

Uncontrolled Business: The Case of Blacklisting Kyrgyzstani Medical HEIs by Pakistani Medical Council (PMC)

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ABSTRACT

Medical education for export in Kyrgyzstan has many challenges in the way of achieving international standards. Existing archaic state regulative norms have huge discrepancy with modern global standards in the field. In addition, the uncontrolled growth of number of HEIs newly entered the market aggravates the situation. Along with this, countries which students usually choose Kyrgyzstan as a direction for medical training, have weak policies and establish low barriers for recognition of qualifications from the places their students choose to study in. A recent case of blacklisting Kyrgyzstani medical HEIs by Pakistani Medical Council (PMC) can be analyzed as a typical example of the shortcomings listed above. It has disclosed different problems and aspects of the phenomena of medical education for export in Kyrgyzstan: compliance of Kyrgyzstani medical education with international standards, shortage of standardized control from Kyrgyzstani and Pakistani authorities, the role of agents is not anyhow standardized or licensed.

Keywords

Medical education in Kyrgyzstan; Kyrgyz Republic; Law; education for export; Pakistani medical students; PMC

Introduction

Aims.

Since the time of receiving independence the Kyrgyz Republic declaratively pays attention to development of its system of education. Emerging market relations have changed the face of the country and the psychology of its citizens, who are starting to think by new socio-economic categories. Kyrgyzstani HEIs should adapt themselves to new conditions in terms of globalization of education, with all its challenges and imperatives.

During the past decades development of the system of education led to such negative phenomena, as organization of HEIs, which were not matching modern standards of higher education [1].

Public healthcare is one of the factors of sustainable development of the country. For that purpose, there should be introduced an effective system of healthcare, medical education [2].

Unfortunately, there are some negative trends in the system of higher medical education. Currently there are 20 medical HEIs and faculties in Kyrgyzstan. Also there is a program of revocation of license started to increase the quality of education. Particularly, the license of the medical faculty of the University of Science and Business is revoked; the license of the medical faculty of KNU is suspended.

Many youngsters from Pakistan and India choose to study medicine, due to the status of a medical worker in these countries [3]. Another reason of high demand in receiving medical

education among Pakistani students is the lack of qualified medical workers and increase of career opportunities due to different factors, including brain drain to developed western countries [4].

Due to the high demand, expensiveness of contracts, and other limitations, medical education in Pakistan is non-achievable to many Pakistani citizens, and it makes them look for other opportunities outside the country to pursue the path of physicians. Relatively rich families try to send their children to Eastern Europe and Russia, and lower-class families choose between such exotic countries, as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. According to Dietrich Reetz [5], the price of study at Kyrgyzstani medical HEIs is on average five times cheaper in comparison to study in Pakistan.

Main Analysis

The Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) has included all Kyrgyzstani medical HEIs into the black list of universities, meaning all Kyrgyzstani HEI graduates were not allowed to pass the Pakistani National Licensing Exam (NLE), or prolong the license. The problem is salient: easy path to enter the market caused to a sharp increase of HEIs specializing in medical training for Pakistani students. There is no standardized control in both Pakistani and Kyrgyzstani sides. It has led to the situation when thousands of graduates and students have big concern about suspension of their majors [6].

The main reasons to include all Kyrgyzstani medical HEIs to the black list, according to the Minutes, are:

1. The statement, that many students from Pakistan are being lured into the colleges by agents. Agents provide guaranteed entry to the colleges without any prerequisite criteria;
2. Dozens private medical colleges have been opened since 2013 in the territory of Kyrgyzstan. Mainly these HEIs are focused on provision of medical education for export, with one of biggest markets in Pakistan. Most of these newly opened HEIs do not have enough or any clinical bases and qualified teaching staff.

As an intermediary decision, upon the request of the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic in Pakistan, PMC removed 4 (four) “Public” medical HEIs from the black list, and placed those to the Green one. Along with this, PMC set up other rules and criteria for further recognition procedures.

