How should the Educational Abilities of Candidates for Department Chair be Assessed?

Chair: **Morito Monden**[1]
Vice Chair: **Gerald M. Fried**[2]
Members: **Patrick Serruys**[3]
               Anna Wang[4]

[1] Director, Cancer Institute Hospital, Japanese Foundation for Cancer Research, Tokyo, Japan
[2] Chairman, Department of Surgery, McGill University, Montreal, Canada
[3] Chair, Department of Interventional Cardiology, ERASMUS University, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
[4] President, Swiss Medical Student Association, Zurich, Switzerland

Correspondence:
Chair: Morito Monden (monden@jfcr.or.jp)
Vice Chair: Gerald M. Fried (gerald.fried@mcgill.ca)

Abstract

Department Chairs occupy important leadership positions in universities. Since teaching and learning are critical pillars of educational institutions, it is crucial that the educational attributes of applicants for these leadership positions be appropriately evaluated during the selection process. To define a process to assess these educational abilities, a series of structured interviews of teachers and learners was conducted, followed by a web-based survey, and then a second series of interviews with selected experts in medical education.

The commitment of the candidate to teaching and learning should be considered strongly in the selection process. The candidate should prepare an educational dossier including a summary of teaching activity, effectiveness, scholarship and recognition of excellence. This should be supplemented by narratives describing the educational philosophy and perception of the changes that he or she would put in place to meet the learning preferences of the current generation of students. The leader should be able to describe concepts about formative and summative assessment. He or she should also have a plan for faculty development to ensure that the educational needs of the department or faculty could be met optimally. An educational advisory committee should be formed at the faculty level whose role would be to assess the educational qualifications of candidates all Department Chairs. With this mechanism, education abilities could be evaluated consistently and given the required importance in the selection process.

Introduction

The excellence of a university is impacted by the quality of its educational programs. A primary responsibility of these institutions is the education of students from the level of undergraduates through to continuous professional development of professional faculty. Department Chairs hold senior leadership positions in universities. In view of these responsibilities, the selection process for these academic leaders should place important emphasis on the evaluation of educational abilities of prospective candidates.

To evaluate the educational qualities of the applicants for such positions, it is important to place the selection process into context taking into consideration whether the individual is a candidate for Chair, the structure and size of the group that the applicant will head, the available resources and talent within the department or faculty, etc. (see panel 1)

The goal of this manuscript was to make recommendations regarding the process of evaluating the educational abilities for Chairs of clinical Departments in faculties of medicine. To approach this topic, we conducted a series of interviews of students from a number of generations, as well as teachers, senior educators and administrators. We also performed a literature review. Finally, once we had identified a series of abilities or potential qualities that could be evaluated in the

selection process, we conducted a survey to help prioritize or weigh these abilities during the assessment process.

Methods

The literature search strategy is described in Figure 1. From this it was seen that there was very little published data to provide evidence, on which to base recommendations to direct the selection process [1-3].

Figure 1: Literature Search Strategy

Ovid MEDLINE(R) In-Process & Other Non-Indexed Citations, Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1996 to Present
 Total exported - 266,
Removed as duplicates - 218
Identified via "citing articles" option - 12,

Keywords:
Higher Education
Administration
University
Medical Education
competence
background
dean
department chair

MESH:
Academic Medical Centers/organization & administration*
Academic Medical Centers/standards
Career Mobility
Consensus
Cultural Diversity
Education, Medical/standards
Employee Performance Appraisal

Faculty, Medical/standards*
Professional Competence/standards*
Staff Development/methods*
Leadership
Needs Assessment
Organizational Objectives
Personnel Selection
*Physician Executives
Physician Executives/education*
Professional Role
****

1. exp Academic Medical Centers/og, st [Organization & Administration, Standards]
2. exp Employee Performance Appraisal/mt, og, st, td [Methods, Organization & Administration, Standards, Trends]
3. *Professional Competence/st [Standards]
4. exp Staff Development/mt, og, st, td [Methods, Organization & Administration, Standards, Trends]
5. career mobility/ or *career mobility/
6. *leadership/
7. *Needs Assessment/og, st, td [Organization & Administration, Standards, Trends]

