

---

## The globalization of medical education: bringing the Canadian professional competencies program and problem-based learning to the Indian medical education system

---



*Student Name:* Palika Kohli

*Program Stream:* Globalization and Development

*Research Advisor:* Dr. Karen Trollope-Kumar

*Practicum Organization:* McMaster University; Professional Competencies Program Pilot Project at King George's Medical University in Lucknow, India

*Practicum Supervisor:* Dr. Karen Trollope-Kumar

**Background:** The globalization of medical education has changed medical school curricula around the world in a significant way. Focus has shifted towards a more holistic education, as professionalism and communication are stressed more and more as important parts of any future doctor's training.<sup>1</sup> The Professional Competencies (ProComp) Program at the McMaster Medical School in Hamilton, Ontario, is a direct response to this observed need.<sup>2</sup> This program is divided into seven modules, ranging from 'Self-Care and Self-Awareness' to 'Communication Skills',<sup>2</sup> and seeks to address less academic aspects involved in being a physician. This program is taught through the 'Problem-Based Learning' method, a learning style that has originated at McMaster University and spread throughout the world.<sup>3</sup> Indian medical schools generally report a lack of varied learning styles, and mostly do not include training for their students outside of the science-based curriculum.<sup>4</sup> This has been identified as a problem, among others, that renders aspects of the Indian medical education system as limited in scope and lacking in quality.<sup>4,5</sup> The literature review in this paper explores the impact that curriculums like ProComp and PBL have in various globalized and cultural contexts. It investigates the current situation in Indian medical schools, and seeks to address how a program, such as ProComp would respond to certain needs. Furthermore, faculty and researchers from McMaster are working to collaborate with faculty and students at the King George's Medical University in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh (India) to help implement

the ProComp program. This is currently functioning as a Pilot Project, with shorter ProComp PBL sessions on-campus in India, with both students and faculty. The project is under constant re-evaluation and is working to address important expressed needs in the Indian medical education system. The experiential analysis in this paper explores the ways in which the ProComp program is being translated to the Indian context, and assesses its methods.

**Methodology:** This study was conducted as a targeted literature review of articles from *Global Health*, *PubMed*, *Medline*, and *Web of Science* databases, using the following key words: "globalization", "medical education", "problem-based learning", "cultural context", "Indian medical school", "India", "professional development", "communication skills", "Professional Competencies Program", "McMaster Medical School", and "post-colonial". Exclusion criteria include articles before 1989.

**Findings:** Studies indicate that while Medical education curriculums around the world objectively strive for the same goals (i.e. the best possible training for competent and capable physicians), they vary widely in a contextual sense.<sup>1,6</sup> This can often be due to differences in culture, tradition and religious beliefs.<sup>7</sup> Many Indian scholars and professionals have pointed to flaws and holes in the Indian medical education system, and recommend the implementation of cultural competency training<sup>8,9</sup>, an

---

**The globalization of medical education: bringing the Canadian professional competencies program and problem-based learning to the Indian medical education system**

---

increased focus on professional development and the PBL teaching method.<sup>1,4</sup>

**Conclusions and Recommendations:** PBL itself has spread around the world, as it has been promoted as a new and effective teaching method. It has been shown to be effective when it is implemented in a culturally sensitive manner.<sup>8,9</sup> Bringing ProComp to Indian medical schools would

be addressing an expressed need, but if it is not done in a manner that is humble and willing to adapt to the Indian cultural context, it will not be effective. As the Pilot Project continues at KGMU, it is highly recommended the the project keeps researching and developing its curriculum by incorporating feedback from Indian faculty and students.

#### **Global Health Relevancy**

- The globalization of learning methods such as as PBL and professional development programs are having a positive impact for physicians-in-training around the world
- Globalized curriculums that are implemented in a culturally sensitive manner are the most impactful when being introduced in a new context: the ProComp program is currently working to adapt and effectively address concerns in the Indian cultural context, while also seeking to help students develop into well-rounded physicians