



Development of the MB ChB curriculum map at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

To the Editor: With reference to the article by Van Heerden^[1] aimed at addressing the health needs of South Africa (SA)'s population through competency-based health professions curricula, we share our experience of developing the MB ChB curriculum map at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) as a first step towards curriculum review. The map is intended to evaluate the current curriculum against the five key elements referred to in the article as necessary to inform the training of health professionals for the SA context.

This communication will describe the process of mapping the curriculum in under a year using LOOOP (Learning Opportunities, Objectives and Outcome Platform), a web-based platform developed at Charité University in Germany.^[2] On LOOOP, the learning events in every module or discipline are linked to learning objectives, the seven Health Professions Council of South Africa meta-competencies, Medical Subject Headings (MeSH), the National Qualification Framework, and UKZN-specific exit level/yearly outcomes. Teaching methods and resources are defined, and every objective is linked to assessment methods.

Fragmentation of the medical curriculum across three schools in the College of Health Sciences has presented challenges, evidenced by a lack of cohesiveness in curriculum content, delivery and assessment methods. To make the different components and interconnections in a competency-based programme transparent, we embarked on this project to improve curriculum access for students, teachers and curriculum planners across the schools and disciplines.

Various factors influenced participation, and strategies were developed to mobilise academic staff to recognise the benefits of the process and understand its requirements. A process of information sharing was project-managed by the dean and office of teaching and learning in the School of Clinical Medicine and led by key academics across the schools. Implementation of the project required a range of resources to support co-ordinated and integrated processes among leadership, academic staff, support staff,

organisational structure, technical support and communication networks. To increase participation in the project, multiple training workshops were hosted for academic staff by the platform developer from Charité, the LOOOP representative from Sefako Makgatho University, and relevant academics. Academics were motivated to engage with the process through a variety of forums such as school teaching and learning committees, school boards, departmental meetings and meetings with module co-ordinators.

This mapping exercise has been a developmental process and a formative exercise for academic staff. Stakeholders have access to LOOOP to enable a comprehensive paperless view of the curriculum. This allows educators to interrogate and clarify their own content and understand how this articulates with other content in achieving the desired learning outcomes. It has identified redundancies and gaps, particularly with regard to inter- and transprofessional learning. It has clarified the vertical and horizontal integration and learning spirals essential for curriculum development with relevance to context.

Curriculum mapping is an integral step for aligning curriculum content with outcomes in a competency-based curriculum. The experience in the MB ChB programme will be shared, and recommendations will be made to support the process of curriculum mapping across other health professions programmes in this and other institutions.

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