

Editorial

12 Roles of a Teacher

Medical education has seen major changes over the past decade. Integrated teaching, problem-based learning, community-based learning, core curricula with electives or options and more systematic curriculum planning have been advocated.¹⁻⁵ Increasing emphasis is being placed on self-directed study with students expected to take more responsibility for their own learning. The increasing emphasis on student autonomy in medical education has moved the center of gravity away from the teacher and closer to the student.⁶

Now question arises: What is the role of the teacher in the present context of the changes taking place in medical education? The fact is that medical teachers today have a challenging and multifaceted role. Twelve roles have been identified and these can be grouped in six areas as illustrated in Figure 1.⁶

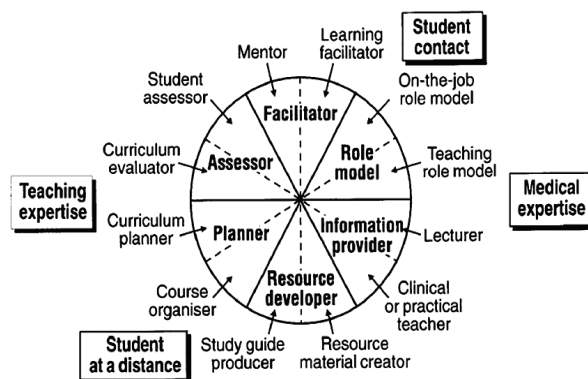


Fig.-1: 12 roles of teacher

12 roles can be explored as follows:

The information provider

a. The lecturer

The teacher is considered as an expert who is knowledgeable in his or her field, and who conveys that knowledge to students to fulfil the learning objectives. In transmitting the knowledge, the teacher may also assist the student to interpret it

using one of a variety of educational strategies by which the teacher explains the subject matter to the student.⁷

b. Clinical or practical teacher

The clinical setting, whether in the hospital or in the community, is a powerful context for the transmission, by the clinical teacher, of information directly relevant to the practice of medicine.

Good clinical teachers can share with the student their thoughts as a 'reflective practitioner', helping to illuminate, for the student, the process of clinical decision making.⁶

The role model

a. The on-the-job role model

The importance of the teacher as a role model is well documented. Walton⁸ concluded "Sociological research has demonstrated the extent to which an important component of learning derives from the example given in their own person by teachers, who significantly influence medical students in many respects, such as in their choice of future career, their professional attitudes, and the importance they assign to different subjects". It is well documented that students learn by observation and imitation of the clinical teachers they respect. Students learn not just from what their teachers say but from what they do in their clinical practice and the knowledge, skills and attitudes they exhibit.⁶

b. The role model as teacher

Teachers serve as role models not only when they teach students while they perform their duties as doctors, but also when they fulfill their role as teachers in the classroom, whether it is in the lecture theatre or the small discussion or tutorial group. The good teacher will have a passion and expresses enthusiasm for teaching that will help to motivate and inspire students. Role modeling

is one of the most powerful means of transmitting values, attitudes and patterns of thoughts and behaviour to students.⁹

The facilitator

a. The learning facilitator

The move to a more student-centered view of learning has required a fundamental shift in the role of the teacher. No longer is the teacher seen predominantly as a dispenser of information, but rather as a facilitator or manager of the students' learning. The more responsibility and freedom given to the student, the greater the shift required in the teachers' role.⁶ teacher will encourage and facilitate them to learn by themselves and will guide them to become a lifelong learner. This changing role of the teacher is also reflected in the constructivist approach to learning, in which knowledge is 'constructed' in the mind of the student and is constantly evolving.¹⁰

b. The mentor

Mentoring can be viewed as a special relationship that develops between two persons with the mentor always there for support but not dependency.¹¹ Lingham and Gupta¹² mentioned that It is about helping a person to learn within a supportive relationship. Grayson et al¹³ found that students both expect and want their lecturers to be a source of help.

The assessor

a. The student assessor

One of the most important tasks of a teacher is to assess the student's learning outcome. Assessment offers perhaps the greatest challenges facing medical education today and it is possible for someone to be an 'expert teacher' but not an 'expert examiner'.⁶ The assessment of students is an integral part of teaching. Teachers are responsible for taking adequate steps to ensure that assessment of students is valid, reliable, fair, and in line with course objectives. Moreover, teachers need to provide timely feedback in formative exam. Feedback enables learners to recognize their deficiencies and reinforces good performance which has a motivating influence on the learner.

b. The curriculum assessor

Along with assessment of the students' learning, teachers' responsibility is to assess the course and curriculum delivered. Monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching of courses and curricula is now recognised as an integral part of the educational process

The planner

a. The curriculum planner

Curriculum planning is an important challenging role for the teacher. Trained teachers have to use their expertise to adopt different approaches to curriculum planning² according to the need of the society. Much of the creativity and power in teaching lies in the design of the curriculum

b. The course planner

Detailed planning is required at the level of the individual course or phase of the curriculum. More recently along with discipline-based teaching, curriculum focuses on to integrated teaching and problem-based learning. Such approaches need to be reflected in course design and its implementation. Course planning, like planning the curriculum, requires trained up and sincere teaching staffs. Participation in course planning gives the teacher an opportunity to exert a significant influence on the educational process of his institution.

The resource developer

a. The resource material creator

With problem-based learning and other student-centered approaches, students are dependent on having appropriate resource material available for use. Teacher should be competent in developing learning resources in the form of handout and multimedia presentation. The new technologies have greatly expanded the formats of learning materials to which the student may have access and make it much easier to take more responsibility for their own education.⁶ Video or audio recordings of lectures and web-based presentation will help students to cope up with E-learning.

b. The study guide producer

A study guide is an educational tool presented in electronic or printed form, produced and designed

for students to use independently. It indicates what should be learnt and how can be learnt. It assists in the management of students learning as it contains an overview for the course, prerequisite, learning outcome, learning opportunities and assessment details.¹⁴ Study guides encourage students to take more responsibilities and guide them in self-directed learning.

Consideration of the above-mentioned multi-dimensional roles of the teacher should be part of the culture of good teaching practice keeping in mind that the teacher's role goes well beyond information giving. As student achievement correlates with the quality of the teacher, the need for staff development programmes and the training of medical teachers in education has been recognised.

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