According to the Embassy of Pakistan in Kyrgyz Republic, there are 8495 students admitted in Kyrgyz medical HEIs in 2019[6]. However, this number does not correspond to the data received from the Ministry of Education and science of Kyrgyz Republic (MESKR) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Number of local and foreign medical students according to data provided by MESKR, including number of Pakistani students and graduates (as for the year 2020)

No.	Name of HEI	Total Number of students	Number of foreign students	Students from Pakistan	Graduation of Pakistani students
1	KSMA	7271	2154	234	Yes 2016-2017 (31)
2	OshSU	2897	2882	16	Yes 2016-2017 (75)
3	JASU	2154	1513	234	Yes 2015-2016 (5)
4	AsMI	3914	3914	1212	Yes 2015-2016 (49)
5	IHSM	3493	3493	147	Yes 2015-2016 (242)
6	Ala-Too	265	202	105	No (2017)

7	SRMSI	98	98	93	No (2018)
8	IMU	2099	1911	1747	Yes 2019-2020 (10)
9	EIMU	508	508	492	No (2019)
10	ADAM	1015	656	629	No (2018)
11	Salymbekov	410	410	410	No (2019)
12	Avicenna	98	98	98	No (2017)
13	RMU	125	125	A	No (2020)
14	KNU	17270	N	39	No (2020)
15	KRSU	2092	883	1	No
16	IUK		N	N	N
17	ABC		A	60	No (2020)
18	IUSB		N	N	N
19	OshIMU	200	200	A	No (2020)
20	TOTAL		19047 (19107) 8495=44.5% from 19107, 5842=30.6% from 19107	5517 (5842) 68.7% from 8495	412

N – No data, A – data of columns 4 and 5 is combined and calculated to derive TOTAL. In TOTAL row – the data without calculation of A, and with calculation of A in parentheses with percentage to PMC number of admitted students. In the column 6: if Yes – first year of graduation (since 2015) and number of graduated Pakistani students in parentheses; if No- year of first admission in parentheses. There is no clear data from the IUK since the standardized MESKR questionnaire is filled in by them incorrectly. IUSB is the absolutely new HEI as for 2020. They have not conducted admission yet.

There are no mandatory standards of state/international accreditation of medical HEIs in Kyrgyzstan. Accreditation-passing has a status of recommendation. However, many medical HEIs have started accreditation-process during last 3 (three) years. Kyrgyzstani medical HEIs pass through state accreditation (5 HEIs), IAAR accreditation (4 HEIs), AAEP0 (3 HEIs), EdNet (2 HEIs), and state accreditation by a state authority of another country (1 HEI). Some HEIs do not provide names of bodies and entities by which they were accredited.

Main regulating acts to perform medical training are:

1. The Law of Kyrgyz Republic “On Education” [7];
2. State license from the Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyz Republic [8].

Important: in the report provided to the MESKR many HEIs state that their Charters are approved by different ministries (MESKR, Ministry of Healthcare). However, only the Ministry of Justice of KR approves Charters of HEIs, in compliance with non-medical juridical standards.

Table 2. Information about number of medical training programs, accreditation, and clinical bases according to data provided by MESKR (as for the year 2020)

No.	Name of HEI	Number of MBBS (5-year study in English) or equivalent (5-6-year local	Accreditation	Number of clinical bases
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program)				
1	KSMA	8	Every 5 years (state accreditation) 2019 – independent accreditation	195
2	OshSU	2	2018 – independent accreditation (IAAR) 2020 – independent accreditation EdNet 2020 – state accreditation	22
3	JASU	3	Every 5 years (state accreditation) 2020 – independent accreditation (IAAR)	27
4	Tentishev AsMI	3	Every 5 years (state accreditation) 2017 – independent accreditation	14
5	IHSM	1	AAEPO, IAAR	16
6	Ala-Too	1	IAAR	9
7	SRMSI	2	AAEPO	8
8	IMU	6	Independent accreditation – 2 times	47
9	EIMU	1		19
10	ADAM	2		10
11	Salymbekov	2		11
12	Avicenna	1		5
13	RMU	1		5
14	KNU	1	AAEPO	4
15	KRSU	4	2017 – Independent accreditation (EdNet) 2019 – state accreditation (Russia) 2020 – state accreditation (Kyrgyzstan)	43
16	IUK			
17	ABC	1		3
18	IUSB			
19	OshIMU	1		4

