Reviewer's report

Title: Exploring types of focused factories in hospital care: a case study approach

Version: 2 Date: 17 November 2009

Reviewer: Thomas Plochg

Reviewer's report:

Best authors,
First of all, I would like to notify that you have made an effort to improve the paper. However, I still have one major comment that has implications for the whole paper.

Major essential revisions

- In my opinion, the objective of your study is still fuzzy. You state that you want to explore the application of focused factories in hospital care to refine the definition of the concept. Your design could be appropriate for that purpose. However, you used the method in another way, i.e., an inventory of the application of focus in hospital care. As such, the objective is slightly different, i.e., to give an descriptive overview of how the businesslike concept of focused factories is currently applied, and to give some indications for its performance. In my view, you must explicitly choose for one of these objectives. However, each choice has repercussions for the structure of the paper. I think that the second objective better suits the study as it has been performed. This is best illustrated by the conclusions where you state that focus could lead to better operational performance. Moreover, the refinement of the concept is quite superficial which does not support the idea of refining the concept of focused factories. On the other hand, you face problems in the study design, as your sampling is not representative. So, how valid is your descriptive overview then?

Minor essential revisions

- The argument in the background sketches the relevance of exploring the concept of focus factory in hospital care. In my view the argument could be more concise and to the point. It is now quite long. The argument should be that the hospital sector is experimenting with the business concept of focused factories. This is initially positive, but is also problematic in two ways. First, hospital management does not have exactly know what the concept means, and does not now under what conditions it could be implemented. Second, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the concept when there is so much diversity.

- I support the idea of using tables to present information. However, table one is now somewhat empty. You only provide the concept with a reference. Please provide a short description of each concept.

- In the methods section, page 8, you write that you sampled primarily Dutch
hospitals. Please add that you sampled “conveniently”. I think that your sampling strategy was quite pragmatic guided by some general problems.

- Page 5. “This is in stark contrast” seems very Dutch to me. Please revise.

- Table 2. It is confusing to present different variables (i.e., treatment places, inpatient beds, no. of annual cataract surgeries etc.) in one column. The table is difficult to read.

Discretionary revisions

- The title could be more catchy and precise referring to the key message of the paper. At least, it might be better to change "a case study approach" into a "multiple case study".

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.