Reviewer’s report

Title: Enhanced hospital-based learning at a medical school through application of management principles - a case study

Version: 0 Date: 18 May 2017

Reviewer: Brian Mavis

Reviewer's report:

This paper describes an intervention based on management principles to realign the educational mission and enhance the learning environment of a community teaching hospital. It is written as a case study and documents the problem to be solved, the steps taken, preliminary outcomes and lessons learned. Generally the authors use the case study format successfully. There are a number of places where the explanations are not clear or need to be expanded to help the reader understand the approach taken by the authors.

Some specific suggestions are provided below:

1. The overall logic and organization of the Background section is challenging to a reader unfamiliar with this case. It is difficult to follow. I would suggest that the authors carefully review the sequence of information presented as well as the transitions from one main idea to the next. The use of subheadings would help the reader follow the flow of the story as it unfolds. In addition, the Background section is long and redundant in places. For instance, much of the Background provides general principles, some of which are repeated again on p. 7 when the specific hospital at the center of this case study is described. Overall, in the Background section, the delineation of the key principles and the organization of ideas to be presented need attention.

2. In the Background, the authors write, "...clinical education has not always (been the) highest priority …" p. 4 (line 11), which implies that education has been the highest priority at one time or another. In contrast, on p. 5 (Line 36) they write "The dominating mission of a hospital is indisputably to provide high quality care of patients." This latter is true and seems inconsistent with the prior statement on p. 4. I suggest rewording the statement on p. 4 for consistency and accuracy.

3. IN the Background (pp. 4-5, lines 52-60 and 1-3) the authors make the gap between learning and supervision, however no references are provided to support their statements.

4. On p. 6 (lines 53-59) the authors write that government funds are made available to university departments. Is it true that the government funds departments directly? In
many cases, the government funds the university, which then directs funds to specific
departments. As written it seems misleading.

5. There are no references to any of the statements made on p. 7. If these statements are
based on the authors' observations, then they should be explicitly labeled as such;
otherwise they should be referenced to the literature.

6. I would suggest that the authors move the Study Aim statements to the end of the
Background, and revise the study aims for clarity to guide the reader. The aims should be
written as complete sentences.

7. One step that is not clear in this manuscript is how the decision to use management
principles came about. Were other approaches tried and unsuccessful, did the people
involved have backgrounds in management so this would have been the approach with
which they were most familiar, or were there characteristics of the situation such that a
management approach seemed the most appropriate among the alternatives considered?

8. On p. 12 the authors describe the results of “the first step” and conclude that
benchmarking did not result in any clarifications related to financial resources (lines 9-
12). In the next sentence (lines 14-22) the authors indicate that benchmarking was used
as one of several strategies for an analysis of financial resources, which resulted in
modeling. This seems to be a successful use of modeling to provide clarity around
financial resources, and therefore contradicts the first statement. Perhaps the authors
were trying to make a different point, but as written this is not clear to the reader.

9. The discussion of the use of benchmarking was not found to be useful due to the
distinctiveness of the case and comparison hospitals. On page 13, there is discussion of
the reorganization of the course to improve outcomes. It would be helpful to how the
realignment compared to the other hospitals: were the results a model unique to the
hospital or do the changes reflect a convergence of the course to a model common to the
teaching hospitals?

10. The graphs need clear labeling. There is no label on the y-axis of either graph. For
Figure 1, there is no labels provided in the legend to explain the meaning of 1, 2, 3, 4 and
5.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?  
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?  
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?  
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Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?  
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Not relevant to this manuscript

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