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Strategic Leadership in Medical Education for International Students: Evidence from Georgia

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Introduction

Global demographic changes, population aging, and increasing disease burden are driving rising demand for competent healthcare professionals. Georgia has become an emerging hub for international medical education, attracting students from India, the Middle East, and other regions. Effective health workforce planning requires strategic leadership in medical education to align graduate competencies with labor market and healthcare system needs.

Methods

A mixed-methods approach was employed to analyze labor market demand and stakeholder perspectives. Secondary data sources included WHO statistics, national health strategies (2022–2030), and accreditation reports. Primary data were collected through surveys of active students, recent graduates, recruitment agencies, and potential employers. Random sampling and multi-stakeholder engagement ensured triangulation of evidence. Quantitative and qualitative analyses were performed to identify workforce gaps, educational quality, and competency alignment.

Results

International student enrollment in Georgian medical programs has rapidly increased, with students citing affordability, European recognition, and career opportunities as primary motivators. Survey findings indicate high motivation among students but highlight gaps in clinical competence, practical skills, and integration of theoretical and practical learning. Employers report moderate graduate preparedness (knowledge: 7/10; skills: 5–6/10), particularly in clinical sciences and patient management. Agencies emphasize the need for international licensing exam preparation, clinical exposure, and language proficiency. Strategic analysis reveals Georgia's potential to address local and global physician shortages while identifying challenges in faculty quality, clinical training, and workforce distribution.

Discussion

This study demonstrates strategic leadership in medical education through evidence-based workforce planning, system-level integration, and policy-oriented recommendations. Aligning curriculum, faculty development, and clinical training with labor market demands can enhance graduate competence and health system performance. Focusing on international students as a workforce pipeline underscores Georgia's global relevance and provides a model for leadership in medical education planning.

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