8. *Personnel Selection/es, mt, og, st, td [Ethics, Methods, Organization & Administration, Standards, Trends]
9. *Professional Role/
10. *Physician Executives/ed, es, og, px, st, td [Education, Ethics, Organization & Administration, Psychology, Standards, Trends]
11. *Organizational Objectives/
12. or/1-11
13. dean.mp. or "department chair".tw,ab. or "department adj2 chair".tw,ab.
14. 12 and 13
15. ((background or education) and relation*).tw,ab.
16. 12 and 13 and 15
17. 1 and 3 and 8 and 13
18. 1 and 2 and 8 and 10 and 13
19. (background or qualit* or skill*).tw,ab.
20. (relation* or relationship*).tw,ab. or Interprofessional Relations/
21. (Personnel Selection or Personnel Recruitment or Recruitment Activities).mp.
22. 19 or 20 or 21
23. 22 and 13
24. 12 and 24

To gather expert opinion on the topic a survey was developed in English, converted to a web-based format and sent to program directors, division and department chairs, as well as deans, of medical schools in North America, Europe and Japan. The data were then analyzed and summarized. The main questions of the survey, other than a description of the demographics of the respondents are summarized in Figure 2.

Of the 160 respondents, 86 completed the entire questionnaire. These included 44 Department Chairs, but also 24 Deans and 18 program directors. Geographic representation was from Canada (15), Europe (8), Japan (11) and US (52). Opinions were reported on a 5-point Likert scale. Data are reported as median (interquartile range).

After analysis of the survey, a series of structured interviews was again carried out with senior academic leaders to formulate recommendations for the selection process.

Figure 2:

Questionnaire
How important do you consider the educational qualities of candidates for Chairperson when you conduct a search? Please rate from 1 to 5; 1 = not important; 5 = most important | Candidate for Chairperson
Please rate the following aspects of the teaching abilities when selecting a Chair? Please rate from 1 to 5: 1 = not important; 5 = most important | Vision for medical education
Please rate the following aspects of the teaching abilities when selecting a Chair? Please rate from 1 to 5: 1 = not important; 5 = most important | Mentorship for medical education
Please rate the following aspects of the teaching abilities when selecting a Chair? Please rate from 1 to 5: 1 = not important; 5 = most important | Clinical teaching skills
Please rate the following aspects of the teaching abilities when selecting a Chair? Please rate from 1 to 5: 1 = not important; 5 = most important | Personal Teaching skills (awards, student evaluations)
Please rate the following aspects of the teaching abilities when selecting a Chair? Please rate from 1 to 5: 1 = not important; 5 = most important | Innovation in education
Please rate the following aspects of the teaching abilities when selecting a Chair? Please rate from 1 to 5: 1 = not important; 5 = most important | Skill at teaching researchers
Please rate the following aspects of the teaching abilities when selecting a Chair? Please rate from 1 to 5: 1 = not important; 5 = most important | Educational research productivity
What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements? Please rate the following components from 1 to 5 (5 = most important) of an educational file/dossier as to their importance in selecting a Chair of a Department in the Faculty of Medicine: | Educational philosophy
What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements? Please rate the following components from 1 to 5 (5 = most important) of an educational file/dossier as to their importance in selecting a Chair of a Department in the Faculty of Medicine: | Personal teaching evaluations
What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements? Please rate the following components from 1 to 5 (5 = most important) of an educational file/dossier as to their importance in selecting a Chair of a Department in the Faculty of Medicine: | Teaching activity over past 5 years
What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements? Please rate the following components from 1 to 5 (5 = most important) of an educational file/dossier as to their importance in selecting a Chair of a Department in the Faculty of Medicine: | A narrative to describe how teaching methods should be modified to meet the current learning needs and communications styles of students

What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements? Please rate the following components from 1 to 5 (5 = most important) of an educational file/dossier as to their importance in selecting a Chair of a Department in the Faculty of Medicine: | Teaching awards/Formal recognition - Local

What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements? Please rate the following components from 1 to 5 (5 = most important) of an educational file/dossier as to their importance in selecting a Chair of a Department in the Faculty of Medicine: | Teaching awards/Formal recognition - National

What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements? Please rate the following components from 1 to 5 (5 = most important) of an educational file/dossier as to their importance in selecting a Chair of a Department in the Faculty of Medicine: | Teaching awards/Formal recognition - International

What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements? Please rate the following components from 1 to 5 (5 = most important) of an educational file/dossier as to their importance in selecting a Chair of a Department in the Faculty of Medicine: | Educational publications (books, original papers, etc.)

