

## **New Trends at the TSMU: Developing a Concept of Medical Education**

*Ramaz Khetsuriani, Besarion Kilasonia, Gaiane Simonia,  
Zaza Avaliani*

Tbilisi State Medical University, Georgia

**A**s it is stated in Bologna Declaration of June 19, 1999, key component of existence of stable, peaceful and democratic society in Europe is higher education, educational cooperation between European countries and creation of integral educational space in Europe. This is a long, gradual, rather painful but irreversible process, which represents a precondition for successful development of European Community. In this regard so called Post-Soviet countries need special attention and support from the side of European official structures, as for long periods of time these countries were somewhat isolated from main strategic directions of development of European society.

Anticipated integration of Central and Eastern Europe countries into European Union has conditioned increasing interest towards standards and requirements of medical education. We would like to emphasize the fact, that modern medical education requires advanced medical and teaching technologies, which reflect economical development of the country. Above-mentioned countries are in rather poor situation as their newly independent national economics are still in the process of formation. Considering aforementioned, implementation of modern standards of medical education without a strong international support (consultative, technical, financial) seems absolutely impossible.

On the difficult road of solving above-described problems, we consider of particular importance the working visit of Professor Ioan Bocsan, President of Task Force on Medical Education in Eastern European Countries, Board Member of AMEE.

Since 1998, when TSMU has become a member of AMEE, we started to gradually fill informational vacuum formed after the collapse of Soviet Union. We were

initiators of reform of existing medical education system not only in Georgia, but in entire Caucasus Region

You have already been acquainted with existing format of teaching system in our University, now we will try to present the objectives that we plan to solve

- Precise identification of final outcome of teaching process
- Elaboration of effective structure of reform of teaching curriculum
- Selection of optimal method of teaching
- Elaboration of optimal methods and criteria of assessment of knowledge
- Designing indicators of monitoring of teaching curriculum
- Assessment of level of knowledge of faculty staff and creation of relevant system of their re-qualification
- Creation of a basis for post-graduate education (residency, scientific research and continuing medical education)
- Preparation of Georgian textbooks matching modern standards
- Creation of proper material and technical basis for theoretical and clinical studies

Similarly to other Post-Soviet countries, above-presented objectives are conditioned by the following factors:

- Educational system used to be strongly centralized, ruled by the state in most cases; this system is ineffective and inadequate;
- Majority of academic staff is not familiar with modern forms and methods of teaching;
- Deficiency of modern teaching equipment (especially of computers) and of properly equipped clinical bases.

So called European "Doctors' Directive" 93/16 defines main criteria of European Union that must be met by all higher medical educational institutions of member countries. These are: duration of teaching process (6 years) and total number of teaching hours (5500 hours)

At present duration of teaching process at TSMU is 7 years. Total number of teaching hours is 8800 (2712 of them on 6th and 7th years). Number of teaching disciplines is more than 70. In this regard, together with professor Bocsan we have elaborated the following strategies:

- Teaching only major disciplines on the General Specialization Stage;
- Merging certain disciplines, decreasing number of teaching hours to the minimum;
- Complete reorganization of certain disciplines (e.g. medical chemistry, military training);
- Transfer of part of the disciplines to elective (optional) and facultative courses;
- Increase in number of hours in certain disciplines, for example anatomy, internal medicine and pediatrics (needs to be considered that in Georgia like many other post-soviet countries pediatricians are being trained at separate Faculty of Pediatrics).

Teaching curriculum of Dental Faculty needs to be revised, as well.

Central Methodological Council, main strategic organ of methodological support of teaching process at our University, has started to work in this direction. Involvement of students in this process and consideration of their opinion will be encouraged.

Teaching curriculum of Pharmacy Faculty has already been revised according to modern requirements. At this faculty we have successfully implemented so called stepwise assessment system, which implies summarized evaluation at the end of each stage of teaching process.

For successful incorporation in European accreditation system, particular attention is paid to the implementation of credit transfer system in our University. In European medical education system it means 900 academic hours and 60 credits annually. This is going to be the most painful part of our reform. In all Post-Soviet countries system of payment to faculty members was based on the principle, that salaries are proportional to number of academic hours. Academic staff of each Department was being formed according to the same principle. For example, Assistant Professor had to teach 600 academic hours annually in order to accomplish requirements of one academical position and receive relevant salary. Similarly, Associate Professor had to teach 500 hours and Professor - 400 hours. The payment system based on number of academic hours needs to be revised with government of the country to fit the credit system context, where salaries are calculated according to number of students. In this process, we need strong support from the side of AMEE leadership.

Another important issue in reform process was choice of optimal teaching method for TSMU. We went through different teaching models and methods probed in developed countries of Europe: problem-based learning, distant learning, outcome-based, technology-based etc. But most of them are not appropriate in the settings of developing economy of our country. This is especially true for costly systems such as distant learning, technology-based learning. They require significant funds, complicated techniques and our country cannot afford this.

Detailed analysis of teaching models has demonstrated that most appropriate model for Georgia is outcome-based model of medical education. This is an effective and affordable tool for reformation and management of medical education. According to Georgian Law on Health Care and to European standards, goal of education at TSMU is preparation of General Practice Physicians. Objectives and criteria at each stage of teaching process are defined according to this ultimate goal. For identification of expected results we chose so called three-circle model of outcome-based education designed by Professor Harden, Secretary General of AMEE. For realization of this concept we will need major adjustment of teaching curricula. Both theoretical knowledge and practical skills of the students need to be assessed, which will help to destroy existing barriers between knowledge received at medical university and professional activities of a graduate.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to AMEE leadership and personally to Professor Bocsan for their readiness to support TSMU. We hope that with joint efforts we will be able to achieve our ultimate goal of implementation of European medical education standard.