

OPINION

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL EDUCATION A Policy Analysis

Policy analysis is a formal discipline within the field of education. Policy analysis in education is used to equip those governance positions in secondary school and institution of higher learning with tools they need to direct educational practice. As a formal discipline, however, policy analysis has not gained widespread acceptance within medical education. Medical educators should consider using this tool to better equip educational decision-makers, within individual medical schools.

A proposed definition is as follows: "Medical education policy analysis, is the field of study and practice, wherein the priorities, values, resources, and educational processes devoted to medical education are examined". Policy analysis in medical education should be viewed, as a broader construct, than that of curriculum studies.

The process of analyzing a given educational policy within a medical school should focus on the following ingredients.

- A. Conceptual: what are the core concepts?
- B. Normative: what ought to be true in regard to the policy?
- C. Theoretical: within what theoretical framework does the policy fit?
- D. Empirical: are there research studies in the literature, which could prove helpful in illuminating the issues?
- E. Economic: what impact would the adoption of the policy have on institutional budgetary resources?
- F. Cultural: How are different organizational, racial, gender and professional cultures within the medical school affected?

Policy analysis in medical education appears to be an area that is ripe for future exploration. Research into such areas as education decision-making processes, academic governance structure, use and control of educational resources, and teaching incentives and reward structures, have recently begun to appear in the medical education literature.

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