



# IDENTIFICATION OF OBSTACLES DURING CLINICAL EDUCATION FOR INDIAN PHYSICAL THERAPIST STUDENTS.

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## ABSTRACT

Faculty of Physiotherapy colleges were loaded with responsibilities for producing physical therapist workforce and physical rehabilitation scientist. Current report suggest that physiotherapy curriculum is lagging behind as per the need of society. It seems that physical therapist students were lacking in knowledge and skills as per need of current scenario. The majority of teaching faculty want effective teaching to prepare well but, multiple and complex factors such as curriculum, culture, environment and financial issues hampering their effort. Curriculum impediments such as disagreement of learning needs, goals and objectives of curriculum and so on. The modern trend alters the attitudes of students towards faculty and vice versa. Others factors such as environmental barriers such as time constrains, practical class room settings and so on. The financial barrier such as lack of educational budgets for physiotherapy researches and other issues. This article find out the barriers and suggested effective measure to solve the current challenges and to solve the current issues.

Key Words: **Clinical education, Barriers, Physiotherapist, India.**

## INTRODUCTION

Physiotherapy is an allied health care profession, which needs four and half year baccalaureate degree program. Graduate scholars have to learn more than thirty five different subjects and almost every subject has its own practical aspects. Moreover the students have to go through clinical training in each semester and at the end, they have to undergo six months intensive compulsory rotatory internship training. Similarly, the clinical and academic instructors are required to instruct the students continuously during the course program. With the soul aim of teacher is to infuse the technical knowledge and skills from one generation to another generation. Thus, it is a higher responsible and noble job that anyone could have peruse. Physiotherapy faculty members are entrusted with their critical duty. They must prepare the future workforce of physiotherapist for practice and serve the humanity in the coming centuries. Although Universities and higher educational authorities have revised/modified their curricula and teaching practices over the years, but there are still insufficient for as per need and demand of the society. It has been noted that students are graduating without gaining the true meaning of knowledge and skills which are set for physiotherapist for current work culture. It has been noted that present graduates do not appreciate professional values and ethics which are needed to sustain in health services. The majority of the Indian colleges and universities teachers want to be effective teachers and train the young physiotherapist with high standard of knowledge and skill of professionalism but factors such as curricular, work culture, working environment, and finance and so on, hinder their efforts. The purpose of this article is to delimit several such barriers and address effective steps to improve.

## 1. SYLLABUS VARIATION.

### 1.1 Ambiguous learning objectives

As per our view, syllabus of none of the universities has focused on integrity and application of skills. The present curriculum should have valued given priority to the need of the students to meet the current demand and expectation of our Indian societies, when they start practicing physiotherapy ethically and effectively in present complex and costly health care system. Majority of the eminent professionals of physiotherapist have agreed for an urgent and major curricular alteration for effective education for physiotherapist for practicing in current scenario. Though it has been revised with good intention but the scope of current curriculum evasion may not meet the future physio's learning need. For example, subjects like Yoga asana, meditation, dry needling are some of the controversial subjects which can be taught to young physiotherapist, for better care of patients but on the other hand the controversial question may arise, as these subjects were taught by naturopaths, cryopractitioners, occupational therapist and so on. Austin and colleagues<sup>2</sup> enlighten the importance of psychosocial factors in treating certain health problems, but several physicians doubt on this subject as worthwhile. Similarly many of our Indian universities have introduced the subject such as professional ethics, soft skill communication but has been consider as non-examination subjects or subject with least importance. Majority of faculties were unaware of the contents of training to be provided for youngster. Several such studies cited as similar barrier to non-traditional topics including complementary and alternative therapeutics method<sup>26</sup>. Teaching and learning efforts are becoming more challengeable, when clinical instructors and faculty who are a role model, discriminates between the importance of different subjects and certain topics and its values<sup>18</sup>

### 1.2 Goals and objectives

Several scholars noted several phenomenon that hinders clinical training, such as instructors are often try to deliver wide range of educational goal that are unachievable, which are not possible in clinical setting and within limited time,<sup>27</sup> learners prior knowledge and experiences, faculty members perception on students.<sup>4,11</sup> Broadly constructed goals and objectives which creates confusion about teachers priority. Though the curriculum developers of universities clearly draft the curricular objectives, the young generation teachers neither read the objectives nor use them to guide instruction and evaluation.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.3 Curriculum sequencing