‘National’ and ‘State’ types of universities can be presented as equivalent of ‘Public’ ones in western countries. Many universities have relatively big history, and provide 6-year MD and other local medical programs. However, local 6-year system is based on standards of Soviet medical education traditions, based on 11-year secondary education[9].

Kyrgyzstani post-soviet medical education program has many differences in comparison to standards and programs in the Commonwealth countries and the USA. Many foreign students prefer to take a 5-year MD program in English, on the basis of 12-year secondary education, which is similar to MBBS [10].

According the PMC Minutes [6], there was a significant growth in number of HEIs with medical education for export between 2013 and 2018. If we analyze the MESKR data, the growth will not stop: several universities have opened admission between 2018 and 2020 (Table 1, Graduation).

Next 4 (four) years number of Pakistani graduates from Kyrgyz HEIs will increase from 412 in 2020 to 5929 (5517+412), or 6154 (5842+412) (Table 1, TOTAL). Along with this we have to

take into account divergent number of 8495 students admitted in 2019, as by the Embassy of Pakistan in Kyrgyzstan and PMC [6]. Of course, not all students will finish study and graduate. However, the real number of graduated students will be close to the roughly estimated one.

Discussion

An essential note to be added about the case described above is the lack of statistical data and academic research about the phenomena of medical education for export in Kyrgyzstan and other countries of CIS[11].

Due to the failure to find comprehensive reliable information about real situation it becomes impossible to analyze social, economic, political, and other causes and effects deeply. We encourage researchers to do their research works in the field of this phenomenon [12].

Conclusion

Main key-factors caused the situation are presented below.

First is the uncontrolled role of agents, which is mentioned in PMC Minutes. It lies beyond this article, and has to be explored.

Second is PMC failure in paying attention to the problem. More than seven years of unrevealed and uninvestigated business cannot be reimbursed by simple blacklisting (embargo) medical HEIs of a whole country.

Third is the lack of state control of Kyrgyzstani government over medical HEIs, providing education on the basis of the MD program. As it's mentioned in the profiles of medical HEIs, they work under several normative documents: Kyrgyz Law "On Education" [7], the Regulation No 525 of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic[13], and Charter. The Government does not set up reliable barriers to enter the market. Only 3 (three) universities were graduating Pakistani students in 2015 in Kyrgyzstan (Table 1, Graduation). Over the past 5 (five) years number of medical HEIs graduating Pakistani students has increased more than 6 (six) times. It leads to low quality of graduated specialists, corruption, and other deception cases.

The case of deception of Pakistani students by options of receiving medical education in Kyrgyzstan has many roots. Misconduct of governments and people of both countries underlie the situation.

Abbreviations

KSMA – Kyrgyz State Medical Academy

OshSU – Osh State University

JASU – Jalal-Abad State University

AsMI – Asian Medical Institute named after Tentishev

IHSM – International Higher School of Medicine

Ala-Too – Ataturk Ala-Too University

SRMSI – Scientific and Research Medico-Social Institute

IMU – International Medical University

EIMU – Eurasian International Medical University

ADAM – ADAM University

Salymbekov – Salymbekov University

Avicenna – Avicenna International Medical University

RMU – Royal Metropolitan University
 KNU – Kyrgyz National University
 KRSU – Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University
 IUK – International University of Kyrgyzstan
 ABC – ABC Academy
 IUSB – International University of Science and Business
 OshIMU – Osh International Medical University
 PMC – Pakistan Medical Council
 MESKR – Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyz Republic
 HEI – Higher Education Institution

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