

Review article

Libyan Medical Education Program and WFME Accreditation Process: A Brief Report

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Abstract

The emphasis on national accreditation follows the announcement by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) that, beginning in 2024, it will only recognize medical schools or programs accredited by an agency recognized by the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) Recognition Programme or an equivalent standard. As consequence, A six-member committee has been set up under the chairmanship of a quality assurance expert from the National Center for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Educational and Training Institutions (NCQAAETIs) to prepare the national standards manual based on WFME criteria. As result, in 2021, the NCQAAETIs committee had translated and implemented the accreditation standards applicable to the WFME to facilitate the recognition process. This manual is in line with the world health organization's requirement that all countries are to have established accreditation mechanisms for health training institutions by 2020. In this report, we briefly describe the current situation for the national medical education accreditation in the ear of WFME.

Keywords: Libya, Education, Accreditation, WFME.

Introduction

The progression of developing countries can be measured by how they integrate education into daily life and how this affects their healthcare systems. The rising global demand for healthcare has had an impact on medical education, leading to a number of trends such as an increase in the number of medical schools and students, as well as migration for medical education and training [1]. This rapid expansion of the medical education system has raised concerns about the quality of individual graduates and their educational programs. Medical school education is critical to any country's progress. Many countries, including Libya, will be affected by the current universal advancements and improvements in medical education [2]. Over the last two decades, medical education has undergone significant changes around the world [3]. Educational institutions, mainly private colleges and universities, play crucial part in any country by attaining universal competitive benefits. As such, they are likely to yield graduates who hold the essential knowledge and skills required in the international industries and markets [4]. The mission is too remarkable that educational institutions have to frequently and repetitively audit themselves against international standards and stay themselves up-to-date of innovative advances. Thus, there is an urgent necessity to further boost the quality of education [5].

Accreditation process in Libya

The accreditation of educational institutions in Libya is a set of complex and precise processes, involving two main parties: the first party: the National Center for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Educational and Training Institutions (NCQAAETIs) through the teams in charge of external audits (the auditor), which is the legally authorized body to grant accreditation, through its standards, and whoever has the appropriate decision based on the results of the evaluation. The second party is the educational institution or the educational program (audit), where the educational institution must plan well and be fully prepared for the external audit process, meet all the requirements of the audit process and achieve indicators standards, and providing evidence that the institution/program meets at least the minimum requirements for accreditation [6].

Accreditation in Libyan higher education institutions are a method of formally evaluating and accrediting an educational institution whether it has met or failed to meet the standards of the NCQAAETIs. The institutional accreditation criteria guide for all educational institutions consists of nine criteria, eight criteria for programmatic accreditation for all disciplines except medicine, and nine criteria in the first part consisting of 207 indicators for faculties of medicine, dentistry, and basic medical education programs. The accreditation process requires a visit to the institution's website / educational program to conduct the auditing, by the auditing team in charge [7].

Libyan Medical Education Program and accreditation

Libya's higher education system has faced numerous challenges in recent years, resulting in a system that fails to meet international standards and, more importantly, social needs. Enrollment in all public Libyan educational institutions provides free education at all levels, resulting in an extremely high university admissions rate [8]. As a result, any system that grows rapidly faces challenges and pressures.

Medical higher education institutions (both private and public) have been required to go through the NCQAAETIs accreditation process by the end of 2022 in order to improve the quality of medical education in Libya. NCQAAETIs is a self-acting center with a mission to comply with quality accreditation and assurance in all fields of education, including medical education, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as established by resolution number 18, 2010 from the ministry of higher education. With the responsibility of applying standards, measures, and procedures for accreditation, as well as maintaining quality assurance, NCQAAETIs has adapted criteria derived from global experience while respecting local characteristics [9].

Based on the available information sorted by the NCQAAETIs database in June 2022, there are only 4 accredited governmental medical faculties out of 15 faculties had granted institutional accreditation, with no faculty had obtained a programmatic accreditation. On the other hand, only 5 medical private faculties out of the rest 38 faculties had received programmatic accreditation, demonstrating the difficulty that public higher education faces in meeting these requirements [6].

WFME criteria in medical education

In a move aimed at improving the quality of medical education in Libya, public, private and foreign medical higher education institutions are now required to secure accreditation from the NCQAAETIs by the end of 2022. The focus on national accreditation comes as the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) announced that, beginning in 2024, it will only recognize medical schools or programs accredited by an agency recognized by the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) Recognition Program or an equivalent standard [10].

