MILESTONES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND REPOSITIONING OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION IN A HOSPITAL

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Abstract: The preparation and modernisation of the human resources management policy in order to meet patients' needs and to improve the career progress of health professionals in terms of quality and cost play a central role in the hospital reform strategy. Today it is necessary to make the transition from the human resources function based on the administrative management where quality is widely acknowledged, to the strategic approach focused on the acknowledgment and valorization of the human capital which is undoubtedly the factor that contributes to the creation of undisputable value in hospitals. This article is intended as a reflection on the primary milestones for development and repositioning of human resources – the key stake in hospital reform.
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1. Introduction

After the 1980s, many specialised works discussed the changes in the views of public sector organisations regarding the place and the importance of labour in the performance of organisational entities in various areas of activity, including hospital services. Thus, the name *"Personnel Division"* evolved towards *"Human Resources Division"* and the concept of *"personnel management"* has been replaced by *"human resources management"*. This change in concept has occurred from the need to find the best match between human resources and the requirements of an organisation, both in terms of quantity and in terms of quality. The new concept of *"human resources management"* is supported by two aspects (UNESCO-IIEP, 2015): on the one hand, there is the fact that this management is strategic and drives personnel's mobilisation, and on the other hand, there is the statement that employees are a resource that contributes a great deal to the success of the organisation.

From such a standpoint, an organisation, whether public or private, is considered as a *"new group of people who coordinate their work to accomplish specific goals"* (UNESCO-IIEP, 2015, p.5). This implies that the organisational system – which an organisation forms – no longer depends on one person or the person who directs/runs the organisation, but all the persons having the will, the determination and the understanding that they should "fight" for the goals to be achieved. Therefore, in order for an organisation to effectively reach its goals it should define clearly and realistically its different levels of organisational responsibility.

The strategic human resources management is defined by Bareil et al. (Bareil, Boudrias and Savoie, 2002, pp.64-73) as: *"all the activities of human resources function favouring the coherence of human resources management strategies and practices in relation to the organisation's strategic stakes (vision, direction, values and great objectives)"*. This strategic aspect linked to the human resources management emerged as a result of Chandler's works (1962) and developed in the 1970s and the 1980s (Vallejo, 2013). Chandler's works have pointed out that the organisational success depends on a balance between the internal elements (structure, culture, human resources and management systems) and the external strategy (Guerin and Wils, 2002).

The introduction of the notion of *"strategy"* in the phrase *"human resources management"*, which defines a new theoretical model – *"strategic human resources management"* – results in considering the human resources function not only at operational level, but also at strategic level. Such an approach is evident with the introduction of the *"Human Resources Division"* in the Board of Directors to influence the general policy of the organisation (Storey, 2003, p.28).

The challenge is, therefore, to create human resources management that is proactive and oriented towards the key interests of the organisation (Bareil, Boudrias and Savoie, 2002, pp.64-73) based on flexible anticipation and adaptability (Guerin and Wils, 2002). This view takes into account that the strategic human resources management requires a coherent knowledge or vision of tomorrow's demands (Guerin and Wils, 2002).

Human resources management is acknowledged as a major factor in the organisational performance compared to other factors (investments in research and development, quality of the products placed in the market etc.). The mechanisms of human resources development strategy impacting the organisational performance are (Guerin and Wils, 2002):

- creating the human capital: recruiting, selection, training, development;
- motivating the human capital: progress practices, career development, remuneration, relationships with employees;
- organising a work environment that allows the individual to make an effective contribution: work organisation, providing workplaces with proper equipment.

2. Evolution of concepts that operate in the field of human resources management from an epistemological point of view

From an epistemological point of view the field of human resources management has experienced major progress over the course of the last century, both from a theoretical standpoint, and from an empirical standpoint. Most human resources manuals outline five periods of conceptualisation of the subject related to the place and importance of personnel in the performance of an organisation. The first two periods are chronologically before the 1950s and the next three periods are after the1950s. ST-Onge, Audet, Haine and Petit (St-Onge, Audet, Haines and Petit, 2004) determined these periods according to the approaches to the field concerned:

1. The *"scientific"* or *"technicist"* perspective (or Taylorism) according to which the issues of the human factor result from inappropriate production methods. At the time, the principles of scientific work organisation were applied to find a better organisation that would allow the best possible capacity. By eliminating the employees' contribution, incentive remuneration schemes and training programmes were designed, thus focusing on a set of work organisation rules or methods that would enable the achievement of expected results (St-Onge, Audet, Haines and Petit, 2004, p.13).

2.The *"psychological and human relations trend"* perspective in which the human resources management was approached from the perspective of human dynamism and considerable importance was attached to the abilities of managers in interpersonal relations. According to this perspective, the issues that occur between the management and the employees may be generated when the psychological needs of employees are not given the proper attention or when the management practices characterised by leadership, communication, acknowledgment and respect for individuals are not given enough consideration. During that time, researchers have focused their attention on the behaviours of individuals, small groups, interrelationships between groups and the global (systemic) phenomenon of the organisation (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1989).

