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Research Article

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The Role of Objective Structured Teaching Encounters (OSTE) in Faculty Evaluation: A Review of Methods in the Georgian Context

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Abstract

Background: *Objective Structured Teaching Encounters (OSTE) have become a crucial tool for evaluating and enhancing faculty teaching effectiveness in medical education. Faculty assessment plays a key role in ensuring high-quality instruction and aligning medical education with international standards.*

Objective: *This review examines OSTE as an innovative method for assessing pedagogical skills within the broader context of faculty evaluation in Georgia. Additionally, it explores faculty assessment methods recommended by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) and implemented by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) of Georgia.*

Methods: *The review article was prepared within the framework of the project "Introduction of OSTE-Stations in Georgian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)," implemented in the 2024/25 academic year. By comparing these approaches, this review highlights the advantages and challenges of faculty evaluation strategies, emphasizing how OSTE can address existing gaps in faculty development.*

Results: *Given the rapid evolution of medical education in Georgia and the need for international integration, continuous improvement in teaching methodologies is essential.*

Conclusion: *Through a synthesis of current literature, this article discusses the strengths and limitations of OSTE, offering insights into best practices and future directions for faculty assessment in medical education.*

Keywords: *Medical Education, Medical Teacher, Professional Development, Teaching Skills Assessment, Needs Assessment, Objective Structured Teaching Encounters, OSTE.*

Introduction

Medical education continuously evolves to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. One innovative approach is the Objective Structured Teaching Encounter (OSTE), a standardized method used to evaluate and improve teaching effectiveness through structured assessments. OSTE provides a simulated teaching environment where educators receive structured feedback, fostering professional development. This review examines the role of OSTE in medical education, highlighting its benefits, challenges, and future applications.

The quality of medical education depends significantly on the competency of faculty members. Modern medical teaching requires not only subject expertise but also proficiency in interdisciplinary knowledge, psychology, medical humanities, scientific methodology, and interpersonal communication [1]. Traditional methods of faculty evaluation—such as student feedback, peer reviews, and self-assessments—have been widely used but have significant limitations in objectively assessing teaching effectiveness [2].

Globally, inadequate faculty training negatively affects students' learning outcomes and, consequently, the well-being of the larger population seeking healthcare services [3] (Rutz et al., 2012). The importance of faculty development programs is underscored by various educational organizations, including the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME), which emphasizes structured feedback mechanisms and competency-based evaluations [4].

Georgia has a long-standing tradition in medical education, with the training of doctors and healthcare professionals dating back to 1919. Following its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the country underwent significant educational reforms, particularly after joining the Bologna Process in 2005. As a result, medical education in Georgia is now offered in both Georgian and English. Increased international recognition, ease of access, and the high quality of education have contributed to a rising number of enrollees, with over 12,000 international students currently studying in medical and healthcare programs alongside more than 36,000 local students [5].

In Georgia, medical universities are increasingly being aligned with the international standards of WFME to improve the quality of medical education while maintaining accreditation according to NCEQE recommendations, especially in institutions offering medical programs in English. According to WFME guidelines on teacher and student feedback (Standard 7.2), medical schools are required to systematically collect, analyze, and respond to feedback from both educators and students [6]. This feedback encompasses student evaluations, insights into educational processes, and reports of any misconduct by faculty or students, whether legal action is involved.

Unlike other post-Soviet countries that are not members of the Bologna Process and therefore implement educational processes using traditional curricula, most Georgian institutions strive for innovation. In this context, replacing the traditional, didactic, teacher-oriented, passive method with modern, student-oriented, interactive and result-oriented, integrated curricula requires the acquisition and improvement of modern adult learning skills and interactive teaching approaches.

According to Georgian scholars, one of the primary obstacles in medical education is the insufficient professional-pedagogical training of faculty members [7]. Relying solely on personal experience hinders the development of modern assessment methods and prevents the accurate evaluation of students' competencies. Given the rapid advancements in the field, continuous professional development is essential. It is well established that clinical expertise alone does not equate to effective teaching ability. Moreover, the evolving landscape of medical education necessitates a redefinition of the educator's role. In a student-centered, problem-based learning environment, instructors must transition from being mere knowledge transmitters to facilitators, planners, and evaluators of the learning process.

Furthermore, studies indicate that faculty members tend to overestimate their teaching effectiveness when compared to student feedback, highlighting the need for objective evaluation mechanisms [8].

Methods

The review article was prepared within the framework of the project "Introduction of OSTE-Stations in Georgian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)," implemented in the 2024/25 academic year.

