

Continuing Professional Development in Medical & Health Professions

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Abstract: The establishment of the educational development centers for medical and health professionals (EDCs) in the Sudan are a response to global changes in medical and health education and increasing expectations by the society as well as the professions. This paper provides an overview of the four EDCs established in Sudan. The paper argues that these centers have responded to the challenge of growing demand for qualified teachers in health sciences by offering effective teacher training programmes, consultation on curriculum evaluation, planning and implementing curriculum changes and innovative teaching and evaluation methods for the health professions. In conclusion the paper recommends the need to sustain the cooperation and joint effort between the EDCs and the expatriates Sudanese experts in medical and health education and training. This cooperation will offer a great opportunity for knowledge transfer by organising beneficial and effective training courses, seminar and conferences in the Sudan and by sponsoring short training placement for young Sudanese medical and health professions to be exposed and acquire international experience and assist in technology transfer to the Sudan.

1 Background

The establishment of the educational development centers for medical and health professionals (EDCs) in the Sudan are a response to global changes in medical and health education and increasing expectations by the society as well as the professions. Increased public expectations relating to healthcare; community trends towards increased accountability and responsibility; educational developments that call for increased sophistication on the part of teachers in the health professions; the increased scope of and specialization within medicine that focus attention on what to teach and how to educate doctors; and the need to train more doctors within existing resources has all placed increasing demands on healthcare professionals.

These centers have responded to the challenge of growing demand for qualified teachers in health sciences. They have offered effective teacher training programmes, consultation on curriculum evaluation, planning and implementing curriculum changes and innovative teaching and evaluation methods for the health professions.

The EDCs have recognized the importance of professionalism in medical education and hence their activities have encompassed teaching, learning, research, service provision and nurturing the careers of the teaching staff.

In the Sudan there are four well established EDCs and these are:

2 The Educational Development Centre – Khartoum

The Educational Development Centre (EDC) was established under the auspice of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum in 1972. It aimed at developing and supporting the educational and training efforts in the field of health. Conscious of the needs created by the fast growth of medical and health professions education and the continuous international developments in educational theory and practice, Khartoum EDC is dedicated to the mission of educational de-

velopment in medical and health training institutions with priority to innovation, integration, relevance and excellence.

Over the past years Khartoum EDC managed to achieve its mission with great success. Among its notable achievements are the development and upgrade of teaching staff capabilities in concepts and methods of the educational sciences, improvement of health teachers' education through the systematic selection, development, use and evaluation of innovative approaches to instructional and evaluation techniques. Khartoum EDC has assisted and supported different medical schools and health sciences institutions in curricular development, evaluation and reform, with emphasis on primary health care, community-oriented and problem-based learning.

Among the important objectives of Khartoum EDC is to promote continuing professional development in the health fields, through the design and support of continuing and in-service education. EDC has encouraged and supported student centered self-learning programmes, applying problem solving approaches and designing learning experiences in different settings including the community settings.

Participation in the development and support of the learning process through development of learning materials, production of self-learning materials and tools and creation of skills laboratories and teaching technologies suitable for local situation were among the important objectives of the centre. Learning resources library and production of health learning material for education for the medical and health students and other health professions were established and developed by the centre. The centre has also established a clinical skill laboratory where human models are used for learning and teaching of different clinical skills.

Khartoum EDC has participated in training paramedical teaching staff from Sudan and the region in educational planning, instruction and assessment and evaluation. It had actively and energetically supported the different primary health care programs in the Sudan.

Other essential role of Khartoum EDC is the creation of the culture of educational research which has the responsibility to innovate; evaluate the innovations; and disseminate the results of the evaluation as part of the school self assessment

Khartoum EDC other specific objective is the curriculum development and reform of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum and other medical and health institutes and this was achieved with a reasonable success. Development of objective methods of assessment for medical students and students in different other health institutes was an important objective of the centre and many training workshops, seminars and meetings were organised and many changes in the assessment tools were adopted by many medical and health institutes in the Sudan and the region.

Initiation of community oriented educational programs for the medical students and other members of the health professions were designed and implemented. Upgrading of the teaching techniques of the faculty staff and the staff of other health institutes in Sudan and the region is an important objective of the centre and that was achieved a good success and that was by organisation of many workshops, seminars and two international conferences on medical education in the Sudan.

