

EDITORIAL

INVENTING CME IN PAKISTAN: A SWOT ANALYSIS

Continuing Medical Education [CME] has gained momentum over the past decade and the resistance for its adoption has been diluted all over. SWOT is an acronym for **S**trength **W**eakness, **O**pportunity and **T**hreat. SWOT analysis is a method of analyzing a business [or organization], its resources and its environment. SWOT analysis is instrumental in strategy formulation and selection. It is a strong tool but it involves a great subjective element. It is best used as a guide and not as a prescription. SWOT analysis works through an internal analysis [Audit or Review] and external analysis [Audit or Review]. The internal analysis comprises Strengths and Weaknesses, whereas, the external analysis consists of Opportunities and Threats. SWOT synchronises the institution's resources and capabilities with the competitive environment. Though, basically it was used in business and industry but is found equally useful in developing community health, health care systems, education and even personal growth. SWOT analysis helps in strategic planning by [a] increasing source of information [b] building organisation's strength [c] reversing weaknesses [d] maximizing opportunities [e] overcoming organisation's threats [f] identifying core competencies [g] setting of objectives for planning and in [h] knowing past, present and future to enable to make the plans for tomorrow.

When developing SWOT analysis in CME, all stakeholders must be taken in confidence by repetitive sessions or meetings. The stakeholders include decision makers [Government or Ministries], strategic planners [Dean, Principal, Vice Chancellors], project managers, team members, faculty member, accreditation bodies [CPSP, PM&DC, PNC, PPC, HEC], research organizations [PMRC, PSF, NGO's], funding agencies [Pharmaceuticals, HEC, individuals], professional societies [society for cardiology etc], staff members, students, patients, community users, CME providers, universities and medical colleges,

general practitioners, and hierarchy in health and education administration.

A SWOT analysis for CME may be developed by listing the internal factors of strengths and weaknesses like:-

- a. **Human resources** [faculty, staff, volunteers, board members, target population, students and the like]
- b. **Physical resources** [building, location, equipment, and the like]
- c. **Financial resources** [grants, capitals, funding agencies, other sources of income]
- d. **Activities and Processes** [program, systems of employment and their working]

A SWOT analysis for CME will be complete by listing the external factors of Opportunities and Threats like:-

- a. **Future Trends** [in education strategy, evaluation system, research themes and the like]
- b. **The Economy** [local, national, international]
- c. **Funding Sources** [foundations, trusts, donors, legislatures]
- d. **Demographics** [changes in age, race, gender, culture]
- e. **Physical Environment**
- f. **Legislation** [legitimacy]
- g. **Events** [local, national and international]

The SWOT analysis for CME can be incepted by conducting public forums, arranging listening sessions, conducting sessions of focus groups, organising a retreat, formulating a core-body to reach a consensus, relating the analysis to specific vision/missions, goals, translating analysis to action plan and strategies. The feedback is an essential part for reforming and reframing the system and in the implementation and monitoring the system.

The major significances of SWOT introduction in the development of CME are to build strengths, to minimize weaknesses, to avail opportunities and to counteract/overcome threats. Many developing countries

must build CME on a regular basis. This will require modification of the organizational and training policies in developing countries to achieve the goals for future educational programs. The CME programmes must be invented keeping in view of the parameters of SWOT analysis.

Inventing CME in Pakistan is like turning a ship or an aircraft but it's doable and useful.

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