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## MODELING OF THE CORE MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES IN THE PROCESS OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH MANAGERS

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### ABSTRACT

The success of any organization depends on effective management, but health systems face a lack of competent management at all levels. During the past decade, there has been a growing interest in competency-based performance systems for enhancing both individual and organizational performance in health professions. This article reviews the processes and outcomes associated with the training and development of health managers. The study attempted to draw up guidelines for basic modeling of key management skills necessary to optimize the training of health managers. To achieve this, the following methods of research were used: critical analysis and synthesis of scientific literature on the research problem; documentary method - national and European documents were examined, inquiry method - direct inquiry. Results: A noticeable deficiency in knowledge and application of appropriate motivational approaches to communicating with staff. The most desired areas of excellence to which it is necessary to focus future training topics relate to: motivation skills, conflict resolution and team cohesion, communication skills, persuasion and influencing / leadership skills.

**Key words:** management, competency, training, development, health managers

### INTRODUCTION

The European Union considers development based on competence a means of achieving competitive advantage. The development and assessment of competence and competencies have been identified as a key strategy for harmonizing the prospects for employment and free movement of labor within the EU.

The current stage of development of the Bulgarian healthcare system, with Bulgaria now a member of the European Community, further requires finding the most appropriate model for developing and maintaining the competencies necessary for health leaders to achieve the main goals of health and develop an effective system for organizational development (2, 3, 4, 6).

More and more authors are trying to build models of managerial skills and roles, and

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determine the corresponding processes of learning and development. A noticeable trend is to integrate a functional approach based on competence and personal characteristics of the approach in practice (7, 8, 9, 10, 11).

The applied aspects of management accounts created many opportunities for systematic and focused design of activities to develop leaders. In designing training programs, the desired profile of the manager on completion of the program can be constructed by using approaches based on competence. It is reasonable to expect differences in requirements for the training needs of managers from different levels of management - strategic, operational and team.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study attempted to draw up guidelines for basic modeling of key management skills necessary to optimize the training of health managers (2).

The main objective of this study was to specify the main areas of behavioral deficits in the management of medical staff and prepare a model for the development of leadership

competence in the field of health, relevant to the challenges of a dynamic emerging market of health services and in line with European practice for the introduction of professional standards of management and leadership.

To realize the goal, two sub-goals were considered:

1. The study of parameters of the main indicators of managerial competence in the field of human resource development and organizational behavior, such as job satisfaction of staff and their loyalty to the healthcare organization.

2. The identification and modeling of the key management skills necessary for effective management of human resources in health organizations.

The study was carried out among 220 executives on a team and operational level, 730 health professionals from hospitals in the cities - Teteven Region, Gabrovo, Lovech, Blagoevgrad, Kyustendil and Sofia. The sample was randomly selected.

To achieve the goals, the following methods of research were used: critical analysis and synthesis of scientific literature on the research problem; documentary method - national and European documents were examined, inquiry method - direct inquiry. Own questionnaires were prepared and implemented to identify the factors that drive job satisfaction and key managerial competencies in health for health managers at the operational and team level and contractors - health professionals. Questionnaires were compiled on the basis of a screening questionnaire to assess the competencies and structure of questions concerning organizational behavior in the medical facility. In designing the questionnaire, the expert assistance of specialists from the health and management practice with considerable experience in the field of organizational behavior and human resource management is taken into account. Questionnaires are written and anonymous, semi-structured interviews, statistical methods for the processing and analysis of raw data.

This outlines the results of the survey on the skills of health managers on a team and operational level. The purpose of this part of the study was to identify what the respondents consider as the most important skills for a manager of their position within their organization.

## RESULTS

For the purposes of modeling the key skills needed for the best performance of the activities of managers on a team and operational level, empirically drawn groups of skills by R. Boyatsis and teams by the Hay Group (9) were used with some modifications. They were formulated based on the basic functions of work as 1) diagnosis of situations and needs, 2) design and planning of interventions, 3) implementation of interventions, 4) establishing and maintaining relationships, 4) appropriate I-image, which in addition to the necessary special skills ensure smooth execution of work (9). Skills are grouped into three main areas:

- Analytical and thinking skills - systematic thinking, data analysis and collection of information, and more.
- Fluid skills - productivity orientation, planning and organizing, initiative, flexibility, etc..
- Ability to work with people - showing empathy, persuasion skills, negotiation skills, communication, teamwork and others.

Within the framework of the questionnaire, the following question was drawn up and posed to the respondents - managers:

"In your opinion, what skills does a person of your position need to their job as manager in the best possible way?"

To maximize the objectivity of the results, these skills of managers are classified in three different ways: 1) according to how many times the relevant skills was ranked first by all managers interviewed, 2) according to how many times it was generally referred to as a relevant skill, no matter which place 1 to 4 it ranked, and 3) according to the points collected by each skill. Points are calculated as follows: skill classification I gives 4 points, II gives 3, III gives 2 and IV gives.

Three basic skills needed by managers of low and medium level are clearly identified: teamwork, discipline, planning and organizing. They are significantly more often classified than all other skills. The results relate directly on elements of at least three functional areas of the British standards - working with people, government and providing direction.

In evaluating managers, the leading skills are interpersonal skills and a proactive group. Analytical skills are assessed as least important

(Table 1). Table № 1 presents the 10 skills, which the profile includes. The average estimates of the requirements of managerial

work, according to participants, are in descending order.

