



The participation of faculty members in designing and implementing educational projects at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences compared to type 1 universities in Iran

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Article info

Article History:

Received: 24 Dec. 2016

Accepted: 19 Feb. 2017

epublished: 29 June 2017

Please cite this article as: Ghaffari R, Akbari H, Baradaran Binazeir M, Hassanzadeh S, Salek Ranjbarzadeh F, Motarebsun N, et al. Res Dev Med Educ 2017;6(1):1-2. doi: 10.15171/rdme.2017.001.

Keywords: Educational projects, The participation of faculty members, Medical sciences universities

Dear Editor,

With regard to the incredible growth of science and technology in all areas, especially in medical sciences and health, medical sciences faculty members and policy makers need to keep their information and knowledge up to date. So setting the standards for education and research of faculty members is of particular importance in the world.¹

Modern societies owe their position, more than anything else, to the development, deepening and growth of research. The field of medical sciences is not an exception.² Despite the importance of this issue, given that one of the main goals of the medical sciences field is training human resources needed for community health, research activities and education are also important at the university level.² However, educational services are on the decline at universities, and it seems educational activities are regarded as less important for a number of faculty members.³

Alizadeh noted that there were no standards for education in research or service provisions for faculty. Faculty members rarely have information and awareness on educational methods, and teaching and education were not considered distinguished activities but routine tasks of faculty members.³ The Carnegie Science Foundation in both 1969 and 1989 showed that scientific publications is the main criterion for promotion of faculty members and the importance of publication for promotion rose rapidly in those 20 years. Ron Richards clarified this problem by suggesting the two options for the faculty members

to choose: "Service to Students" and "Promotion," and added: "A teacher who teaches well is not necessarily someone who has good research."⁴

In 1990, Boyer, of the Carnegie Foundation, published the book *Scholarship Reconsidered*. In it, he reviewed the definition of scholarship, which until then was limited to research activities and publications in prestigious journals. He defined scholarship in four areas: scholarship of discovery, that is, the production of new knowledge, the same as research; scholarship of integration, that is, showing the relationship between the produced knowledge with other attitudes; scholarship of application, or using the produced knowledge to solve problems; and scholarship of dissemination, sharing new knowledge and scholarship of engagement along with actual applications in society to solve problems.³

Following this, the authorities changed their attitude toward Teacher's Day by considering importance of education at universities of medical sciences and provided appropriate conditions for holding Teachers' Day starting several years ago. They have tried to implement and value indicators related to scholarship to enhance the educational position at the University of Medical Sciences. One of the achievements of this approach is the Shahid Motahhari Educational Festival,⁵ sponsored by the National Secretariat and held every year to celebrate and honor faculty members of medical education and to identify desirable local and national educational projects and innovation, and to introduce new projects to enhance medical education. Additionally, the Shahid

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Motahhari Educational Festival leads to identification and introduction of faculty members and desirable educational projects and participation of faculty members in the festival.

Regarding the percentage of faculty member participation in developing and providing educational projects in various schools of the Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, it seems that the trend for participation in most schools (Medicine, Paramedics, Management and Information, Rehabilitation and Modern) showed certain patterns. The highest percentage of participation was seen in 2013. With regard to promotion regulations and provision of scholarship for promotion, it seems faculty members began to develop, implement and provide educational processes due to the requirement of these regulations. It should be noted that in the same year (2013), the percentage of faculty member participation in the university educational festival has reached to its highest rate. This fact should be considered that perhaps creating a requirement, along with encouraging activities, was one of the effective factors for the participation of faculty members in developing and implementing educational projects.

The examining of faculty member participation in developing and providing educational processes at type 1 universities indicated a heterogeneous condition with different trends, so that the participation of some in the recent festival was higher than the previous ones. Among these, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences stands out, where the participation of faculty members in providing educational processes of the university had an upward trend from 2011 to 2015, decreasing slightly in 2016. The participation rate for Isfahan University of Medical Sciences showed a relatively stable trend from 2011-2013, but then participation declined. There was a significant increase in the participation rate at Tehran University of Medical Sciences in 2011 and 2012, but it was reduced in 2013 and 2014; however participation increased again from 2014 to 2016. The participation rate at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences showed on average that it had the highest percentage of participation in designing and providing educational processes compared to other universities (12.39%). The participation of faculty members at the university in submitting educational processes suggested a relatively stable trend from 2011 to 2014, which then faced with a decline in the last two

years. At Kerman University of Medical Sciences, except for 2012 and 2016, which had high peaks of participation, in the other years there was relatively a stable trend in participation. Comparing the Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Mashhad and Kerman Universities of Medical Sciences with Tabriz University in terms of participation percentage and trend, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences had the highest participation rate among faculty members in developing and providing educational projects with the exception of 2013; the trend was relatively stable, only a slight decrease in 2016. It can be concluded that the participation trend of faculty members in designing and providing educational projects did not follow a steady and homogeneous trend, which may be the result of external factors and parameters and/or academic policies, but it has been coupled with increasing participation rates in the years which were under more focus and attention.

Ethical approval

The research project has received the confirmation of the Ethics Committee with the number of TBZMED.REC.1394.1147 Dated 17/4/2016.

Competing interests

Authors declare that they have no competing interests

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