

HOSPITAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT. EVALUATION RESEARCH METHOD

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Abstract: Sustainable development (SD) and its management as provided primarily by the Rio Summit and the Kyoto Protocol is not a fashion, but on the contrary, it is a science and a concern that records a historic move at the beginning of the XXIth century. For all organizations, whether productive or unproductive, of the business environment, of public institutions, the SD management presents itself as a guide to maximize in a realistic way, the activities and processes, both in terms of their economic and social aspect, but also regarding the environmental concerns. The strategic stake of the SD management manifests itself by the economic, social and ecological directives of each organization. Currently, many hopes are put around the concept of SD management and the accompanying opportunities. The approaches presented in the literature are large and numerous, and especially focus on the economic and environmental protection and less on the social area, and especially on healthcare. From this point of view, finding practical and useful solutions remains a major concern for the healthcare specialists in order to operationally integrate the SD of the healthcare field in the SD of the economic and environmental field. It requires rethinking the SD management in the health filed in close correlation with economic development and environmental protection, allowing the judicious development of the three areas in an ideal form of consensus.

Cuvinte cheie: dezvoltare durabilă – D.D. viziune managerială, sistem de sănătate, echipa managerială, metoda evaluativă

Rezumat: Dezvoltarea durabilă și managementul său, așa cum se prevede în principal la SUMMITUL de la RIO și în Protocolul de la KYOTO, nu este o modă, ci dimpotrivă o știință și o preocupare care consemnează o mișcare istorică la început de secol XXI. Pentru toate organizațiile, fie ele productive ale mediului de afaceri sau neproductive ale instituțiilor publice, managementul D.D. se prezintă ca un far călăuzitor spre maximizarea într-un mod realist a activităților și proceselor atât sub aspectul lor economic și social, dar și al preocupărilor ecologice. Miza strategică a managementului D.D. se manifestă prin intermediul directivelor economice, sociale și ecologice a fiecărei organizații. În prezent, se pun numeroase speranțe în jurul conceptului de management al D.D. și a oportunităților care îl însoțesc. Demersurile prezentate în literatura de specialitate sunt ample și numeroase și se orientează mai cu seamă spre zona economică și protecția mediului și mai puțin spre zona socială și mai ales pe domeniile vieții medicale. Din acest punct de vedere, rămâne o problemă majoră pentru specialiștii din sănătate de a găsi modalitățile concrete și utile de integrare operațională a D.D. a sistemului de sănătate cu dezvoltarea durabilă din mediul economic și cel al protecției mediului. Este nevoie de o regândire a managementului D.D. în sănătate, în strânsă corelare cu dezvoltarea economică și de protecție a mediului, care să permită o dezvoltare judicioasă a celor trei domenii într-o formă ideală de consens.

“The concept of sustainable development (SD) management, as the process that anticipates and coordinates, guides and plans, assesses and controls the activities of change, in which resources exploitation, coordination of investment and technical development orientation, as well as the institutional changes are all compatible and allow to meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet them in their turn.”(1)

We notice that sustainable development management aims at a new balance between environmental conservation, economic growth and social equity.

Based on the theories of unlimited economic growth, starting from the radical environmental theories up to the rationalist theories that justify a blind globalization, the notion of sustainable development and its management, as it developed in the 70s - 80s of the last century by the Brundtland Report

(1987), the concept of SD is seen under its multidimensional aspect - economic, social and environmental.

In classical thought, development and management development were associated with the economic growth and the sole indicator of the development being the gross national product statistics. This vision is already controversial, resorting to new models in the context of globalization and market economy with particular regard on the trinomial - sustainable performance, sustainable development and their management.

In this context, a significant contribution is held by SD management and by the prospective management vision, which must be in constant interdependence with the SD process and its overall size, the only way to finally get the synergy of the processes, as a result of individual choices.

We should be aware however, that the essence of the global size of SD consists in its social purpose, in the sense that

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it must first meet the present and future needs of man and humanity.

While the economic structure is one of the strengths of its global size of the SD management, the social - cultural - ecological component acts as its weakness.

Within the health system, health care system is made up of all the human, material, financial and informational resources used under various forms in order to produce health care.

