

Students as Propulsion Engine of Medical Education System: The Concept of the Student Committee of Medical Education Development

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Dear Editor,

From the past decades to the present, medical education has been known as one of the most important fields of education which trains those who can, directly and indirectly, affect human health and lives (1). Despite medical education being divided into various sectors, its ultimate aim is to “supply society with knowledgeable, skilled, and up-to-date health profession providers who put patient care above self-interest, and who undertake to maintain and develop their expertise over the course of a lifelong career”. Therefore, medical education is

imagined as a busy, clamorous place, where a host of pedagogical practices, educational philosophies, and conceptual frameworks collide (2). As students are known as one of the main targets of the medical education system, it seems that they can potentially act as a propulsion engine for the medical education system (3); therefore, in the present article, we are going to present the concept of the *student committee of medical education development (SCMED)*.

Having a detailed view of the medical students' activities indicates that they spend their time in various

curricular and extracurricular activities. Medical students' extracurricular activities are not limited to educational activities; they can go further to include a wide range of activities such as research, innovation, and social activity (4). Interestingly, in 2017, a student committee was formed in the Iranian Universities of Medical Sciences called *SCMED*.

To express the concept of the *SCMED*, it is important to note that the main aims of the committee were to have beneficial impacts on the medical education system, improve the outcomes of the medical schools, educate multidimensional students, and highlight the role of the students in not only during their educational period but also after their graduation. To maintain the goals of the *SCMED*, a four-level structure was constructed, from the universities to the Ministry of Health and Medical Education. Additionally, each level of the committee could encompass four main sub-committees, including education, research and innovation, evaluation, and public relations. In detail, the four-level structure of the *SCMED* consists of the graduate students committee, as the experience-transferring arm, the central committee which includes eleven students that are directly supervised by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, the regional network which consists of several universities within a specific educational region, and the local committee in each university. In fact, from the top of the network to the bottom, the roles change from policy-making to implementing the policies. According to the structure of the *SCMED*, specific duties are defined for each level and sub-committees. In detail, the education sub-committee is going to design, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive operating model for empowering students in the field of medical education. The research and innovation sub-committee is going to plan and support the implementation of medical education research projects and innovations in response to the up-to-date needs of the medical education system- in fact, this sub-committee makes the activities evidence-based. The evaluation sub-committee is going to supervise the activities and provide feedback and suggestions to resolve the obstacles. Finally, the public relations sub-committee is not only going to facilitate coordination between different sub-committees and other structural levels but also going to be a bridge for medical students to the higher levels of the medical education administration.

Some similar organizations and committees were developed in the world before the *SCMED*; however, none of them have the properties of the *SCMED*,

especially being the unique student committee supported by the government which is directly linked to the Ministry of Health and Medical Education. During the past six years, the *SCMED* presented its effects, such as students' involvement in educational decisions, making students interested in medical education, making the quality of medical education more critical to the students and sensitizing them, making students attracted to the educational research, on the Iranian medical education system as the student committee, there are still some concerns and gaps about such activities; like lack of support, students' interests, and some pitfalls of the *SCMED* power on the changes on the medical education system and its curriculum. Additionally, among the most highlighted concerns, there is a fundamental question of whether medical students' involvement in such committees and activities is known as the educational goals. Moreover, some previous studies have not presented beneficial impacts of students' activities on the educational system; even, they called them time-wasting activities for medical students; but there is strong evidence against these opinions (5). Overall, it can be stated that the *SCMED* concept had brilliant impacts during its birth; however, there is still a long way to this student network in the medical educational system.

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