

## Medical Education of Bangladesh: Current Issues Regarding Quality Assurance and Accreditation

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In the context of globalization and an economy driven by technological expertise, it is crucial for Bangladesh to maintain a contemporary standard of higher education. The caliber of a nation's higher education system, along with its evaluation and oversight, plays a vital role in both its social and economic prosperity.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it significantly influences the international standing of that educational system. The establishment of a formal quality assurance and accreditation (QAA) framework serves as a critical gateway to participation in a knowledge-based global society and facilitates access to the competitive global talent market. Developing countries are increasingly striving to enhance their global competitiveness by implementing formal QAA systems within their higher education sectors. This heightened focus on quality is driven by a growing acknowledgment of the significant impact that medical education can have on development and its rapid evolution.<sup>2</sup>

Quality Assurance (QA) is essential for establishing the standards necessary to uphold or enhance the quality of medical education and healthcare services.<sup>3</sup> It encompasses the methodologies of teaching, learning, and assessment that medical colleges are expected to implement.<sup>4</sup> To ensure that their graduates meet the competencies outlined in the BMDC curriculum objectives, medical colleges must integrate Quality Assurance practices. This process is ongoing and involves the evaluation, assessment, and implementation of improvements to ensure that the outcomes align with quality specifications. Such a systematic and structured approach to continuous enhancement guarantees that the educational offerings remain

pertinent to contemporary needs. Effective management of quality assurance can be achieved through institutional oversight, which should incorporate course evaluations, peer assessments, and comprehensive evaluations.<sup>5</sup>

Accreditation is a process, widely used in higher education to evaluate the quality educational programs. Quality assurance in education can be achieved through transparent selection processes, rigorous entrance examinations, standardized curricula regulated at a central level, self-assessment practices, and institutional academic audits. Additionally, the involvement of external examiners and the necessity of national examinations prior to licensure further enhance quality control. In response to the growing population and the corresponding demand for healthcare professionals in Bangladesh, the number of medical and dental colleges has increased significantly, from 13 in 1990 to 112 in 2023.<sup>6</sup> The ongoing rapid inflation has raised persistent concerns regarding the quality of education in medical colleges. A significant challenge continues to be the shortage of qualified faculty, particularly in the fundamental medical sciences. Regardless of the number of doctors trained and placed in the field, health professionals will be unable to effectively enhance population health and well-being unless they obtain the necessary competencies through a high standard of medical education.<sup>7,8,9</sup> The Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC) serves as the sole governing body responsible for the accreditation and regulation of undergraduate medical and dental education within Bangladesh. Its role is crucial in maintaining the quality of medical education, aligning it with the dynamic requirements of the healthcare delivery system and societal expectations. The BMDC has introduced a new curriculum that is currently undergoing evaluation to assess its validity, measurability, acceptability, and compatibility with both the local context and the shifting global perspectives.<sup>6</sup> There are also lacking in updated BM&DC technical authority to provide accreditation and furnish training to quality assurance units in medical colleges to prepare colleges to meet new standards. Medical educators are expressing growing apprehension regarding the characteristics of the existing BM&DC accreditation standards, the procedures involved in accreditation, and the regulatory body's

constrained technical capabilities to guarantee the quality of medical education within our nation.<sup>4</sup>

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