In physiotherapy few subjects need multi-disciplinary approaches. These subjects need multiple checklist, yet faculties from different disciplines rarely meet together to discuss or collaborate on the teaching styles and thus it results inefficient curriculum, with unplanned, inconsistent and termination of objectives.<sup>23</sup> For example, faculties of pre-clinical subjects such as Anatomy, physiology, pathology etc. have very little coordination with clinical faculty members of physiotherapy. Therefore the students loose the continuity of exposures and makes chaotic and inconsistency in learning skills. Moreover students and teacher need sufficient time to create bonding for skills and knowledge transfer, but continuous clinical rotations create problem. The innovative techniques for assessing the students that measures the learning outcome are improving, but need to be standardised. It should match the core goals and objectives as well as to track the student's proficiency in terms of knowledge and understanding. It has been observed that there is no specific teaching protocol prepared by universities and thus it becomes "catch as catch can" which further impairs the learning skills among the graduates.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. CULTURAL OBSTACLES

The uniqueness of India is that being a nation of maximum variation in culture and traits, and still it is able to live happily under one roof. Each culture has its own attitudes, tradition and mores which effects the students, faculties and stakeholder of physiotherapy colleges.<sup>15</sup> It has been observed that culture influences the learning skills and strategies among students. Shell<sup>25</sup> has enlighten that students' attitude and expectations are one of the chief barrier for developing their critical thinking skills. Students prefer lectures than active learning. Even they prefer that the contents should be so delivered to them that can be memorised easily. The consequence of spoon feeding is that it will hamper the problem solving skills and curiosity towards gaining new knowledge and technical skills. Further students tries to discourage non-traditional instruction strategies such as field visits, community health camps, health awareness camps for society and so on.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.1 Faculty attitudes

The negative attitude of the faculty members also affects the teaching skills as well as self-development. Some of them willing to peruse higher education for becoming true sense of academicians whereas few of them choose teaching, to get rid of from chore, challenges facing during patient care in clinic.<sup>13</sup> Such attitudes are generally results from social learning. The academicians generally lack in belief in the usefulness or importance of faculty development program.<sup>27</sup> Most of them are unaware of potential benefits in improving teaching skills. Some of the therapist, believing being a good clinical therapist or junior researcher as a good academicians, but failed to understand teaching itself as a discipline to be mastered.<sup>18</sup> Several studies found that lack of formal preparation loses their confidence in teaching techniques. As a result teachers can't develop beyond the traditional skills as new, creative and novel ways of instructions.<sup>8,16</sup> It has been noted that majority of faculties were lack in formal training in teaching and as well they got very less exposure to attend such programs.<sup>7,14</sup> Many surveys suggest that attitude of teacher influences the evaluation outcome. The faculty members prefer to give grace marks, even to the candidate who deserve fail.<sup>27</sup>

## 2.2 Educational Institutional support

Certain faculties prefer research and patient care than to give value to the teaching methods.<sup>18,27</sup> Moreover majority of the physiotherapy colleges failed to standardised the teaching expectation and responsibilities. Additionally senior faculty members failed to guide as how to maintain the balance between patient care and teaching responsibilities.<sup>9</sup> These problems arises due to lack of exposure for faculty development programs and as a consequences though faculties try very sincerely to achieve their responsibilities but end up with frustration.<sup>14</sup> due to the inability to balance between their clinical sounds and their syllabus completion

The importance of physiotherapy clinics, hospitals and physical rehabilitation centres not are only for teaching about disease and remedies but also they teaches the responsibilities for carrying out its fundamentals<sup>27</sup> The faculty members often believes that the management of the institution does not value teaching activities because promotion and tenures committee take decision based on financial criteria.

To encounter this believes, several educational institution developed standards for teaching faculty in terms of promotion and incentives. Several private educational organisations revised their policies and implemented the set of criteria for education-focused faculty feel valued, to reduce loss of faculty, to set criteria for meeting standards of education excellence.<sup>3,6,19,20,22</sup>

The teaching faculty expects support from their institution and governing agencies against malpractices and grievances. Due to false advertisement by close competitors against physiotherapist, the intensity of supervision increases, which gives less freedom in patient care, limit the opportunity to learn new techniques & skills and creates dislikes among new clients and in society.<sup>35</sup> The educational organisation need to support the teachers for teaching and clinical care responsibilities, with great care.