What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements? Please rate the following components from 1 to 5 (5 = most important) of an educational file/dossier as to their importance in selecting a Chair of a Department in the Faculty of Medicine: | Educational innovation

Results

Survey results

      Respondents considered the educational qualities of candidates for Department Chair to be very important with median scores of 4 (4;5), where 1 represents least important and 5 most important. When asked to prioritize the teaching abilities when selecting a Chair, the most important aspects were rated to be vision for medical education 4 (4:5), mentorship 4 (3:5) and clinical teaching skills 4 (3:5). Complete data are shown in Table 1.

Table 1:
Please rate the following aspects of the teaching abilities when selecting a Chair? * (5 = most important)

Aspects of the teaching abilities when selecting a Chair	Score
Vision for medical education	4[4;5]
Mentorship for medical education	4[3;5]
Clinical teaching skills	4[3;5]
Personal Teaching skills (awards, student evaluations)	3.5[3;4]
Innovation in education	3[3;4]
Skill at teaching researchers	3[3;4]
Educational research productivity	3[2;4]

      When asked "What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements?" regarding applicants for Chair, the 4 top components were: educational philosophy4 (4:5), personal teaching evaluations 4 (3:4), teaching activity over the past 5 years 4 (3:5) and to provide a narrative to describe how teaching methods should be modified to meet the current learning needs and communications styles of students – 4 (3:5) as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2:

What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements? Please rate the following components from 1 to 5 (5 = most important) of an educational file/dossier as to their importance in selecting a Chair of a Department in the Faculty of Medicine:

What do you request the candidate to submit as "Contents of educational file" to assess the below elements?	
Educational philosophy	**4[4;5]**
Personal teaching evaluations	**4[3;4]**
Teaching activity over past 5 years	**4[3;5]**
A narrative to describe how teaching methods should be modified to meet the current learning needs and communications styles of students	**4[3;5]**
Teaching awards/Formal recognition - Local	**3.5[3;4]**
Teaching awards/Formal recognition - National	**3[3;4]**
Teaching awards/Formal recognition - International	**3[2;4]**
Educational publications (books, original papers, etc.)	**3[3;4]**
Educational innovation	**3[3;4]**

Based on the survey results, when evaluating the candidate, the following aspects should be weighed more heavily in consideration the educational skills.

For a candidate for Department Chairs, it is recommended that search committees prioritize the following information from candidates:

1. A statement of the individual's educational philosophy
2. A summary of personal teaching evaluations over the prior 5 years
3. A summary of teaching activity over the previous 5 years.
4. Recognizing that there has been rapid change in the way young learners acquire information and communicate with one another, it was also felt to be important to have the candidate provide a narrative to describe how teaching methods should be modified to meet the current learning needs and communications styles of students.

The sample size did not allow meaningful comparisons in the responses according to geographic distribution or between public and private institutions. These considerations would be worth exploring further. In practice, there was a great variability in the frequency with which institutions review and modify their criteria for assessing candidates regarding their educational skills. Most do not have a formal template for this process. The outcome of this conference would appear to be welcomed by the respondents to this questionnaire.

Results of Structured Interviews

A Chair should be able to elaborate a vision that encourages life-long learning, starting in medical school, continuing through postgraduate education and throughout the career or the physician. This requires a comprehensive understanding of teaching and learning and the philosophy that encourages the learner to develop effective learning habits.

Finally, assessment is a critical aspect of teaching and a strong motivator for the learner. The Chair should be able to discuss the roles of formative and summative assessment, especially understanding that individuals have different styles and rates of learning. In the end, it is essential that we provide appropriate feedback during the learning phase (formative assessment), and that we verify that the learner has acquired the knowledge, judgment and skills that they must have as they pass various milestones in their education.

A leader can bring out the best in his or her faculty members. Faculty development is the process by which academic faculty enhance their teaching and research skills and keep up to date. The Department Chair should have a strategy for faculty development that motivates and rewards members for investing their time in personal development through policies that might include promotion, tenure, and merit bonuses. He/she should encourage scholarship in education (research and advancement of field and ensure there are sufficient faculty properly trained to deliver and assess educational content.

In addition to the usual criteria identified in the survey, the educational experts emphasized the importance of assessing, if a medical leader has skills that reflect the learning style of the modern generation. Does he/she have an understanding of the variety of ways the current generation accesses information for learning? There is an increasing importance placed on accessing information at the time and place where it can be used.

Education that is experiential and interactive is more highly motivating and effective. New technologies that are based on simulation and electronic platforms have proven to be very useful, reproducible and scalable. They allow the teacher to track the learning of the students. Social media platforms can be used to disseminate information and to motivate students. These new learning platforms also enable the use of effective and reliable metrics to measure performance. The ability of a Chair to understand the capabilities and opportunities presented by these innovative learning systems should be assessed.

