

Rethinking health sciences education

A new study addresses the full value chain in health sciences education from student selection, through pedagogical developments, unpacking of the current bottlenecks in the system and looking at how the future health sciences education system can be financed and regulated.



Professor Jimmy Volmink

Entitled [*Reconceptualising Health Professions Education in South Africa*](#), the report by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) was compiled by a 10-member panel led by Professor Jimmy Volmink, dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS), Stellenbosch University.

“South Africa’s quadruple burden of disease, shortage of trained health personnel, particularly in under-resourced and rural areas, and the ongoing higher education crisis places unique challenges on the health sciences education sector,” Volmink says.

Sixteen recommendations aimed at a wide-ranging audience, including policymakers and educators, were made, some of which are:

- There is a need to reconceptualise student selection with the aim of evaluating a broader set of criteria than those currently in use.
- Selection and training should be orientated towards addressing inequity and meeting the needs of the most underserved, through supporting a primary care focus and increasing the supply of healthcare professionals to rural areas.
- Public sector academic institutions need to be strengthened to scale up the production of healthcare professionals.
- Universities should take responsibility for education and professional development from undergraduate years through to internship and community service.
- To enable inter-professional education and collaborative practice (IPECP) to become sustainably embedded in health professional education in South Africa, a multi-stakeholder, national working group should be formed to develop and guide the implementation of a strategic plan for IPECP.
- There is a need to take urgent action to improve governance of health sciences funding by strengthening the capacity and accelerating the momentum of the Joint Health Science Education Committee.
- Improve human resource planning, resource allocation and budgeting.

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