*Table 1. Average ratings of skills required for work and self-assessments of participants*

Skills required for work	Average ratings of requirements	Average estimates of individual skills
1. Planning and organizing	34,35	29,62
2. Relationships	33,44	27,89
3. Proactive	29,76	29,47
4. Laying order	28,79	25,94
5. Communication	28,06	25,54
6. Leadership	26,32	23,77
7. Support	26,24	25,66
8. Information Collection	25,03	24,71
9. Rationalization	23,71	21,15
10. Systematic Thinking	22,62	22,60

If we look at the assessment in detail, the highest rated elements of skills fall in the group of interpersonal skills. They reflect managers' perceived importance of leadership skills in team work. Elements of action skills rank below.

The self assessment of managers of their own skills, in turn, indicates where problem areas are open—for development, according to the participants themselves. They are presented in the far right-hand column of Table № 1. The main differences between job requirements and available competencies are evident.

This outlines the areas of management behavioral deficits in respondents: in the field of action skills / planning, organizing, setting goals / and in the field of working with people / relationships, communication, leadership - Ability to influence and persuasion to unite, etc. ...

The key managerial skills needed in their work, as defined by the respondents-managers, largely relate—to staff relations. Marked discrepancies between the competencies required for successful implementation and self-assessment of managers of their own managerial competencies outline the areas of management behavioral deficits in respondents: in the field of action skills / planning, organizing, setting goals / and in the field of working with people / relationships communication, leadership - Ability to influence and persuasion to unite, and others.

## DISCUSSION

A deficiency in knowledge and application of appropriate motivational approaches to communication with staff is noted. It is this that requires managers to acquire greater social- psychological expertise and create strategies that comply with the needs and nature of its contributors. Moreover, they must carefully assess the organizational culture, micro climate and value criteria in the hospital, and bind them with the style of interpersonal behavior and existing tradition in the organization. Usually when there is a lack of systematic information on the attitudes of employees at work, the decisions related to work ethics, change, wages and allowances, the organization falls within an information vacuum. In fact, this phenomenon is common in health care organization in the country at present (3,4,6).

The top rated managerial competencies are in relationships, leadership and initiative (**Table 2**).

Pooled data from interviews held with respondents—managers suggest a detailing of the skills which they estimated as necessary for the successful implementation of management roles.

In the semi-structured interviews conducted, include the following questions were included:

1. How would you rate on a six-grade system at the necessary management skills necessary in your job and your current personal competence in this area?

2. What are the biggest difficulties encountered in managing the team that you command?
3. Do you feel the need to improve your management skills and in what areas?

4. What are your preferred forms and methods of increasing your professional competence in this area?

**Table 2.** Average ratings of the 4 highest rated elements of skills required for work

No	Elements of skills	Skills	Assessment
1.	Inclusion in the work as a team member	relationships	5,88
2.	Communication with other	relationships	5,68
3.	Building a team spirit	leadership	5,59
4.	Personal involvement and responsibility	initiative	5,59

Based on the identified qualities and skills that the respondents-managers themselves indicated as necessary, two main areas of training are set- professional competence in teamwork and personal development.

The most desired areas of excellence to which it is necessary to focus future training topics relate to: motivation skills, conflict resolution and team cohesion, communication skills, persuasion and influencing / leadership skills.

Interviewed managers determined the most preferred methods to improve their professional qualifications as: didactic methods used in the form of postgraduate / thematic modular programs / (73%), consulting (49%) and coaching (38%). Combined forms - present and distance / online - are the preferred formats for respondents.

In the health care system the requirements for the development of managers are directly related to the ongoing reform and the need to adopt new organizational values, requiring a new management style, skills and attitudes to work (5). The need for middle and lower level managers to prepare for their new roles of developing leaders and "agents of change" is becoming apparent.

In addition to the general core skills, however, the development of health organizations and anticipated changes in these present new challenges to managers. For example, the model for development of management competence leadership requires from the health manager:

- to be part of the team;
- to develop effective teams and talent;
- to urge improvements;
- to master the content;
- always to deliver results.

Many of the skills associated with such new roles are portable and are reflected in one way or another in other models. However, they can become the focus of future research and lead to the development of management accounts.

The results of this study and previous own research in this direction, and critical analysis of literature on the topic, give us reason to determine the presence of behavioral deficits in skills for planning, organizing, setting goals, communication skills and leadership competence in the management of human resources in these hospitals.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the overall results the following recommendations may be made to guide the Faculty of Public Health:

- Introducing the Competency approach in all forms of academic and continuing education of specialists in public health and health management. The use of standards based on the basis of best practices, defining the requirements for competent performance of work and necessary for that personal competencies, is a good basis for the design of targeted learning process.
- Rethinking and implementing changes in the forms and methods of training. Introduction of distance learning, especially suitable for active managers. Substantial reserves offer informal processes and episodic learning in the workplace and their combination with formal training. Updating of curricula based on Competency approach.
- Overcoming the distance learning process - a practice by using innovative approach to learning through experience. The most critical location in the chain of learning is

the unit linking individual learning with the application of learning in the workplace.

- Using the more flexible, innovative approaches in the preparation of health managers. For example, in the form of postgraduate training appropriate for the design of an effective development process the resources available to the trainee, his organization and Public Health Faculty to be used most efficiently. This means "expansion" of the process beyond the school and its connection with the workplace and the environment in which the trainee works. The first step here is the definition of requirements for the competence and determination of individual development needs.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the evaluations and specific requirements and development needs of managers modular training programs for development may be designed and academic bachelor and master programs in healthcare management rethought. In their design, the key areas that need to be committed to appropriate topics and issues should be aimed at developing the key competencies, as identified by participants, in the management of the health sector.

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