In majority of the private universities and colleges, during recruitment process of physiotherapy faculty members, interviewer / management shows less interest to appoint experts or passionate faculty members due to several avoidable or unavoidable short-term reasons. Due to lack of foresightness and poor recruitment abilities the recruitment committee members hires such new faculty members who have to develop his/her teaching skills, who are lacking passions in teaching, who teaches when time permits, and also may have poor teaching skills.<sup>18</sup> As per our view, the recruitment should be from multi discipline with professional and educational experts from allied streams of physiotherapy, such as Physician and surgeons of different field, orthotics and prosthetic experts along with physiotherapist with different expert field.<sup>18,30</sup> Finally for growth and development of any physiotherapy institution society donors and government policies should be priorities. Even small projects on physical rehabilitation should be allotted by different government health & research agencies for promotion of institution.<sup>47</sup>

## 3. ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC HURDLES

Facility barrier means physical setting where physiotherapy education occurs, including time, space, manpower, and at least basic instruments and technological resources. Financial barrier means revenue and resources needed for teaching physiotherapy oriented clinical subjects.

### 3.1 Time and resource

Busy physiotherapy clinic or unit is not ideal place for teaching the clinical and practical aspects for new generation of physical therapist to make them master in diagnostic and therapeutic skills. Physical therapist need time for providing clinical quality service and proper documentation. Whereas fixed duty hours limit their availabilities and in consequences, it lacks of proper care for clinical teaching for young therapist. Time is one of the major barrier to effective teaching.<sup>8,14,21,27</sup>

In generally many of the physiotherapy institutions and hospitals do not have financial support for clinical physiotherapist who support teaching in pre-clinical subjects such as exercise therapy, manual therapy and so on or clinical curriculum like application of physiotherapy in different clinical conditions. Moreover, many institutions discourage teaching by applying pressure on faculty members to use them efficiently to regenerate facility-based revenue. However, the administration tries to equalize the efforts and work loads of faculty members by providing compensations, but limitation of funds at the institutional level hampers the process of compensation. Educational and clinical settings, access to patients, students variability, teaching supporting services and research funding are the other reasons for financial burden for the institute and as a consequences it affects teaching and learning process including inappropriately designed physical space for teaching, limited to educational support, limited purchase or availability of resources for practical and clinical assessment for patients.

### 3.2 Educational and clinical settings, patients contacts, student unevenness, teaching axillary facilities and research funding.

For physiotherapy, appropriate and sufficient space and infrastructures are needed required for providing education and training such as ISOKINETIC equipment's, gait lab equipment's, robotic rehabilitation equipment which are the part of the state of art facilities for physiotherapy services. Since these items are not exactly for revenue generation so these are given least priority for purchase. Though the physiotherapist teachers are highly skilled, they practice in a setting that mimics actual health care environment in which their learner will ultimately work.

The physiotherapist are least interested on teaching in different clinical settings, patient's demography and duty plans. This hesitancy reduces the likelihood to transfer the knowledge and skills from one generation to another generation. Thus students are less willing to learn in other environment other than clinical setting. It is also noted that rotation of students makes patient bit uncomfortable and add additional discomfort during their care.<sup>17,24</sup> In vice versa, lack of patient for teaching also create environmental barrier for learning new diagnosis and therapeutic skills.<sup>4</sup> Depending on learning capacity few students can understand the concepts on single observation whereas other students need more patients of same conditions to understand the concepts about the disorder and application of therapeutic skills. Some students require more instructions from the teachers and some need fewer instructions to understand the same concept. Thus teacher need time for teaching and enough willingness of patients for teaching the skills for different learners.

In addition, Skills experts such as chiropractor, acupuncture therapist, masseur, yogic guru and other multiple discipline professionals need to be hired for advance exposure. These experts help us to understand new concept for healing remedies. More over physiotherapist will be exposed to new ideas and concept, as it can be used for their own scientific studies and research and more chances to attract grants for small or medium projects from the govt. or research organisation for the physiotherapy institutions.<sup>11,30</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation may not be the exact solution for the above said barriers for the teaching of clinical training for physical therapist but it has been tried to find solution amicably in following-methods.

