxonomy
- Miller's pyramid of clinical competence
- Reflective practice and feedback models

Objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs)
Initially optional, these programs later became mandatory through initiatives like the *Basic Course Workshop (BCW)* and *Curriculum Implementation Support Program (CISP)* under MCI/NMC directives.

Ground Reality and Feasibility in Non-INIs

In contrast to INIs, many government and private medical colleges across India face:

- a higher student load (often 250+ MBBS students per batch)
- faculty shortages and administrative overburden
- infrastructure limitations
- rigid academic calendars.

This makes implementing innovative teaching-learning strategies an uphill task. Questions commonly raised include:

- Are these frameworks, developed under ideal INI conditions, scalable to all institutions?
- Have these methods been proven to enhance student outcomes across diverse settings?
- Why is there a lack of national data assessing the real impact of MEUs and CBME?

Even among well-staffed institutions, implementing *every taxonomy and module* prescribed in workshops is often impractical. Day-to-day teaching is dictated more by curriculum deadlines, examination pressures, and clinical commitments than by idealised educational theory.

Impact on Faculty and Teaching Culture

Faculty members have always been dedicated to student growth. Long before formal MEU training became mandatory, teachers shared clinical experiences, patient variability insights, and practical problem-solving approaches—methods that resonated deeply with students.

With the advent of medical education training:

- faculty are now expected to master theory-heavy pedagogical frameworks
- there is a significant increase in documentation and procedural compliance
- less time is left for actual teaching, mentoring, or personal learning.

Worryingly, many experienced faculty—especially post-retirement—have admitted that these trainings, while intellectually stimulating, offered limited help in real classroom settings across different institutions.

Super-specialty faculty, who may not be involved in MBBS teaching, are also required to undergo these programs, even if they do not participate in undergraduate education. This raises further questions about relevance and applicability.

Structural and Policy Inconsistencies

Despite the NMC's introduction of Competency-Based Medical Education (CBME) and guidelines to reduce the MBBS course duration, many INIs continue to operate with outdated schedules, unaffected by these reforms. Yet, these very institutions are often chosen to train faculty from colleges that are expected to implement CBME rigorously.

This leads to uncomfortable contradictions:

- Why do MBBS programs differ in duration across institutions?
- Why are model institutions exempt from the very reforms they promote elsewhere?
- Where is the evidence that CBME implementation has improved graduate quality?

Key Gaps and Challenges

1. **Lack of Outcome Research**: There is minimal national data comparing student performance before and after implementation of CBME or MEUs.
2. **Mismatch in Vision vs. Ground Reality**: Recommendations assume ideal faculty-student ratios, which are rare.
3. **Fragmented Implementation**: Uniformity in curriculum delivery is compromised due to varying institutional policies and leadership priorities.
4. **Faculty Fatigue**: Overburdened teachers experience burnout, worsened by repeated training mandates and administrative duties.

Student Learning Outcomes: There is insufficient evidence that all this translates into better clinical judgment, empathy, or decision-making among students.

Recommendations and the Way Forward

To make medical education reform more effective, the following changes may be considered:

1. Contextual Flexibility

Educational policies should be tailored based on institutional capacity—faculty numbers, infrastructure, student load, and clinical material.

2. Integration with Clinical Reality

Training should focus on aligning medical education principles with real-life patient care scenarios. Workshops should include bedside demonstrations, patient communication strategies, and ethical decision-making.

3. Voluntary Faculty Development

Encourage voluntary and interest-based faculty development rather than enforcing mandates. Passionate teachers make better learners and better educators.

4. Peer Mentoring and Community Learning

Create state-level faculty mentoring networks where experienced educators from varied settings mentor junior faculty using realistic tools.

5. Feedback and Monitoring Systems

Implement longitudinal studies that assess how student competencies evolve with different teaching models. Faculty feedback must be valued in policymaking.

6. Equalising Curriculum Standards

Bring consistency in course duration and curriculum across INIs and non-INIs. No model institution should be exempt from reforms it teaches others to follow.

Conclusion

Medical education in India stands at a crossroads. While reforms like CBME and MEUs are rooted in sound pedagogical principles, their success depends on contextual adaptability, inclusive feedback, and genuine faculty engagement. Mandatory workshops alone cannot transform teaching quality unless supported by institutional readiness and realistic implementation strategies.

Faculty are not just passive recipients of educational theory—they are experienced clinicians, lifelong learners, and frontline mentors. Empowering them with autonomy, relevance, and support—not just mandates—will be the key to unlocking the full potential of medical education in India.

Let us hope for a future where both **students thrive as compassionate, competent physicians** and **teachers find purpose and recognition** in shaping the next generation.

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