Research in medical education and evaluation of different education programmes were conducted and the results of these were published in local and international peer reviewed medical journals.

Khartoum EDC established strong links with similar institutes locally, regionally and internationally. Khartoum EDC had organised many training activities for Sana'a University and two international conferences on medical education in the Sudan. These are a testimonial of excellent and superb regional and international Khartoum EDC's collaboration.

The EDC target groups were medical and health professionals, newly recruited teaching staff in the different medical & health science schools and faculties, health staff with educational responsibility and senior staff who are undertaking new responsibilities in education and teaching.

Khartoum EDC is the nucleus of medical and health education in Sudan. It is well suited to address the needs of Health professions and will continue to support and shape their attitudes toward medical education and to develop capabilities in educational planning, instruction and evaluation.

3 Gezeria EDC

Gezeria EDC was established under the umbrella of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Gezeria to mirror the vision, mission and objectives of EDC Khartoum, but with major emphasis on community education and development.

The centre has offered staff development training courses in community oriented medical education and problem based learning. The centre also has organised courses on teaching, communication skills and counselling. The centre has produced many multi-media learning materials to support self learning activities to cope with massive increase in students' intake.

Khartoum EDC and Gezeria EDC are WHO collaborative centres for medical and health professionals' development.

4 Ahfad EDC

More recently Ahfad EDC was established with a strong infra-structure. It has similar mission, vision and objectives with special emphasis on problem based education and rural development programmes.

There are other new EDCs under establishment in other medical schools in the country, but they are still in their infancy.

5 Continuing Professional Development – Federal Ministry of Health

Continuing professional development (CPD) is the process by which health professionals keep updated to meet the needs of patients, the health service, and their own professional development. It includes the continuous acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable competent practice.

During the past decade CPD has encompassed managerial, social, and personal skills, topics beyond the traditional clinical medical subjects. The term CPD acknowledges not only the wide ranging competences needed to practice high quality medicine but also the multidisciplinary context of patient care. The concept and culture of the CPD is fairly new in our world with some areas not been accepted.

At the turn of this century, in response to the concept of CPD, the Federal Ministry of Health had established a centre for professional development for medical and health professionals. The

centre runs professional and education training courses for medical and health professionals e.g. Evidence Based Medicine, Research Methodology and Leadership to mention a few. The centre also offer newly appointed doctors orientation courses on medical and health practice in the Sudan.

6 The way Forward

Physicians today are confronted with increasing demand to ensure and improve care of their patients. A variety of approaches has been adopted to provide solutions to the problems of health care delivery. They represent different perspectives on optimal care and the best method for improving care. Evidence-based medicine and clinical practice guidelines, continuing professional development, assessment and accountability, patient empowerment and total quality management are some of these approaches that gained popularity during the last decade.

Sudan like other most low to middle income countries have to cope with a wide range of health problems and dilemmas that interfere with their future economic development. One of these problems is the lack of trained health workforce which is essential to improve the population health.

One of the approaches adopted in Sudan to resolve the lack of trained health workforce is capacity building in medical education and development of human resources in the field of health which are important steps in medical and health changes. The EDCs with their available trained human resources, successful past experiences can play a major role in these changes. The leaders for the changes are the senior as well as young staff with orientation in medical and health education. These centers can offer training courses curriculum planning, teaching method, assessment and evaluation and research in the field. The EDCs can participate in the learning process support through development of learning materials, introduction of self-learning materials and tools and creation of skills laboratories.

The successful cooperation and partnership between the Federal Ministry of Health and the EDCs in training different health cadres over the past years is exemplary and that should be supported and encouraged.

Internet accessibility is improving in Sudan and access to high quality education and training based materials published on the Internet can be a useful method for continuing professional development in the Sudan and provide areas for collaboration with a wide range of academics and Health professionals from across the globe.

The cooperation and joint effort between the EDCs and the expatriates Sudanese experts in medical and health education and training offer a great opportunity for “transfer of knowledge” that cannot be over emphasised. They can help by organising beneficial and effective training courses, seminar and conferences in the Sudan and by sponsoring short training placement for young Sudanese medical and health professions to be exposed and acquire international experience and assist in technology transfer to the Sudan.