The aim of the article is to review the existing traditional methods of faculty evaluation in HEIs of Georgia and compare them with OST to demonstrate the advantages of OSTE as a modern approach compared to traditional evaluation methods.

Traditional Faculty Evaluation Methods in Georgia

Faculty evaluation in Georgian medical institutions primarily relies on the following methods:

*Student Evaluations***:** Anonymous feedback surveys assess teaching effectiveness from students' perspectives. While widely used, they are often criticized for subjectivity and bias.

*Peer Reviews***:** Faculty members observe and provide feedback on their colleagues' teaching performance. This method promotes professional development but may lack objectivity without standardized criteria [9].

*Administrative Reviews***:** Conducted by department heads or university management, these evaluations consider research output, course design, and institutional engagement but may overlook classroom dynamics.

*360-Degree Evaluations***:** A comprehensive approach that incorporates feedback from students, peers, administrators, and self-reflection.

While these methods provide valuable insights, they often fail to systematically assess an educator's ability to deliver effective instruction, provide feedback, and engage students [10]. One promising approach to faculty assessment is OSTE, a structured method designed to evaluate teaching abilities through standardized teaching scenarios and objective rubrics [11].

OSTE as an Innovative Faculty Evaluation Method

The Objective Structured Teaching Encounter (OSTE), as described by Gormley et al. [12], is a comprehensive assessment framework designed to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching in medical education. This method consists of multiple stations, where faculty members are observed engaging with learners in predefined teaching situations that simulate real classroom interactions. At each station, specific teaching competencies are assessed based on established standards. The evaluation focuses on essential teaching skills such as communication, engagement, feedback delivery, and instructional clarity. Trained assessors/evaluators utilize structured rubrics to evaluate performance, and each station's performance is measured according to predefined objectives.

It is crucial to emphasize that this method does not evaluate a teacher's subject matter expertise. Instead, it focuses exclusively on assessing their communication and pedagogical skills, such as classroom management, feedback delivery, problem-solving, empathy, and other key teaching competencies.

One of the principal features of OSTE is the immediate feedback mechanism, where faculty receive constructive feedback on their performance, promoting continuous improvement. Unlike traditional evaluation methods, OSTE places a strong emphasis on skill development, offering educators actionable recommendations for enhancing their pedagogical approach. Through this structured process, OSTE supports both the evaluation and professional growth of educators, ensuring that they can refine their teaching methods and improve the learning experience for students. A comparison of different methods commonly used to evaluate medical teachers in Georgia is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Comparison of OSTE with Other Faculty Evaluation Methods.

Evaluation Method	Strengths	Weaknesses
Student Evaluations	Direct learner perspective	Subjective, prone to bias
Peer Reviews	Encourages collegial feedback	Potential lack of standardization
Administrative Reviews	Institutional oversight	May overlook classroom dynamics
360-Degree Evaluations	Comprehensive perspective	Complex implementation
OSTE	Objective, skill-focused, immediate feedback	Requires resources, faculty training

Note: Objective Structured Teaching Encounter, OSTE

Studies have shown that faculty members are more receptive to training when it is tailored to their needs and schedules, such as through online or blended learning approaches [13]. The OSTE approach enables participants to identify areas for improvement and determine which specific training programs will help enhance their pedagogical skills. In turn, this insight allows universities administration to strategically plan targeted staff development initiatives.

As mentioned earlier, WFME advocates competency-based education, where teaching is focused on developing specific skills and competencies in students, rather than just content delivery. This aligns with methods like OSTE, which assess teaching effectiveness in terms of competencies like communication, feedback, and problem-solving.

In addition, WFME recommends adopting learner-centered teaching approaches that promote active learning and critical thinking. These methods focus on engaging students actively in their learning process, an idea supported by innovative assessment tools such as OSTE. Also, WFME stresses the need for ongoing professional development for educators. This includes training in new teaching methods, technologies, and assessment strategies, which is in line with the goals of implementing OSTE to enhance faculty skills.

In Georgia, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the urgent need for structured faculty development programs to improve teaching quality and ensure the continuity of medical education [14]. With the shift to remote and hybrid learning environments, it became clear that educators required new skills to effectively engage students and deliver content through digital platforms. The introduction of contextual and needs-based professional development is essential to best improve teaching skills in these new modalities. Such programs should be tailored to address specific challenges faced by faculty, including the adaptation to online teaching, student engagement in virtual environments, and the integration of innovative technologies into pedagogy. By offering targeted professional development, universities can equip their educators with the tools necessary to thrive in evolving educational landscapes, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of medical education in Georgia.