After 1990, the health leaders faced new problems mainly caused by the change of the social and economic factors, especially by the alarming reduction of the financial resources and possibilities of the individual, an aspect which often came along with the sharp negative decrease of the real possibilities of the institutions to make the required payments to the budget for the care of the employees.

Against this background, health managers have progressively observed the following trends and needs manifested at community level, and hence the consumption of services in the field: the growth and the diversification of the healthcare need amid the social progress, as a dynamic factor of civilization, the need to reconsider medical care by its systemically re-design at macro and micro-functional level with a view to legitimate the afferent activities, enhancing institutional competition, both macrostructurally (complex units) and basically (medical units) by harmonizing the goals, the social tasks with the those of the individual.

Based on these considerations, the medical practice is revealed as a business, if it acts effectively and productively. This clearly differentiates the physician's condition until 1990, prepared exclusively for acquiring skills in the speciality, for establishing and applying the clinical and therapeutic diagnosis, so that afterwards, the relationship with the healthcare market to appeal to him and to require from him thorough knowledge of medical practice management in a competitive system, the knowledge and application of legal regulations specific to the open market economy, services financing, calculation and costs covering, monitoring the costs by destination, maintaining and developing the business under the fluctuating market conditions, the optimum utilization of resources in the system, quality management based on criteria, standards, regulations and expenditures control etc.

The success factors in health are dependent on the structure of the organization itself and on the competitive context in which it operates on the health market, conditioned by dynamism, simplicity, operational autonomy and staff, oriented towards the key factors initiating an effective work system and the rigorous use of control and self control in all the stages of any activity.

It is the hospital that produces services in various ways (day hospital and continuing care, providing emergency, outpatient consultations, conducting medical tests, radiology and medical imaging, functional explorations, ensures the implementation of national health programmes etc.).

Based on the many services provided by a hospital, the hospital manager and the management team sets the SD strategy on long-term (10-15 years), compatible with the short- and medium-term one from the sociological perspectives (organizational development, patients' rights and quality of care), from the ecological perspective (reducing environmental impact), from the economic perspective (effectiveness of care), in terms of engineering (the efficient use of resources, minimizing the waste, building energy certificate, energy efficiency).

The answer to these commands is achieved by establishing the main directions and targets regarding the

sustainable development of the hospital, in close correlation with concrete measures to streamline the operational plans.

Hospital sustainable development directions can regard the various operational aspects and operations of the hospital, starting from: analysis of costs, increase service quality, improved performance of the hospital in accordance with the national and European health policy, performance measurement processes, deepening partnerships with patients' associations, establishing a media communication strategy to increase the involvement of patients and carers.

Hospital sustainable development directions involve setting goals and for each of them, there are as many reasons for analysis and regular monitoring, judicious distribution of resources, their classification in time, assigning responsibilities and driving the staff towards their achievement.

The establishment of hospital performance indicators that reflect the quality of care, information system implementation, technical efficiency through the appropriate use of resources and eliminating waste, a greater accessibility to emergency services, achieving a balance assets with lower expenses than income, a greater mobility to reorganize the organizational structure in order to increase revenue and decrease costs by department, the development of maintenance plans for buildings and equipment, all these may represent objectives of the management in terms of hospital sustainable development.

For a hospital, efficiency is designed and involves expenditure reduction measures, increasing outpatient services, day care increase and decrease of continuous hospitalization, shortening of hospitalization, increasing the share of own revenues, the use of practice guidelines for diagnosis and treatment etc.

In the same context, we mention again that the managerial steps for re-assessing the methodology for calculating the hospital costs per patient (2) case-based funding adjustment for the cases with extreme hospitalization (3) the use of the comparative reports of DRG to improve sections management (4) the use of DRG reports closely correlated with the income and expenses for each doctor in the hospital, standardization under certain limits of the consumer behaviour (5) the information and consultation of physicians in setting up the economic and development strategies on short-, medium- and long term.

Once the directions and objectives of a hospital sustainable development management are settled, we can pass to the operationalization through practical measures concerning the economic and financial accountability, procurement of goods and services, hospital services and streamline their marketing investment in equipment, upgrading buildings, human resources management, clinical management and the strategy of the management team, measuring and analyzing the outcomes.