Panel's own perspective

Education is fundamental to the success of the academic mission of a department or faculty of medicine. There is no evidence-based literature about educational skills to correlate selection criteria with success in the position of Dean or Department Chair. Based on expert opinion of a broad group of Deans, Department Chairs and Program Directors, representing reasonable geographic diversity, the educational talents of the candidate should be important considerations, whether the individual is applying for the position of Chair or Dean. The commitment of the candidate to teaching and learning should be considered strongly in the selection process.

The applicant should be requested to prepare an educational dossier emphasizing performance over the most recent 5 years. This file should include a description of teaching activity (hours, level of course) and evidence of teaching effectiveness (student ratings, and may include specific examples of mentorship and the positions obtained by those mentored by the candidate). The candidate should also include evidence of teaching excellence, such as awards or national and international recognition. Other important considerations that should be communicated are details of educational scholarship, such as development of new curricula, teaching tools, assessment methods and original educational research and writings. Evidence of grant support for this work, the impact of the publications and the citations of the work should be considered. This should be evaluated like original scholarship in research.

The candidate should provide a description of his/her educational philosophy, written in a narrative form. This gives insight into how the candidate sees education, would structure the educational component of the faculty and department, and allows him/her to present an integrated vision of the direction he/she would take the faculty or department in the future (4, 5). A narrative describing the candidate's perception of how teaching and learning is changing and how the candidate would introduce innovative ideas to address this evolution would provide the search committee valuable insight. In particular, the candidate should describe the impact and potential of the internet, electronic learning platforms (smart phone, tablet, computers), social media and simulations.

The candidate should also be able to communicate new ideas about assessment, when used for feedback and for summative purposes (pass/fail), and how to ensure that assessment can stand up to increasing scrutiny and legal challenge. Finally, this educational profile should include a strategy to develop an excellent faculty development program. Such a plan would ensure sufficient faculty members were prepared for the changes in teaching and learning, to motivate them to commit their academic efforts towards excellence in education and would imbed in the promotion system criteria to recognize faculty members who excel in teaching.

An educational advisory committee should be formed at the faculty level whose role would be to assess the educational qualifications of candidates for Dean and Department Chair. This committee would evaluate all applicants for these senior leadership positions within the faculty and make a recommendation to the various search committees. Members would serve 3-5 year terms in a rotation, so there would be both renewal and consistency on the committee. Members of the committee themselves would benefit from an annual faculty development workshop to

discuss this topic, to keep apprised about publications in the literature on this topic, and to collect feedback from their work.

This committee should include an Associate Dean (Undergraduate education, Postgraduate Education, Continuing Medical Education, Faculty Affairs, or Faculty Development). This individual would convene and chair this educational evaluation committee. Other members might be one or two Department chairs. When selecting a Dean, it would be appropriate to include both a clinical and basic science department chair. Other members should include a vice-chair for education from a large department (if such a structure exists locally), a program director responsible for postgraduate education in a large department, a director for undergraduate education for a medium to large department, one or two junior faculty members with a career focus on education and interest or expertise in modern learning platforms, and one or two students, at the level of graduate school and undergraduate, who would serve on a shorter rotating basis.

In summary

With this mechanism, education abilities could be evaluated consistently and given the required importance in the selection process. The educational advisory committee would be experienced in this role, since they would be involved in many searches for Department Chairs. They would be prepared with a clear understanding of the specific needs of the Department or faculty at the time of the search, yet would understand the resources available. They would also be best prepared to evaluate the candidates in the context of the educational talent available in the faculty, so that their recommendations can also be constructive once the selection has been completed.

References

1. Mallon WT, Buckley PF: The Current State and Future Possibilities of Recruiting Leaders of Academic Health Centers. Acad Med. 87:1171–1176, 2012
2. Sarchami R, Asefzadeh S, Ghorchian N, Rahgozar M: Selection Criteria for the Position of Dean in Medical Schools: A Competency Approach. Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research 12 (6): 899-905, 2012
3. Schwinghammer TL, Rodriguez TE, Weinstein G, Sorofman BA, Bosso JA, Kerr RA, Haden NK.: AACP strategy for addressing the professional development needs of department chairs. Am J Pharm Educ. 76: 1-8, 2012
4. UZAWA, H. Economic Analysis of Social Common Capital. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2005
5. Medical Professionalism Project: Medical professionalism in the new millennium: a physicians' charter. Lancet 359: 520–22, 2002