1. **Create and analyse desired education outcomes:-** Teachers need proper understanding of student's need and goals and need to analyse the level of goal achievement by students. The physiotherapy teaching institute should set certain standards for knowledge, skills and professional qualities that are suitably defined and which public and society should understand. The teaching techniques should be clear, concise and easy understandable language where graduates should understand easily.
2. **Determine acceptable evidence of performance proficiency and use:** Teacher need to inform their students about their performance in order to plan their effort. Moreover teaching plan should be modified if the students unable to meet the established criteria. Based on students achievement and failure areas teachers should make their teaching plan in responsible way.
3. **Development of patient-physiotherapist-students relationship/bonding:** A strong mentorship is needed to encourage long-term relationship with faculty and with students. This will help them in overall clinical learning experiences, able to coordinate with teachers, patients, and ability for caring patients for long time.
4. **Involvement of multidisciplinary health professionals in the education mission:** Health care is a multidisciplinary system where nurses, physician, lab technologist, health care workers and many more specialists join together for caring the patients. Collaboration in educational activities will increase the interdisciplinary exposure, will develop team spirit and will promote quality care for patients. Moreover such effort faculty shortage, saves time and avoid revenue damage
5. **Development of reward and accountability system for teaching skills:** Administration and management of physiotherapy institution should focus to the importance of promotion and up-gradation on the basis of teaching skills, research, conference, seminars, workshops, community services and so on for advancement of standard of faculty members based on educational programs. The faculty members scrutinise their own peer group for their teaching responsibilities and accountability with acceptable quality and consistency. Faculty members must be held accountable for the quality and quantity of teaching performance, which is their prime duty. They must ~~held~~ understand their duties and criteria for excellence, and must ~~be~~ initiate appropriate action to resolve substandard performance. They must show eagerness to learn and update ~~by~~ them. Faculty members should spend their time for preparation of lessons and preparation their own teaching materials. They must exert continuous effort for improving teaching skills.
6. **Allocate educational and research environment:** Faculty members who incur loses of clinical income due to academic activities should be compensated and those who are mainly focused on clinical activities should support their colleagues who are carrying out research and education. The senior faculty members as well the scholars are needed to be involved in developing new facilities planning so that space and resources should be prioritised and be can used with full potentiality.
7. **Recruit educational specialists for proper educational development:** Experienced and qualified faculty members should provide coaching to other faculty members who want to assess and improve their teaching efficiency. Such senior faculty members should revise the curriculum as per need base and should introduce innovations of technology. They can also provide proper evaluation system, design multimedia instructional materials and so on, which are needed for ideal educational advancement. Collaborating with such experts, institutions can save time and money and may achieve desired projects for young scholars.
8. **Develop a national or global level educational research:** In order to promote physiotherapy education an institution should be involved for the development of faculty members and related educational research programmes. In faculty development program physiotherapist should focused on teaching skills and research programs, which could be arranged by arranging series of workshops, seminars, conferences which are often required for advance degrees. Generally the degree programs has set of standard courses and then focused is given on areas of interests. The physiotherapy institutions should come forward and offer faculty development program through continuous medical education programs such as seminars, workshop, and hands on based skills, scientific conferences at national and international level. The outcome of such events will improve educators, who can develop the quality of physiotherapeutic education.

9. **Increase of projects and grants for promotional and development of physiotherapy educational researches (CSR projects):** Though several public and private organisation support for research in health, but it is an unfortunate story for Indian physical therapist faculties. Like other health sciences, physiotherapist should be equally valued in terms of research and scientific development for growth of professionals and scientific research for graduates and scholars. Educational organisations and trusts of different public and private bodies should support financially for increasing facility shortage, development, educational research, curriculum developments and other teaching innovation skills for physiotherapy faculty members.
10. **Create an international level physiotherapy research institutes:** India has several research institutes for healthcare such as institute of Ayurveda studies and research, Vallabh Bhai Patel chest institute, haffkine institute, school of tropical medicine, national institute of communicable disease, CCRYN, PGIMER, ICMR, King institute of preventive medicine and many more for medical and health related research institute. Similarly, physiotherapy should have bodies of separate or collaborative research organisations where data of different issue can be compiled. Innovative educational and scientific research should be encouraged. It will help toward gain the quality and compatibility and utility of physiotherapy professional and further support educational policy development implementation and evaluation. This will help to build our own teaching skills, teaching attitudes. Educational out come and performance trend. This will help us to compare us our level of skill with that other nations and can assess our position and analyse our quality at international level.

## CONCLUSION

For every good thing, challenges will come and for every challenges there is solution and remedies. It is law of nature. This article has tried to find out possible challenges with its causes and has tried to provide some suggestions and recommendation. These are the possible challenges faced by different educational fraternities related to physiotherapy. Amicable solutions can come out if implemented honestly. The basic intension is to restore the respect for physiotherapy education and improve research and patients care. It is an aim of our physiotherapy faculty members to create suitable environment where they can be successful in their carrier and can be focused in teaching-learning process. They should be able to prepare educational policies and can practice with no limits.<sup>49</sup> We believe that physiotherapy practice needs certain changes, which can break down the curricular, cultural, environmental and financial barriers. Because society and young generation depend on us.

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