

Research article

Students' engagement in the medical school in Nepal based on ASPIRE criteria

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: Students' engagement in active learning and scholarly activities are essential for effective medical education. This is one of the dimensions of ASPIRE-to-Excellence-Initiative. Objective of this study was to know from students about their engagement in Universal College of Medical Sciences (UCMS) Bhairahawa, Nepal as per ASPIRE criteria for excellence.

Material and methods: This is questionnaire-based survey done in UCMS, in October 2019. The Criteria regarding students' engagement developed by International Association for Medical Education (AMEE) for ASPIRE-to-Excellence-Initiative was utilized in the questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of four ASPIRE criteria and 21 sub-criteria. The response on each sub-criteria (statements) were three yes/to-some-extent/no. They had to select one response as deemed appropriate. 3rd-year MBBS students participated in the survey. The data was entered into SPSS 21; frequency, and percentage were computed.

Results: Out of 100 students; 80 participated in the survey. The response rate was 80%. Around 2/3 of the students reported that they didn't engage with management of the school, including matters of policy and mission and vision of the school. Overall students' engagement is poor on criteria-1. More than 2/3 of the students mentioned that they have been engaged in the school's education program (*delivery of teaching and assessment*). Overall students' engagement is fair on criteria-2. More than 50% of students reported that they have been engaged in the academic community (*school's research program and participation in meetings*). Overall students' engagement is satisfactory on criteria-3. More than 70% of students mentioned that they have been engaged in the local community and service delivery. Overall students' engagement is good on criteria-4.

Conclusion: Students' engagement on 4 criteria varies from poor to good; poor on criteria 1 while good on criteria 4. More research is required involving all batches of students and other medical colleges in Nepal to know the details of students' engagement in medical schools based on ASPIRE criteria.

Key words: ASPIRE criteria. medical colleges. medical education. students' engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The ASPIRE-to-Excellence program is a global initiative; an effort to improve the quality of medical education launched in 2012 by International Association for Medical

Education (AMEE). The ASPIRE-Initiative is an initiative that recognizes and rewards medical schools. This initiative motivates schools and raises their interest for achieving excellence and also motivates students and makes them

aware of their potential engagement roles in their schools. Students' engagement in the medical school is offered as one of the dimensions of the ASPIRE-to- Excellence-Initiative; other two are students' assessment and social accountability [1].

Kahu in 2013 presents a conceptual framework that defines students' engagement: 1) behavioral- focusing on student's behavior and effective teaching practice; 2) psychological- focusing on the individual internal process of engagement including behavior, cognition, emotion and the will to succeed; 3) social-cultural- focusing on the impact of the broader social, cultural and political context; and 4) holistic- attempts to combine the strands [1-3].

This initiative has developed four criteria for a school/program to be regarded as achieving excellence in students' engagement. The school/program is expected to demonstrate students' engagement in the following four criteria: 1) Students' engagement in policy and decision-making activities at the school/program; 2) Students' engagement in the provision and evaluation of the school's education program; 3) Students' engagement in the academic community and; 4) Students' engagement in the local community, in extracurricular activities, and in-service delivery. For each of the mentioned four criteria of students' engagement, there are sub-criteria for which the school/program has expected to provide evidence. The total sub-criteria are 21 [1-5].

Students' engagement is almost overlooked in majority of the medical schools/colleges in South Asia including Nepal. Universal College of Medical Sciences (UCMS) Bhairahawa Nepal, a private institute established in 1998 is affiliated with Tribhuvan University

Institute of Medicine (TU-IOM). It runs undergraduate and postgraduate courses in medicine, dentistry, nursing and allied sciences.⁶The objective of this study was to know from the students about their engagement in UCMS, Bhairahawa, Nepal as per ASPIRE criteria for excellence.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is questionnaire-based survey done in Universal College of Medical Sciences (UCMS, Bhairahawa, Nepal in October 2019. The Criteria regarding students' engagement developed by the AMEE in Europe for The ASPIRE-to-Excellence-Initiative was utilized in the questionnaire for the survey. The questionnaire comprised of four ASPIRE criteria. Criterion 1 is related to Students' Engagement with management of the school, including matters of policy and the mission and vision of the school (*Students' engagement with the structures and processes*); Criterion 2 is related to Students' Engagement in the provision of the school's education program (*Students' engagement with the delivery of teaching and assessment*); Criterion 3 is related to Students' Engagement in the academic community (*Student's engagement in the school's research program and participation in meetings*); and Criterion 4 is related to Students' Engagement in the local community and service delivery. Criterion 1 has 7 sub-criteria (statements), Criterion 2 has 8 sub-criteria (statements), Criterion 3 has 2 sub-criteria (statements) and Criterion 4 has 4 sub-criteria. The total sub-criteria (statements) are twenty-one [4-5]. The response on each sub-criteria (statement) regarding engagement was asked as yes or to some extent or no. The students had to select one response as deemed appropriate.