Considering this new reality, it has become increasingly clear how crucial it is to adopt innovative methods, not only in teaching and learning but also in evaluating their effectiveness. The introduction of approaches like OSTE could prove to be one of the most effective solutions for achieving this goal.

Challenges and Implementation of OSTE in Georgia

Despite its benefits, implementing OSTE in Georgia presents several challenges:

*Resource Requirements***:** The successful implementation of OSTE necessitates the availability of qualified assessors, carefully developed standardized cases, and comprehensive evaluation rubrics to ensure consistency and reliability in the assessment process.

*Faculty Acceptance***:** Some educators may resist structured evaluation methods, perceiving them as an additional burden. If not properly explained, the method may be mistakenly perceived as a punitive measure rather than a developmental tool. It is crucial to clarify that its purpose is not to evaluate a teacher's subject matter expertise but rather to assess their pedagogical skills. The primary objective is to identify areas for improvement and provide targeted guidance for future professional development and training, ultimately enhancing teaching effectiveness.

*Institutional Support***:** The successful integration of this initiative demands strong endorsement from university leadership, alongside alignment with national accreditation standards and policies, ensuring both institutional commitment and compliance with regulatory requirements.

As was mentioned above, over the past decade, both the education system as a whole and the delivery of medical education have undergone significant transformations, driven primarily by two key factors: (a) the COVID-19 pandemic and (b) the inevitable integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into teaching and daily life. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of AI in education, reshaping teaching methodologies and learning experiences. Consequently, the qualifications required for the medical workforce have evolved, becoming more stringent and demanding. Despite these global shifts, the need for highly skilled educators in medical education remains paramount due to the field's competitiveness in the labor market. To ensure high-quality instruction, it is essential to implement innovative assessment methods and continuously enhance the pedagogical competencies of medical educators. The recommendation section of the thematic analysis addressing challenges in higher medical education in Georgia emphasizes the need for an effective mechanism to systematically monitor and evaluate faculty performance [15].

Clearly, the implementation of this method will require time and effort; however, it has already been successfully introduced at two Georgian universities—Tbilisi State Medical University and Georgian American University—under the framework of under the framework of World Bank project, financed by the Competitive Innovation Fund CIF (#CIF-2023-13) and has also been introduced to other regional universities [16]. During the implementation process and based on feedback from survey results [17], it was clearly shown that OSTE has the potential to become a valuable and effective tool for faculty development in high medical universities in Georgia and It may serve as both a means of receiving feedback from colleagues and observers, as well as a resource for self-reflection, and may support further improvement of teaching skills of medical professionals. Despite the challenges mentioned, we believe that integrating this method with traditional teacher evaluation approaches will significantly enhance the quality of medical education in Georgia.

Recommendations for Integrating OSTE into Georgian Medical Education

To facilitate the adoption of OSTE in Georgia, the following steps are recommended:

*Pilot Programs***:** Universities should introduce OSTE as a supplementary faculty development tool before full implementation.

*Training for Evaluators***:** Educators and evaluators should undergo training on the effective use of OSTE rubrics.

*Integration with National Standards***:** Collaboration with NCEQE to align OSTE with faculty accreditation requirements.

*Periodic Faculty Workshops***:** Organizing training sessions to familiarize faculty with the methodology and benefits of OSTE.

Conclusion

Objective Structured Teaching Encounters (OSTE) present a promising approach for evaluating teaching effectiveness among medical educators in Georgia. By providing a structured, objective, and feedback-driven assessment model, OSTE complements existing faculty evaluation methods while addressing their limitations. With proper institutional support and alignment with WFME and NCEQE guidelines, OSTE can significantly enhance medical education quality in Georgia. Future research should focus on long-term outcomes and the sustainability of OSTE as a standard faculty assessment tool.

Clinical trial number: not applicable

Ethical Consideration

The project was conducted in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was granted by the GAU Institutional Ethics Committee (E/7-18.09.2024)

Data Availability Statement

This manuscript does not contain any data that can be shared.

Competing interest

No competing interests were disclosed**.**

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Author contributions

Conceptualization, the literature search and data analysis, Writing –Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review and Editing: Sakhelashvili Irine; Conceptualization, Funding acquisition: Giorgi Gabisonia; Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Resources: Tukvadze Shorena; Resources: Vadachkoria Zurab; Voronovi Salome; Supervision: Simonia Gaiane; Project Administration: Todadze Khatuna.

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