

Title: Bridging the gap: Implementation of an integrated assessment in a problem-based curriculum at B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan, Nepal

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Context and setting: The undergraduate medical curriculum at B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences in Nepal has problem-based learning (PBL) curriculum. Integrated teaching-learning is practiced, however, both the formative and summative assessments are discipline-based.

Necessity for change: Although the training is integrated, the assessment is discipline-based leading to the students not really studying in an integrated way. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to document the extent of alignment between teaching and assessment, and explore the possibility of implementing an integrated assessment system for the first two years of the PBL curriculum.

What was done? The study included second-year students, who had covered gastrointestinal-hepatobiliary and endocrine (GIT-HBS-Endo) systems in basic medical sciences, as well as concerned faculty. All participants were initially oriented to the concept of integrated assessment and the purpose of the study through a series of Workshop and Research Forum Meetings. Perceptions of the faculty and the students regarding the current practices of assessment and the adequacy in alignment were obtained through structured interviews and feedback sessions, and through analyses of examination questions, from the past five years about of GIT-HBS-Endo systems. A five-point Lickert scale (Strongly-Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly-Disagree) was used. Questions to investigate this problem included extent of interdisciplinary integration, match between curriculum objectives and assessment methods, types of questions set in the assessments, role of formative and summative assessments during the learning process, utilization of question banks, and scope of implementation of integrated assessment. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS 10.0 version.

Evaluation of results and impact: The study demonstrated that a very high percentage of questions were “recall” type, and “interpretation and problem-solving” less than 10%. The above findings revealed a clear mismatch in the alignment between the integrated teaching and the assessment. However, all stakeholders involved in the study, were of the opinion that there was a strong need to implement an integrated assessment system to correct this mismatch. The responses of the participants to structured interviews and feedback revealed that the examination-driven learning attitude of the students was the direct result of the type of examination questions, where memorization of facts without understanding was continuously rewarded. Only through the extensive documentation of this chronic problem, the Administrators finally decided to revise the assessment system and implement it.

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FAIMER Acknowledgement: Authors acknowledge the guidance of FAIMER Institute faculties particularly Ara Tekian and Thomas Chacko.

Names of all authors and details of the contribution each made to the work described in the paper:

S. Bhattacharya: Designing the study, Analysis of question papers and doing the major write up.

S.K.Bhattacharya: Interviewing and Conducting feedback sessions with write up.

B.Khanal: Analysis of question papers, Interviewing and Conducting feedback sessions.