

A Need to Revise and Modify the Curricula of the Postgraduate Programs of Basic Medical Sciences, Iran

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Higher education is one of the most important means to train the human resources required in every country in educational, research and health domains, and universities play a pivotal role in this regard. The postgraduate programs of medical sciences include master, Ph.D. in basic sciences and clinical specialty (residency) programs. The postgraduate programs of basic medical sciences (M.Sc. and Ph.D.) have long been established in the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran and administered by universities of medical sciences. The diversity of these courses and related universities is being increased annually. However, the inefficiency of the graduate students of some majors and failure to achieve their formulated educational objectives necessitate a revision in the curricula and the acceptance process in these programs.

The increasing pace of social changes, the trend of developments in various domains of human knowledge, and the emergence of specialized branches in sciences as well as integrated branches (interdisciplinary) have strengthened the need for using new models and methods of curriculum development in higher education system. On the one hand, innovative curriculum developers should design graduate curricula in line with the objectives of knowledge production and scientific developments. They need to develop community-oriented and applied educational programs to train skilled and professional manpower.

A basic principle of education process and its quality improvement is periodic revision of the curricula of different academic levels in every major. Various factors are involved in the revision of the curricula, including the increase of scientific information, inability of teachers and educational authorities in implementation of an approved program, development of the educational and research tools and facilities, changes in the needs of the society and new expectations of the graduates in every major, and

loss of the acceptability of a program. Also, the content, coverage, sequence and structure of the curriculum in some majors have not been able to provide the learners with the ability to analyze and solve professional problems. Some formulated curricula lack the required flexibility and compatibility with the needs of the society, especially changes of the health system. The indices of promoting the quality of a curriculum include content, coverage, sequence and structure, teachers and students admitted in each major, sufficient financial resources, physical environment and educational facilities. Given the quantitative increase of postgraduate programs in the recent years, especially master programs as well as the increasing number of the recipient universities and the students accepted in every major, the educational administrators of universities have always been concerned with the declining quality of these programs and promoting the quality of these courses.

An important part of the evaluation process of the educational system has been preventing the loss of existing qualitative indices and promoting them. As for the revision of every curriculum, it is necessary to take into account the perspectives of the academic members, the theoretical and practical educational needs and the learners' career expectation, the weaknesses and strengths of previous program, the approvals of the supreme council of planning about the length of program and amount of anticipated courses, the job responsibilities of the graduates. Also it should consider using the curricula of similar majors presented in credible international universities, possible selection of some courses based on the thesis topic and even determining the field of study in postgraduate programs according to the university presenting the program. Moreover, a 7-10 year interval is necessary for the revision of the curricula of different postgraduate programs.

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