We have graded the students' engagement as follows:

- 90% or more students are involved means engagement is Excellent
- 80-89% students are involved means engagement is Very Good
- 70-79% students are involved means engagement is Good
- 60-69% students are involved means engagement is Fair
- 50-59% students are involved means engagement is satisfactory
- More than 33-49% students are involved means engagement is poor
- 33% or less students are involved means engagement is very poor.

Purposive sampling technique was used for collection of data. All third year MBBS

Institutional Review Committee (IRC) of UCMS. The data collected was checked for completeness, accuracy and consistency. It was entered in SPSS version 21 for analysis. Descriptive analysis was done; the frequency, and percentage were computed.

RESULTS

Students' responses to ASPIRE criteria and sub-criteria are mentioned in Tables 1-4. Around 2/3 of students reported that they didn't involve in engagement with management of the school, including matters of policy and the mission and vision of the school (*Student engagement with the structures and processes*). Overall students' engagement is poor. (Table 1)

Table 1: Responses of students to ASPIRE CRITERION 1*

Statements	Responses		
	Yes	To some extent	No
1.1. Students have been involved in the development of the school's vision and mission.	14 (17.5%)	17 (21.2%)	49 (61.3%)
1.2. Students are represented on school committees.	18 (17.5%)	17 (21.2%)	45 (65.3%)
1.3. Students are involved in the establishment of policy statements or guidelines.	03 (3.7%)	06 (7.5%)	71 (88.8%)
1.4. Students are involved in the accreditation process for the school.	03 (3.7%)	27 (33.8%)	50 (62.5%)
1.5. Students have a management/leadership role in relation to elements of the curriculum.	06 (7.5%)	15 (18.7%)	59 (73.8%)
1.6. Students' views are taken into account in decisions about faculty (staff) promotion.	03 (3.7%)	07 (8.8%)	70 (87.5%)
1.7. Students play an active part in faculty (staff) development activities.	04 (5.0%)	13 (16.3%)	64 (78.7%)

*CRITERION 1. Related to student engagement with management of the school, including matters of policy and the mission and vision of the school (*Student engagement with the structures and processes*)

students Batch were asked to fill up the questionnaire. Out of 100, 80 consented to participate in survey. The response rate was 80%. Informed consent was taken from the participants and study was approved by

Table 2: Responses of students to ASPIRE CRITERION 2**

Statements	Responses		
	Yes	To some extent	No
2.1. Students evaluate the curriculum and teaching and learning processes.	02 (2.5%)	27 (33.8%)	51 (63.7%)
2.2. Feedback from the student body is taken into account in curriculum development.	08 (10.0%)	23 (28.7%)	49 (61.3%)
2.3. Students participate as active learners with responsibility for their own learning.	43 (53.7%)	29 (36.3%)	08 (10.0%)
2.4. Students are involved formally and/or informally in peer teaching.	18 (22.5%)	40 (50.0%)	22 (27.5%)
2.5. Students are engaged in the development of learning resources for use by other students.	17 (21.2%)	42 (52.5%)	21 (21.3%)
2.6. Students provide a supportive or mentor role for other students.	35 (43.8%)	38 (47.5%)	07 (8.7%)
2.7. Students are encouraged to assess their own competence.	26 (32.5%)	41 (51.2%)	13 (16.3%)
2.8. Students engaged in peer assessment.	25 (31.3%)	41 (51.2%)	14 (17.5%)

**CRITERION 2. Student Engagement in the provision of the school's education program (*Student engagement with the delivery of teaching and assessment*)

More than 2/3 of students mentioned that they have been engaged in the provision of the school's education program (*Student engagement with the delivery of teaching and assessment*) but more than 60% of students revealed that they were not engaged in evaluating the curriculum and teaching and learning processes and the feedback from the student body was not taken into account in curriculum development. Overall students' engagement is Fair (Table 2).

