

## COMMENTARY

# Enhancement of curriculum transparency in health professional education for students progression and social accountability: Empowering students

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Curriculum transparency in medical education is of ultimate importance as it directly impacts the progression and success of medical students. This commentary will discuss the significance of transparency in medical school curricula and how it influences the educational journey of future healthcare professionals and attaining social accountability. Social accountability refers to aligning education activities in health professional education with needs of community and society. The curriculum in healthcare professionals is extensive and challenging, encompassing a wide range of subjects and practical skills. To navigate this complex landscape effectively, students need a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Curriculum transparency, in this context, refers to the provision of clear and accessible information about the curriculum's structure, objectives, teaching methodologies, assessment methods, and expectations. Transparent curricula outline specific learning objectives and outcomes for each course or module. This clarity helps students understand the knowledge and skills they are expected to acquire, allowing them to set clear learning goals. Knowing the assessment methods used for each course is crucial for students. Transparent curricula provide insight into whether they will be evaluated through written exams, clinical assessments, presentations, or other means. This knowledge allows students to prepare effectively. Health professional education is typically organized in a sequential manner, with each year building upon the previous one. Transparency enables students to plan their progression, ensuring they meet prerequisites and prerequisites for subsequent courses. When students see

the relevance of what they are learning and understand how it fits into their overall education, they are more likely to stay motivated and engaged in their studies. Uncertainty about expectations and assessments can lead to unnecessary stress and anxiety among students. Transparent curricula help alleviate these concerns by providing clear guidelines. Transparency extends to how feedback is provided. When students know how and when feedback will be given, they can better utilize it for improvement. Medical students should be involved in curriculum review as they are main stakeholders. Medical students invest significant time, effort, and resources in their education. Therefore, ensuring that the curriculum is transparent can be viewed as a fundamental aspect of educational equity and fairness. It empowers students with the information they need to take control of their learning journey. However, achieving curriculum transparency is not without its challenges.<sup>[1]</sup> It requires effective communication from the institution, consistent updates, and the availability of resources to support students in their learning. Additionally, medical institute must strike a balance between providing clear guidelines and allowing for flexibility and adaptability in learning.<sup>[2]</sup>

Enhancing transparency in undergraduate medical education curriculum is essential for ensuring that students, faculty, and stakeholders have a clear understanding of what is being taught and assessed. Transparency promotes accountability, quality assurance, and alignment with the educational objectives. Table 1 describes some tools and strategies to enhance transparency in undergraduate medical education.

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**Table 1: Tools for enhancing curriculum transparency in health professional education**

Tools	Details
Curriculum mapping software	Utilize curriculum mapping software or tools specifically designed for medical education. These tools help in visually representing the curriculum, including learning objectives, content, assessment methods, and the sequence of topics. Examples include iSpring Learn, MedEdPORTAL, and Curriculum Builder.
Learning management system	Use an LMS to centralize curriculum materials, syllabi, course schedules, and assessment details. Ensure that all faculty members have access to the LMS, and regularly update course materials and objectives.
Clear learning objectives	Develop clear, specific, and measurable learning objectives for each course or module. Learning objectives should be readily available to students and instructors, providing a roadmap for what students should achieve.
Course outline	Create detailed course outlines and syllabi that include information about course content, reading materials, assessment methods, and grading criteria. Make these documents easily accessible to students through the LMS or a dedicated website.
Curriculum committee	Establish curriculum committees comprising faculty, students, and administrators responsible for reviewing and updating the curriculum regularly. These committees can ensure that the curriculum aligns with the latest medical advancements and educational best practices.
Social accountability alignment with program outcomes	There should be clear alignment of social needs of the community and program outcome formulated to all stakeholders for effective implementation and improved patient outcome.
Assessment blueprints	Develop assessment blueprints that outline the types of assessments, their distribution throughout the curriculum, and their alignment with learning objectives. This helps students understand what to expect in terms of assessments.
Cyclic feedback mechanism	Implement feedback mechanisms for students to provide input on the curriculum. Surveys, focus groups, and regular meetings with student representatives can help identify areas for improvement.
Transparency dashboard	Create dashboards or websites that offer a clear overview of the curriculum, including learning objectives, course schedules, and assessment dates. These dashboards can be accessible to both students and faculty.
Regular updates	Keep the curriculum up-to-date by incorporating feedback from faculty, students, and healthcare professionals. Update the curriculum to reflect changes in medical knowledge, technology, and healthcare practices.
External review	Consider engaging external experts or accrediting bodies to conduct periodic reviews of the curriculum. External reviews provide an unbiased perspective and ensure compliance with national or international standards.
Alignment with accreditation standard	Ensure that the curriculum aligns with accreditation standards, such as those set by the LCME in the United States. This alignment enhances the credibility and quality of the curriculum.
Faculty professional development	Provide faculty with professional development opportunities related to curriculum design, assessment, and educational technology to enhance their ability to create transparent and effective curricula.
Documentation and reports	Maintain detailed records and reports of curriculum changes, updates, and assessments. These records can be useful for accountability and future planning.

LMS: learning management system; LCME: Liaison Committee on Medical Education.

Curriculum transparency can help mitigate the negative effects of the hidden curriculum by providing students a clear framework for understanding their education experience. Conversely, a transparent curriculum can make hidden curriculum more apparent, as students may become more attuned to discrepancies between what is formally taught and what is implicitly communicated. Curriculum transparency serves as a tool to manage and mitigate the influence of hidden curriculum, ensuring more equitable and accountable educational experience. It is a challenge to maintain a balance between breadth and depth of curriculum and creating curriculum transparency. There should a transparency for engaging and empowering students but also consider risks associated with need of privacy and confidentiality of sensitive data. There should be a policy for effective risk management to deal with mitigating threats. As excessive disclosure without any well-documented policy can be problematic. Some institution may resist making their curriculum transparent due to administrative inertia or concern about external accountability, hindering necessary improvements. Institution should commit to

continuous improvement cycle, actively seeking feedback from students and faculty to make necessary changes for effective curriculum transparency. Social accountability in medical education refers to medical institute responsibility to align curriculum with needs and expectation of society. Curriculum transparency is a vital component of this social accountability, ensuring educational, content, objectives and assessment are clear, accessible and responsive to societal demand. Together, social accountability and curriculum transparency promote educational system that are capable of meeting evolving needs of community and society. In conclusion, “The Role of Curriculum Transparency in health professional education Student Progression” is a critical area of research that sheds light on the importance of clear and accessible curriculum information in health professional education. Transparent curricula empower students to make informed decisions, reduce stress, and ultimately contribute to their success as future healthcare professionals. As medical education continues to evolve, further research in this area can help improve the quality

and effectiveness of medical training programs, benefiting both students and patients.

## DECLARATION

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Not applicable.

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