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### LETTER TO EDITOR

## Falling Short: The Educational Conferences Missed Opportunities for Learning

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*"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do."  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

Currently, there are many international and national conferences on educational themes mostly related to health professions education trending in Pakistan with the intend of making an effort to anticipate a quality educational experience. The common aim is to vitalize participants to share ideas, communicate their research work findings and make sense to the attendees. They are planned to provide ample time for participants to engage with people related their own field of interest and know each other's genuine intentions, reflecting on each other's creative ideas to apply in real situations.<sup>1</sup>

Regrettably, these conferences one after other are unfulfilling the objectives for learning as such, dropping the vision of being educational but majorly satisfying economical and administrative concerns which has been reported previously on many other conferences as well.<sup>2</sup> Nowadays, the observed behaviours of the attendees is majorly towards informal facet (refreshment and dinner gala) of these formal educational conferences, which provides opportunity of networking, getting job

opportunities and time off from their routine work. The question arises why is that so? Is this because of lack of planning in the sequence of sessions and workshops that are spilling of with the same ideas or research outcomes or is the key note/guest speakers which may following conference rules, bringing to bear their published researches, bombarding information, trying to engage with the assemblage but failed to know what will attendees learn out of it or is the conference planned to provide baseline information to specific group of people.<sup>3</sup>

Now to gauge as educators and leaders how we can search for the right answers of the above questions and what steps need to be taken to ensure that these conferences become helpful and fruitful for learning because a houseful auditorium of a conference does not reflect success, it's just a false impression. To prevent failure, it is crucial to develop process of reflecting, taking authentic feedback and evaluating these events focusing on conference planning and its implementation

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to save people's time, efforts and resources.<sup>4</sup> Majority conferences are unable to meet code of conduct, code of ethics and design well-structured networking activities. To bring is in, these international and national conferences need dedicated evaluation team to keep eye on activities before, during and after the conference.<sup>5</sup> This will definitely help to cater participants needs, improve conference happenings and provide guidance for future.<sup>6</sup> It is also suggested to arrange virtual conferences preventing many issues faced attending these events physically<sup>7</sup> with the effective use of technology and human resource, which can virtually conducted conferences can bring huge amount of people on one platform for better learning, benefiting from all over the world.<sup>8</sup>

The surge in conferences in Pakistan, especially in health professions education, reflects a commendable effort to enhance educational experiences. However, there is a growing concern that these events may be deviating from their primary educational goals towards economic priorities. Attendees increasing focus on informal aspects like networking raises questions about the root causes of this shift repetitive content, speakers not following rules, or unclear learning outcomes. As educators, it is our responsibility to address these concerns. Conference success should be measured by the quality of the learning experience, not just attendees head count. To address this, a systematic evaluation process throughout the event lifecycle is proposed, ensuring adherence to codes of conduct and well-structured networking. Exploring virtual conferences using technology and human resources is also suggested, given the challenges of physical events. Urgently reevaluating conference purposes, shifting from economic concerns to a commitment to meaningful learning experiences, and fostering a culture of reflection and evaluation will lead to conferences that genuinely fulfill educational promises.

In summary, we have embarked on halting one after other conferences without looking at the need making these event less advantageous for all stakeholders involved. The conferences held previously had shown strong link with economical concerns and festivities rather than learning. At this nick of time we should point out steps of evaluation, incorporating core based contemporary technologies<sup>9</sup> and reflect to improve quality of conferences to provide attendees a good learning experience. Moreover, conference organizing teams should focus on questioning the concept of themes need to be addressed throughout the event and "paradigmatic boundaries" 2 required to fulfill educational

purpose of the conferences planned and organized.

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#### **Conflict of interest**

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