WFME published the first set of international standards in 2003 [11]. WFME, which was founded in 1972, is an international organization dedicated to medical doctor education and training. The WHO and the World Medical Association (WMA) established the WFME with the mission of evaluating agencies that accredit basic medical education. The global task force on accreditation in medical education was established in 2004 by WHO and the WFME. In the same year, 26 members from 23 countries representing all six WHO-WFME regions gathered to discuss how WHO and WFME could assist in the establishment of long-term accreditation systems to ensure high-quality medical education [12].

The WFME has set global standards for quality improvement in basic medical education to support quality improvement in medical education. These standards use the national institutions, organizations, and authorities responsible for medical education to guide the development and evaluation of the medical education program, facilitate the diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses related to the medical education program, and stimulate quality improvement. In the recognition programme, the recognition criteria stipulate that the accreditation body/center should work towards developing pre-determined, agreed-upon, and publicly available standards, which should be appropriate for the local context [4]. The standards used may be WFME standards, or other standards appropriate for a local setting. However, there is no exact percentage of the recognition criteria that must be met provided the overall assessment shows that the accredited body/center is operating to an acceptable standard. The assessment procedures are rigorous, and the agency or accreditation center is likely to be successful and meet a very high percentage of the criteria [13].

In accordance with the criteria for recognition of the World Federation's certificate, the accreditation system must be medical-specific or have similar characteristics, and the existence of a general system for all higher education in the country is not necessarily sufficient to assess and ensure the quality and results of medical education [14]. In the case of medicine program, the standards address the mission and social accountability of the medical school,

the outcomes of medical programs, and ensure that subjects are covered in the curriculum such as professionalism, medical ethics, patient safety, and the identification of appropriate content in biomedical, behavioral, social, and clinical specialties. The standards and accreditation process must also include clinical training: by clerks or rotations in medical specialties and in a variety of clinical settings. These aspects of medical education must be adopted into the medical education accreditation process [10].

Moreover, the accreditation process should build on appropriate expertise by involving contributors with an academic background or professional interests in medicine, health professions education, and healthcare in the evaluation of medical and educational programs and in making decisions about accreditation [15]. By including standards or criteria related to topics related to medicine and utilizing medical expertise in accreditation, a general accreditation system can meet the needs of medical education and be recognized by WFME.

Steps in WFME criteria by the Libyan authority

Accreditation of medical programs is an important process for improving the quality of medical education, by verifying that medical schools are competent in providing medical education, and that medical education programs are appropriate [13]. The WFME standards are based on our current understanding of basic principles and best practices in the design, maintenance and promotion of medical education programmes. The standards aim to guide the development and evaluation of the medical education program, facilitate the diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses related to the medical education program, and stimulate quality improvement. Each institution or regulatory body should review the relevant standards and suit the local context [13].

It is beneficial if local standards are aligned with the original WFME accreditation standards. However, not all standards will have application in every adoption case. It is possible for a medical school to obtain a satisfactory overall evaluation and maintain accreditation (where applicable) without meeting all criteria and necessarily substandard. The WFME does not accredit medical institutions, including colleges, universities, and educational and training institutions working in the medical field. National bodies/accreditation centers can obtain recognition or accreditation from the federation according to the system and procedure in force with the federation.

In this context, the NCQAAETIs, by the year of 2020, has started the process of obtaining recognition from the WFME authority according to the procedures followed and the requirements for obtaining recognition [13]. Besides, six-member committee has been set up under the chairmanship of a quality assurance expert from NCQAAETIs to prepare the National Standards Manual based on WFME criteria. As result, in 2021, the NCQAAETIs committee had translated and implemented the accreditation standards applicable to the WFME to facilitate the recognition process. This manual compromise three main sections; the first one concerning the accreditation of basic medical education, and contains nine criteria including; vision and mission, educational program, student assessment, student affairs, faculty affairs, educational resources, program evaluation, administration and governance, and continuous development and improvement. The second section was related to accreditation of higher medical education, and contains the following criteria; vision and mission, education and training, learning assessment, student affairs, academic and career staff, educational resources, evaluation of the educational process, administration and governance, and continuous development and improvement. The third and final section was for the continuing medical education accreditation standards and sustainable training, and involved seven criteria of; vision and mission, education and training, program implementation, trainee doctor, educational and training resources, assessment and evaluation, continuous improvement.

Conclusion

For medical faculties to be accredited, it has to apply to the NCQAAETIs to obtain national accreditation and then to be recognized by the WFME through the NCQAAETIs. Furthermore, medical faculties can obtain accreditation from anybody/quality assurance center and accreditation from outside the country in the event of no objection from the state in which the faculty is located, provided that the body/accreditation center is recognized or accredited by the WFME.

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