(*Student's engagement in the school's research program and participation in meetings*). Overall students' engagement is satisfactory (Table 3).

More than 50% of students reported that they were engaged in the academic community

Table 3: Responses of students to ASPIRE CRITERION 3***

Statements	Responses		
	Yes	To some extent	No
3.1. Students are engaged in school research projects carried out by faculty members.	19 (23.8%)	22 (27.5%)	39 (48.7%)
3.2. Students are supported in their participation at local, regional or international medical, dental, veterinary and health professions education meetings.	21 (26.3%)	26 (32.5%)	33 (41.2%)

***CRITERION 3. Engagement in the academic community (*Student's engagement in the school's research program and participation in meetings*)

More than 70% of students mentioned that they have been engaged in the local community and service delivery but more

school's education program (*engagement with the delivery of teaching and assessment*) is comparably fair except in evaluating the

Table 4: Responses of students to ASPIRE CRITERION 4****

Statements	Responses		
	Yes	To some extent	No
4.1. Students are involved in local community projects.	33 (41.2%)	23 (28.8%)	24 (30.0%)
4.2. Students participate in the delivery of local healthcare services.	38 (47.5%)	26 (32.5%)	16 (20.0%)
4.3. Students participate in healthcare delivery during electives/ attachments overseas.	11 (13.8%)	16 (20.0%)	53 (66.2%)
4.4. Students engage with arranged extracurricular activities.	39 (48.7%)	31 (38.8%)	10 (12.5%)

****CRITERION 4. Engagement in the local community and service delivery

than 66% reported that they didn't involve in participation in healthcare delivery during electives/attachments overseas. Overall students' engagement is good (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study conducted in Nepal that has surveyed students about their engagement in medical school as per ASPIRE criteria for excellence. In the context of ASPIRE, students' engagement in the medical school means the students engaged with the management of the school, the curriculum development process, the delivery of teaching and assessment, the academic and local communities as well as the service delivery [5].

Participant students in this study revealed their engagement with management of the school, including matters of policy and the mission and vision of the school (*engagement with the structures and processes*) is poor; their engagement in the provision of the

curriculum and teaching and learning processes and feedback from the student body taken into account in curriculum development which is comparably poor; their engagement in the academic community (*engagement in the school's research program and participation in meetings*) is satisfactory; and their engagement in the local community and service delivery is good but their participation in healthcare delivery during electives/attachments overseas is very poor.

Bukhari YR et al (2019) conducted a cross-sectional study involving Saudi Arabian medical students from the five main universities in Saudi Arabia with a questionnaire designed based on the AMEE's ASPIRE criteria for recognition of excellence in students' engagement in medical school. Saudi students believed that they must be engaged with their medical schools' faculty members in multiple aspects such as college's strategic planning process, accreditation activities, quality assurance activities, curriculum development committee, all community support services, research activities and participation in scientific

meetings and conferences at all level [3]. UCMS needs to engage all students or committee of students or representatives of all batches medical, dental, nursing and allied sciences students in all areas of students' engagement.

A systematic review and meta-analysis of medical students' perspectives on the engagement in research done by Naing et al reported that those students who engaged in research while studying at the medical school revealed positive responses toward their research experiences, and self-reported changes in their practices and also contributed to the publication output of their university, reflecting better image at the organizational level [7]. In this study more than 50% of students reported that they were engaged in the school's research program [7]. Faculty of UCMS needs to engage all students in research activities.

Nearly all (96%) students of University of Illinois College of Medicine-Chicago agreed that opportunities for involvement of students in curriculum are important [8]. UCMS must also provide this opportunity to students.

CONCLUSION

Effectively engaging students in their learning is an important aim of medical education. The findings of this study cannot be generalized for medical colleges in Nepal as this study was conducted in one medical college involving one batch of the medical students and just to know about their engagement but not details of engagement (length, breadth and depth of their engagement). And also, the study used the exclusive closed-ended response formats. However, in some of the aspects students are fairly engaged while in some their engagement is poor. More

research is required involving all batches of students and other medical colleges in Nepal to know the details of students' engagement in medical schools in Nepal based on ASPIRE criteria.

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