Management research methods. Evaluation research

After an analysis of the objectives and directions of the hospital sustainable development and after identifying the directions and measures to streamline the operational processes of the hospital, the manager must pass to their evaluation.

Evaluation is today a complex process used in almost all fields of activity, in order to verify the achievement of certain criteria of relevance, utility, effectiveness, quality and efficiency.

In terms of coverage, evaluation involves reviewing and analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of policies, programmes, services and staff with a view to improve their effectiveness and usefulness.

Without evaluation, the manager cannot know with certainty whether he/she accomplished what he/she had proposed, whether the objectives were realistic, whether the patients and caregivers were satisfied with the services provided by the hospital, whether the resources were well used to achieve the objectives, what were the causes of the undesired results and many more.

Through evaluation, the manager collects and analyses objectively and systematically the data necessary to make the best decisions. The effectiveness of programmes in achieving the purpose and objectives are analysed, as well as the related standards and regulations, aiming at their improvement, through the change of the operations, methods or resources used.

Evaluation is a plan that includes the purpose of evaluation, the overall approach, which is analyzed in terms of programmes, products, services and personnel in order to achieve a sustainable hospital.

The data required for the analysis of the effectiveness of the management decisions are then collected, regarding the hospital SD processes and the evaluation of the results by: defining and prioritizing the problems, identifying the relevant and appropriate data and information sources, assessing the integrity and comparability of data and identifying the errors in data sources, complying with the ethical principles in the collection, use and dissemination of the information, interpreting the data and the results correlated with the organizational specific.

For data collection:

- There are used the official documents of the hospital: the management plan, reports, records, documents, procurement activity reports of the functional departments, previous evaluation reports, accounts, present and future statistics regarding the management indicators.
- There are studied the hospital projects, annual procurement projects on medical equipment, upgrading infrastructure, modernizing hotel rooms, upgrading and equipping the technical plateau (kitchen, laundry, boiler, maintenance workshops), upgrading electrical, heating and plumbing systems.
- Hospital project evaluation is done by investigating the structure, the activities and their results, comparing what has been effectively achieved with the undertaken programme plans.
- The achievement of objectives in the SMART method is aimed at (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-sensitive) through process assessment, taking into account the activities, resources and materials of the programmes by measuring their effectiveness and efficiency with a view to identify the aspects of success, the economic evaluation by calculating the cost of these projects per clinical departments considered revenue and cost centres.

After data collection, the manager makes all the analyses, carries out the changes he/she considers to be effective and efficient and switches to a new type of management that involves:

- the rigorous control of funds and the urgent decision taking to reallocate them towards the priority areas of the hospital, when the situation requires this;
- the ability and the skill to rethink the investments in projects in terms of growth and potential profit, competitive price, quality of service;
- taking the risks of modernization and innovation, adopting new technologies, introducing new products and pioneering processes;

- the ability to make decisions in difficult conditions, the speed of decision making and their decisive implementation, availability to take less pleasant decisions, to deal with criticism in order to ensure the continuity of hospital activities;
- direct communication with the staff, more than the formal and the bureaucratic meetings;
- increasingly highlighting the personal responsibility for the quality of service in terms of efficiency;
- manager's ability to negotiate with the employees' representatives and patients, pressure groups, government representatives administering the hospital or the state politics.

Conclusions:

1. Sustainable Development Management of a hospital requires well-trained professionals, able to make decisions for efficient services even under poor funding system.
2. Prioritizing the activities and their operationalization is a major requirement of leadership.
3. Harmonization of the objectives of the management team and of the other members of the hospital with the monitoring and analyzing of the results obtained are a factor of progress and change at hospital level.
4. Emphasizing the economic function of management, may be a great advantage for any healthcare manager, who permanently needs to find solutions to streamline all the objectives to achieve.
5. Evaluation is an essential component of hospital services. The evaluation results depend directly on the quality of information, data collection mechanism and evidence within a complete system of indicators.

It follows, therefore, that the efficiency of a hospital requires a multidimensional effort at all levels of management, from managers to heads of departments and finally at the level of each employee - when we speak of a participative management.

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