3.The *"institutional"*, legal and political perspective, identified as being the perspective of employment relations and as being developed as a result of the imbalance of powers between employees and employers, of the authoritarianism of managers and of the economic insecurity of employees. During this period, the legal rules and the collective bargaining were given preference and the overall vision of the organisation was promoted (St-Onge, Audet, Haines and Petit, 2004, p.14).

4.The *"systemic"* perspective promoted the need for an analysis of the components of the organisational environment as they exerted their influence both on the resources dedicated to human resources management and on the activities and objectives pursued by the organisation. Human resources management is considered from this point forward a subsystem of an organisation (St-Onge, Audet, Haines and Petit, 2004, p.16).

5.The last perspective is the *"strategic"* perspective that emerged in the 1990s. It is characterised by the integration of a set of activities chosen according to the results to be obtained. In fact, it involves a process of putting into practice the suitable means aiming at achieving the goals of the organisation, thus completing its mission, in a turbulent environment faced with increasingly fierce competition (St-Onge, Audet, Haines and Petit, 2004, p.17). Applied in the field of human resources management, this perspective is ultimately about bringing the external environment in line with the internal environment and the strategy of the organisation, thus making up the basic model of the *"strategic human resources management"*.

There is a wide range of definitions related to the concept of strategic human resources management, but it should be pointed out that these definitions have similar foundations in the form of three principles applicable to the concept:

a) the need for internal coherence of human resources management practices with each other and the need for external coherence with the company's strategy (Arcand, 2000, p.52);

b) the human resources become part of the organisation's major strategic directions;

c) the strategic human resources management has real meaning only to the extent that it contributes to the improvement of the various parameters related to the effectiveness of the organisation (Bernard, 2009).

3. Development and repositioning of the Human Resources Division – key stake in hospital reform

Hospital reform needs the support of strong human resources management. And the involvement of the Human Resources Division will increase as it is called to participate in the formulation of the (hospital's) organisational strategy.

The issue of modernising the human resources policy in public health establishments is part of an evolving general context characterised by a series of challenges (Toupillier and Yahiel, 2011, p.3):

- responding to new patient expectations related to the transformation of the society;
- respecting patients in the health system;
- taking into account the aging of the population;
- noticing and anticipating public health issues;
- integrating the development of chronic pathologies and polypathologies;
- adapting to scientific and technological progress;
- developing research and innovation.

Under these circumstances, the hospital system must simultaneously act firmly in the spirit of the implemented policy, adapt the organisation of healthcare services in order

to achieve the performance and patient safety indicators, and provide an attractive work environment for all health professionals.

Thus, the modernisation of human resources management of hospitals derives from two mandatory requirements (Toupillier and Yahiel, 2011, pp.3-4):

➢ responding to the abovementioned challenges;

➢ considering and providing better support to a series of reforms and changes probably unprecedented whose success is conditioned by the mobilisation of all categories of personnel involved.

In the steps taken in this process of modernising the human resources management it should be remembered that – and this should not be disregarded at all – today there are three categories of transversal needs that run up against the management of human resources (Toupillier and Yahiel, 2011, p.7):

• the search for a "meaning", which renders it similar to the dynamics found in all complex public and private enterprises;

• the desire for a real autonomy within a framework where transformation is in full swing, because the rules regarding the personnel remain national by definition, while the control becomes very strongly anchored at regional level (which, considering the budgetary impact of the body of employees, is a central context element), whereas daily actions are taken closer and closer to hospitals, even closer to the ground;

• the need for adapted tools and procedures, including professional support for managers and people in charge of human resources management in what has now become a highly territorialised context.

The capacity of hospitals to provide quality health care to all the patients is based, above all, on competence, work and commitment. The major progress that has impacted the operation of hospitals over the past two decades make it necessary to renew the human resources management approach. Three main stakes need to be pointed out in particular (Toupillier and Yahiel, 2011, p.64):

✓ evolving towards more individualised management of skills and support for career path;

✓ constantly ensuring the consistency between the constant evolution of skill requirements within each hospital service and the actual skills available in other hospitals and territories;

✓ making use of the *savoir faire* in the human resources management policy, a decisive factor of hospital strategy and performance in all its dimensions, especially quality, internal efficiency and economic performance.

4. Conclusions

The mission of the Human Resources Division is difficult, but the work it carries out is passionate and complex. In delegating the management it will be vital to be able to preserve its expertise and control missions in the context of a clearly defined general hospital policy.

In order to support the human resources function towards higher performance it is necessary to maintain and increase the autonomy of the Human Resources Division in the organisational structure of the hospital.

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