

Reshaping Health Professions Education in Region: Innovation, Reflection, and Resilience in a Changing World

Karunathilake, I.M., de Abrew, A.

Health professions education in South Asia is at an inflection point. The current issue of the *South East Asian Journal of Medical Education* presents a diverse array of studies spanning from India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar and beyond, each highlighting the innovation, creativity, and adaptability of health professions educators and students in the region. The issue highlights three interconnected and overlapping concepts: the drive for innovation, the cultivation of reflection, and the necessity of resilience.

The push towards innovative teaching and assessment strategies has been a striking theme across the past few issues. Innovative instructional strategies are challenging, yet essential and the authors capture a familiar tension between tradition and modernity. What emerges is not a binary choice but a call for contextualized innovation: adopting global advancements while remaining grounded in local realities and resource constraints. Assessment too has seen creative reform, including with single best answer (SBA) formats and standardization of Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) within MD programs. This reveals the ongoing regional commitment to enhancing fairness, validity, and competence and the educational philosophy to ensure every consistency and transparency in assessment.

Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Corresponding author: Prof. Indika Karunathilake
Email: indika@medarc.cmb.ac.lk

Reflection is another emerging theme in this issue. The assessment of empathy among medical students, the exploration of emotional experiences during the transition to clinical training, and the reflective learning reported during community projects all highlight the value of pausing to look inward. Such reflective practices remind us that health professions education is not solely about transferring knowledge or honing technical skills. It is about shaping individuals who can think critically about their own growth, their responsibilities to patients, and the broader health systems they will serve.

The paper on stress and coping among undergraduates adds to a growing body of evidence on the mental health toll faced by learners. Similarly, the study on grit, growth mindset, and academic self-efficacy highlights psychological resources that can buffer against academic and personal challenges. Resilience is about developing adaptive capacities, but our authors remind us that that resilience is multifactorial, emerging not just from individual traits but also from supportive educational environments, empathetic faculty, and fair assessment systems.

The diverse contributions to the present issue recognize that health professions education in South Asia is not a passive recipient of global trends. Rather, it is actively forging its own identity, drawing inspiration from global best practices, while innovating to address unique constraints and challenges. The challenge is to sustain this momentum, ensuring that every innovation is purposeful, every reflection is transformative, and every act of resilience strengthens not just individuals, but the entire health system.



© SEAJME. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited

South-East Asian Journal of Medical Education
Vol.19, no.1, 2025