

Challenges Faced by Physiotherapy Teachers in India and its Solutions

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the challenges physiotherapy teachers face in India and explores potential solutions to improve their working conditions. The challenges include a lack of recognition and support within the education system, financial constraints, heavy workloads, limited research and professional development opportunities, outdated curricula, and the absence of a clear career progression pathway. Efforts are being made by professional associations, institutions, and policymakers to address these challenges, with a focus on advocating for recognition, infrastructure improvement, enhanced research opportunities, and better policies. Collaboration among stakeholders, investment in research, interdisciplinary teamwork, and addressing low-quality institutions are crucial steps toward positive change.

The article concludes by emphasizing the need for collective commitment to ensure that physiotherapy teachers receive the necessary support, recognition, and resources for delivering quality education and contributing to the field.

Keywords: Physiotherapy Teachers, Challenges, India

INTRODUCTION

The field of physiotherapy in India is confronted with many challenges, particularly concerning the plight of physiotherapy teachers. Recognizing that individual experiences and circumstances may vary among teachers and institutions is important. However, several common obstacles hinder their ability to deliver quality education. I have attempted to shed light on these challenges and explore potential solutions to improve the conditions for physiotherapy teachers in India.

CHALLENGES

One of the primary issues physiotherapy teachers face is the lack of recognition and support within the Indian education system. Unlike other medical disciplines, physiotherapy has not received the same level of recognition, resulting in limited support for teachers in terms of funding, infrastructure, and research opportunities. Consequently, teachers often struggle to access the necessary resources, impeding their ability to provide high-quality education.⁽¹⁾

In addition to inadequate recognition, physiotherapy teachers also face financial constraints. Compared to their counterparts in other healthcare professions, they often receive low salaries and limited opportunities for career advancement. This not only hampers their job satisfaction but also restricts their ability to stay updated with the latest developments in the field through training and conferences.⁽²⁻⁴⁾

Furthermore, heavy workloads pose significant challenges for physiotherapy teachers in India. Due to a shortage of

faculty and an increasing number of students, teachers are burdened with excessive responsibilities. This compromises the learning environment, reduces individual attention, and contributes to burnout. Balancing teaching responsibilities with research, clinical work, and personal commitments becomes arduous for these teachers.^(1, 5)

Another critical challenge is the limited emphasis on research and professional development opportunities within India's physiotherapy field. Many physiotherapy teachers aspire to contribute to the field through research, publications, and innovation. However, lack of funding, mentorship, and institutional research support hinder their ability to explore and advance their academic careers.⁽⁶⁾

Outdated curricula and teaching methods further exacerbate the challenges faced by physiotherapy teachers.⁽⁷⁾ Some programs in India may suffer from obsolete curricula and teaching methods that do not align with current best practices and advancements in the field. As a result, teachers must continuously update their knowledge and adapt teaching methods to ensure quality education.^(2, 7)

Moreover, unlike other countries, India lacks a clear career progression pathway for physiotherapy teachers. The absence of a structured promotion system discourages professional growth and impedes career advancement for these teachers.

In certain states, the entry requirements for the Bachelor of Physiotherapy program entail achieving a minimal passing score in the 12th standard science stream. While

this policy might grant access to a wider pool of candidates, it raises concerns among physiotherapy educators and the broader community. The reason for this concern stems from the observation that not all students possess the same level of intellectual aptitude, and this can have implications for the quality of future physiotherapists being produced. Physiotherapy demands a comprehensive understanding of human anatomy, physiology, and intricate clinical skills. Students with a robust academic foundation tend to excel in these areas, which are crucial for becoming effective and proficient physiotherapists. However, allowing students with lower academic capabilities into the program can potentially result in a disparity in the competence and skillset of graduates. Physiotherapy educators in India face challenges regarding their students, particularly those who may struggle academically. The rigorous coursework and demanding practical training can overwhelm students who may not be adequately prepared intellectually. This disparity between students' capabilities and the program's demands can lead to educator frustration, suboptimal teaching experiences, and student attrition.

Syllabus overload only compounds these challenges, with the extensive curriculum, time constraints, and

mandatory clinical training adding complexity. This situation can cause stress, hinder deep learning, and impede students' mastery of crucial subjects.

The overarching concern is that by compromising on admission standards, the quality of physiotherapy professionals being produced could be compromised as well. This could negatively impact patient care and outcomes, as physiotherapists play a critical role in facilitating the recovery and well-being of individuals through precise assessments and tailored interventions.

REMEDIES

While the challenges are significant, efforts are being made to address them and improve the conditions for physiotherapy teachers in India. Professional associations and institutions advocate for increased recognition, better infrastructure, and enhanced research and professional development opportunities. However, achieving comprehensive change will require sustained commitment and collaboration among all stakeholders.

Government policies also play a crucial role in shaping the physiotherapy profession in India, and poor policies can further contribute to the challenges physiotherapy teachers face. Adequate recognition and regulation of the profession are essential for securing support, funding, and resources.

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Furthermore, integrating physiotherapy services within the larger healthcare system and ensuring adequate reimbursement and insurance coverage are key policy considerations that must be addressed.

Additionally, investment in research and development is vital for the growth and advancement of the physiotherapy profession. Government policies must prioritize funding for physiotherapy research to promote evidence-based practice, innovation, and advancements in the field.

Instances of professional conflicts or tensions between healthcare professionals, including physiotherapists and medical doctors, can occur in any healthcare system. However, it is important to emphasize that generalizing such conflicts to an entire profession or all interactions would be inaccurate and unfair. Encouraging collaboration, mutual respect, and interdisciplinary teamwork is crucial for fostering a positive and productive healthcare environment.

Concerted efforts are needed from regulatory bodies, educational institutions, and relevant stakeholders to address the concerns related to the mushrooming of low-quality physiotherapy colleges in India. Ensuring sufficient infrastructure, adherence to quality standards, and proper appointments of faculty members are essential steps in

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providing quality education and training to physiotherapy students.

To address the difficulties of syllabus overload, institutions should regularly assess their curriculum, prioritize essential content, incorporate technology for blended teaching, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, provide adaptable teaching approaches, and invest in faculty development. These efforts aim to establish a more balanced and effective educational environment for physiotherapy educators in India, enabling them to support their students' diverse learning needs better.

Regarding BPT admission criteria, it becomes essential for educational institutions, policymakers, and the physiotherapy community to contemplate the ramifications of admission policies collectively. Finding a harmonious equilibrium between inclusivity and upholding rigorous academic benchmarks becomes paramount, ensuring that forthcoming physiotherapists are equipped and competent to provide optimal care to those requiring it.

CONCLUSION

The challenges faced by physiotherapy teachers in India are significant, encompassing issues of recognition, support, remuneration, workload, research opportunities, curriculum, career progression, and government

policies. Efforts are being made to address these challenges, but a collective commitment is required to bring about meaningful change. By advocating for their rights, actively participating in educational reforms, engaging in research, prioritizing professional development, collaborating with policymakers, fostering mentorship, and promoting collaborative relationships with students, physiotherapy teachers can contribute to positive change and enhance the profession's recognition and working conditions.

All stakeholders must work together to ensure that physiotherapy teachers receive the support, recognition, and resources they need to deliver quality education and contribute effectively to physiotherapy.

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