

International Social Accountability and Accreditation Think Tank

Summary of 1st session held on March 11th, 2021

Concept of Social Accountability

- Just as accreditation varies from country to country, so does the understanding and application of social accountability. Accreditation is dynamic through context and diversity and so is social accountability, but both still require a basic and shared understanding.
- There is variable understanding of what social accountability *concretely* means, how it relates to the concepts of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) of community service, and of medical schools' accountability to meet the societal health care needs by adapting their education, research and service delivery missions. The application of social accountability not only in preparing future practitioners but to all activities of a medical school, rests in moving geopolitical and temporal contexts, and at the interface between higher education and health ministries.
- Notwithstanding it is essential the universal principles of social accountability be recognized and applicable universally. Thus, a consensus must be reached on a *practical* definition of social accountability and mechanisms to ensure that medical schools rise to practice that definition.
- Social accountability concerns the continuum of medical education (undergraduate, postgraduate, professional development) as well as the research and service missions of the Faculties.

Accreditation process

- Accreditation and quality assurance processes vary between and within countries; they are lacking in many countries.
- Accreditation involves various levels of authority, stakeholders and training.
- Countries that own their accreditation standards can more easily adapt their standards to social accountability than countries that use international (e.g., WFME) standards.
- Institutions need to adopt a culture of programmatic evaluation of which accreditation is just one tool.
- Politics, governments, institutional, and programmatic leadership can strongly influence education curricula, accreditation, and social accountability.

- External parties such as WFME, ECFMG, WHO, play an important role; however, change must come from national bodies and implemented within institutions, driven by internal and external stakeholders.
- The internationalization of accreditation in order to meet other nations' requirements (e.g. CFMG requirements) seems opposite in focus to the goal of social accountability to serve the needs of a defined, local population.

Social Accountability and Accreditation

- Social accountability must be explicitly expressed in the schools' mission statement
- Canada's accreditation standard on social accountability is regarded as best practice in specific reference to educational programs; many want to learn more about the processes that made it possible.
- Rather than being expressed through a single accreditation standard, a social accountability lens should permeate all standards.
- Accreditation standards are essential for social accountability to be given serious consideration.
- Continuing advancement and regular review of SA standards, i.e. continuous quality improvement (CQI) needed as societal needs and capacity for assessments change. An audit ("tick box") of simple quality assurance will be inadequate.
- The WHO has a reporting tool that countries can use to identify social accountability standards in their country.
- Integrating social accountability into accreditation systems requires
 - 1) Culture/Commitment (Mission, Government Adoption)
 - 2) Process (Instruments, Independent Analysis, Accountability tools)
 - 3) Assessment of outcomes
- Means are required to ensure accreditation standards are fully achieved (on social accountability and others) especially in contexts where institutions are independent of external authority.
- Consultation/engagement/sponsorship/support is key with all pentagram partners and more specifically mentioned government, health organizations, communities/patients and faculties of medicine. Engagement of civil society is also an important. How can this be done in an authentic manner?
- Empowerment of the student body is important in developing SA within accreditation and its application within institutions.

Social Accountability Metrics

- What metrics should be used to assess progress towards social accountability?
- Metrics used need to be contextualized, just as accreditation and social accountability are context-specific.
- Metrics should include impact on health priorities and, where possible, on health status.
- Accreditation standards must lead to concrete achievement and metrics should explicitly define the broad intent of standards and the feedback loops served by the measurements chosen.