

**Title:** Determining curriculum priorities for a health-sciences university's faculty development programme

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**Context and setting:** The Health Sciences University model was introduced in several states in India about 10 years ago. Each Health Sciences University is state-based and affiliates schools of Medical, Dental, Nursing, Physiotherapy and schools with traditional system of medicine. The University conducts the certifying examination for each of these disciplines and awards the professional degree. The Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS) serves the state of Maharashtra in Western India. It affiliates over 250 health professions schools, including 39 medical schools.

**Why the idea was necessary:** Faculty and training opportunities in Health Professions Education in India are limited at present. Need for faculty development programmes has been expressed repeatedly. The University recently established the Department of Medical Education and Technology with a vision to improve education systems and educational quality. The Department offers multidisciplinary Faculty Development Programmes in the form of basic and advanced workshops. In one year, over 500 faculty have been trained through thirteen 3-day basic workshops and one 6-month advanced programme. To define the focus of future programmes and refine existing ones, a needs assessment of key stakeholders was conducted.

**What was done:** Three stakeholder groups, included a core team of senior advisors and faculty, workshop faculty and workshop participants of the existing programmes were administered a survey. The survey instrument consisted of 39 competencies distributed into 9 groups of educational themes, namely, learning, curriculum, teaching methods, assessment, continuing professional development, administration, mentoring, educational research and leadership. Two assessments were requested on these competencies – importance and ability, and rated on a 4 point Likert Scale. The core team and departmental faculty rated mid-career faculty on these competencies, and the participant group assessed themselves. The core team was also interviewed using structured open ended questions.

**Evaluation of Results and Impact:** The response rate was 25% for participant group(n=42), 85% for faculty group(n=17) and 85% for the core team(n=6) In each of the groups, the mean for every item was calculated and the items were ranked in descending order, with highest mean representing the highest rating for importance and ability. Of the 39 competencies, the lowest 10 were from the Assessment, Educational Research, Administration and Leadership themes. The importance-ability gap was highest for assessment across all three groups. This was supported by the interview findings, which also additionally revealed system issues, faculty motivation and communication skills as key areas that need to be addressed.

The workshop participants ranked themselves higher on the competencies than workshop and core faculty rankings of an average mid-level faculty, especially on educational research and development. The Importance – Ability gap was lower than that perceived by other groups, indicating the impact of earlier training.

Assessment as a major theme for programme development. The impact of existing programmes on participants also became evident . They perceived key areas as important and also rated themselves high on various important competencies, thus demonstrating the positive impact of the current faculty development programmes.

The findings will be shared with other stakeholders like deans and senior faculty to discuss the identified gaps.

This study is the first of its kind in the country. It will help to give a better direction and focus to the programmes being planned for the future.