



The Role of Strategic Human Resources Management in Healthcare Organizations – The Challenges We Face Today

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Abstract

The complex relationship between healthcare and human resources requires knowledge in healthcare and management theories. The role of effective human resource management (HRM) strategies in the delivery of high quality healthcare services will be discussed along with some of the challenges faced by healthcare managers and providers.

Keywords: Human Resource Management (HRM); Healthcare

Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) in healthcare is challenging due to different various staffing categories required such as medical, non-medical, clinical, non-clinical, administration, secretarial, managerial, public relation and so on, all of whom are responsible for delivering healthcare to patients. Therefore, human resource managers need to be experienced and highly specialized in healthcare HRM. Knowledge about financial resources is crucial to maintain a balance between recruiting highly skilled staff and resource management in terms of costing and profit making. Healthcare comes with a high cost and large expenditure, which makes it challenging to be able to recruit and retain highly qualified and skilled staff, whether medical or non-medical. It is also important to remember that highly skilled practitioners need highly sophisticated and costly equipment to perform their best, so, the higher the standards of chosen employees, comes a higher cost of the tools required for them to perform their job effectively and efficiently. Another challenging issue is how to distribute the workforce across different departments of the organization, as all

disciplines are equally as important and needed to run the service. The ability to decide the appropriate size and composition of the teams, mixing them between seniors, juniors and trainees, and providing appropriate training and continuous education can be extremely challenging in healthcare HRM.

As the healthcare industry is being in continuous challenge and struggle to recruit highly qualified personnel especially in the rural areas, strategic HRM must be practiced. Effective HRM strategies reflect on healthcare in several aspects, the main ones being quality, efficiency and equity [3]. When it comes to quality of healthcare and human resources, the relationship can be somehow complex as it reflects on quality regarding managing patients' expectations, and the technical quality of healthcare services provided to improve their health. In terms of efficiency, cost effectiveness must be considered closely, and for example, sometimes outsourcing labor can reduce the cost of lower caliber manpower [1]. Equity refers to fairness to employees in terms of financial protection and pension plans. Human resource managers

and professionals face many difficulties and obstacles to deliver quality, efficiency and equity, these obstacles can range from financial factors to high rate of staff turnover and workforce migration. Different organizations have different requirements, therefore, human resource strategies applied must be tailored to suit and serve the set-up of the organization. Strategies such as recruitment, selection, development, training and education, reward and staff retention, are all important in healthcare and if practiced appropriately, leads to good outcomes and high quality of care [2]. The recruitment strategy; focuses on finding highly qualified and skilled manpower, which in turn, requires a process of planning and job analyzing. Whereas, the selection strategy focuses on allocating staff where they can perform their best, taking into account their personalities and behaviors, this can be done by using assessment tools like, studying their personal history through the curriculum vitae, taking personality test, and for some jobs they can go through work simulation [7]. This process is followed by interviewing the suitable candidates. Another crucial strategy is reward and manpower retention by motivating the employees with good schemes of leaves and bonuses which can create the sense of belonging and loyalty [3].

There are many complexities and challenges facing human resources worldwide, one of them is number of doctors available to treat patients. Examples of two healthcare systems will be looked at, the system in Germany as compared to developing countries.

In Germany, the number of medical practitioners and physicians is larger than the demands of the country and this has led the German doctors to migrate to other countries [4]. The production of high number of doctors is attributed to affordable medical schools in Germany, and the cost of education and specialization is low as compared to other areas of the world [11]. The oversupply of doctors has caused a challenge to human resources in terms of lower income and high competition. The HRM strategy used to tackle this problem, was to differentiate between hospital based and community based physicians in terms of income. Community based doctors are paid according to the types and number of services they provide, whereas, hospital based doctors are salaried as per a salary scale [4]. In developing countries, the challenge is the opposite, doctors migrating to other countries for better opportunities has led to a serious deficiency in the number of physicians available to provide healthcare especially in the rural

areas [6]. This has adversely affected the quality of healthcare available for patients living in developing countries, and the human resources sector is struggling to find solutions for the lack of well-trained practitioners [5].

Conclusion

Healthcare is delivered to humans by humans, a concept which makes human resource management one of the most important pillars to success and quality of healthcare delivery. HRM in healthcare is a complex and challenging topic, it needs knowledge, experience, and special considerations to be taken into account. Different countries, different healthcare systems and different funding sources, all require the customization of human resource management strategies depending on the setup being dealt with. The organization's set up and requirements make an organizational culture, and where there is culture, there are people, therefore, people management is a base for human resource management. Balancing between the organization's benefits and its employees' interests and benefits is crucial but challenging. Proper strategic planning needs high levels of expertise amongst the HRM professionals and teams, they need to have an understanding of all other operational aspects of the organization including, finance, expenditure, risk management and clinical performance quality and standards. Effectiveness of strategic human resource management in healthcare is reflected by high employee satisfaction and retention, lower turnover rates and higher morale, so all stakeholders are in advantage. The employees are satisfied; the organization has a strong manpower and eventually the quality of healthcare provided is optimum.

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