

# Knowledge Management As A Determinant Of Organizational Agility In The Moroccan Public Hospital

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**Abstract:** Today, the environment of the hospital system in Morocco and worldwide is facing many changes and challenges. It is evolving in a context of environmental fluctuations, as the recent pandemic crisis has demonstrated. This unstable context is becoming difficult given the scarcity of resources and accelerated innovation where knowledge and technologies are exploding and becoming more complex, requiring a great deal of control. The public hospital must transform its management to respond adequately to current challenges. In this sense, a learning and agile public hospital will be a strategic and organizational response to react quickly to provide care and education to its patients. From this perspective, our research aims to answer the following question: "what is the importance of knowledge management within the Moroccan public hospital to enable it to be more agile to ensure care and education to its patients? Based on a synthetic review of the literature, this work sheds light on the importance for the public hospital to better manage its knowledge and to have to look more closely at the issue of learning from its environment but also from its own experiences, which are so rich and multiple, to evolve towards an agile and learning hospital.

**Keywords:** public hospital, agility, change, knowledge management, learning.

## BACKGROUND

In today's competitive and demanding environment, organizations in all sectors, including healthcare, are undergoing profound changes (Teoh et al., 2015). Indeed, the hospital system environment in Morocco and worldwide faces many changes and challenges. The Moroccan public hospital is a complex and vital organization within the Moroccan national health system. It has been under pressure since the beginning of the Covid pandemic to respond adequately to the new needs of the population by providing safe, quality care while ensuring equitable access (Bentaleb, 2021) (Ministry of Health, 2021).

Also, the public hospital evolves under tension in a zone of significant turbulence. It is destined to follow permanent adaptation needs related to the emergence of new requirements or the steady progress of medicine or technology...Etc. (Brémond et al., 2013). The Moroccan

public hospital is in the same way, subject to countless and regular attempts at reform.

These are often experienced as crises frequently challenging its ability to lead change. It is rightly obliged to evolve to serve the population better and, above all, to follow the transformations currently being sought. Among other things is the need to establish a viable and sustainable health financing system that can accompany the generalization of medical coverage while ensuring the financial protection of citizens (Ministry of Health, 2021).

Indeed, the public hospital will have to prepare itself to face the population's increasing demand for health services and care and the emergence of new health problems. The latter requires a great deal of patient education. This brings together different realities, such as health education for healthy people with a view to prevention, illness education for sick people, and education for their treatments (Giordan,

2018). And this is without neglecting the current requirement for accessible and quality safe care (Ministry of Health, 2021).

For this reason, the Moroccan public hospital must rethink its managerial practices by implementing a management system capable of making it more agile to consider changes better and develop more flexibility and responsiveness.

## METHODS

The Moroccan public hospital would be obliged to evolve its organization and management to respond adequately to the many current challenges and issues. From this perspective, our research aims to answer the following question: "What is the importance of knowledge management within the Moroccan public hospital to enable it to be more agile to ensure care and education to its patients?"

Based on a synthetic review of the literature, with the help of a selection of recent institutional reports available in Morocco and international literature, i.e., literature reviews or scientific articles, The objective of this article is to interpret and analyze all these data to shed light on the importance of setting up adequate knowledge management and above all integrating organizational learning within these fairly complex hospitals to make them more agile and thus facilitate the implementation of the desired transformations and above all so that they can provide care and education to their patients.

The agile and innovative transformation has motivated this study. This article attempts to fill a gap in research in this area in the Moroccan hospital context. In this sense, the research was conducted on several English and French databases. The search was limited to studies assessed in quality and eligibility to identify studies relevant to our research purpose.

The selected references, which had good reliability and validity parameters, were imported and managed by Zotero. The parameters included in the quality assessment scale for the selected studies were: description of the study protocol, adherence to the study protocol, precise formulation of the research question, clear explanation of the analysis method used, use of objective and unbiased measurement criteria, presence of single or

double-blinding where appropriate, clarification of conflicts of interest, and discussion of study bias.

## DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

To set the scene for this study, we have chosen first to define some key concepts.

**Organizational agility:** can be defined as the ability of an organization to respond flexibly, responsively, and differentially to the distinct and multiple fluctuations that may emanate from its environment and to produce quality services and products that meet the requirements of its customers (Barzi, 2011).

**Knowledge:** is an integral part of the human capital of any organization (OECD, 2013). There are two types of knowledge; explicit knowledge is directly understandable and expressible by every individual in the organization. Tacit knowledge is specific to each individual. It is formed from personal know-how and individual beliefs and aspirations. (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

**Knowledge management:** is the implementation of a set of approaches, organizational processes, and relevant technologies first to identify crucial knowledge and then collect, preserve, value, and update it and thus share and manage it to make it a tool for the development and performance of the organization (Ermine, 2005).

**Organizational learning** is a process of accumulating knowledge through repetition and experimentation. It involves pooling individual and collective skills and enables the organization to learn (Koubaa, 2014).

## THE MOROCCAN PUBLIC HOSPITAL

The public hospital is a complex, multidisciplinary and particular organization because it is often confronted with significant and contradictory challenges. In concrete terms, the public hospital must offer safe and quality services, optimize the use of resources and control expenditure, and respond agilely to the many transitions experienced, often simultaneously, on the demographic, epidemiological, and political-socio-economic levels (Makhloufi et al., 2012).

In this sense, in Morocco, numerous reforms have followed one another to improve the

organization and management of hospitals (Ministry of Health, 2017). The latter has thus undergone a succession of reforms to, among other things, rationalize expenditure and therefore modernize the management, financing, and regulatory processes (Zammar et al., 2016).

Restructuring within hospitals has aimed to control hospital activities qualitatively by evaluating quality, adopting cost accounting by calculating costs, and finally quantifying performance on an ongoing basis (Ministry of Health, 2018).

Not only has the medico-economic logic been adopted, but also new governance for hospitals has been established to grant them more autonomy to guarantee more transparency and equity in the allocation of financial resources and, above all, to make their actors more responsible for their distinct and multiple activities (Ministry of Health, 2018; 2021).

The implementation of management in hospital organizations has undoubtedly contributed to their development. Still, several difficulties have been experienced during these hospital reforms, and several shortcomings persist despite all the efforts made (CESE, 2019).

Indeed, the Moroccan hospital remains underused; worse still, it lacks attractiveness in the eyes of Moroccan citizens. Unfortunately, these establishments' services are still far from meeting the population's expectations (Ministry of Health, 2017). Unfortunately, despite several efforts, all the steps taken have not been able to bring about the change so longed for in the Moroccan public hospital universe (Chahouati, 2021).

In other words, this hospital organization is still failing in some attempts at change. Questions must be asked to better position itself and, above all, to meet the objective of continuously providing the best services and care to the increasingly demanding patients of today.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Faced with many changes, often costly and unsatisfactory results, and the risk of disappearing, the public hospital must transform itself and rethink its structures and strategies. It is now time to question the best

managerial approach to be followed by hospitals.

The Moroccan public hospital is currently under pressure to ensure the quality and safety of patient care, reduce medical errors, optimize time and reduce costs (Bentaleb, 2021). It is now necessary to innovate and consider new approaches without forgetting to consider the hospital's characteristics in the conduct of all developments and reforms in the health sector. Indeed, the features of the institution, the multiplicity and complexity of activities within the hospital, and not forgetting professional values can act as points of resistance to the overly rapid application of management methods that are more often than not borrowed from the business world (Minvielle, 2009).

Although, health reforms are often part of a logic of transformation of health systems. Updating objectives or increasing resources alone are not enough to call it a reform. Moreover, a reform needs a change that affects existing institutions, organizational structures, and management systems (Belghiti Alaoui, 2008).

And we all know that the health and well-being of the patient is the reason for the hospital's existence. It is also for this patient that severe and costly reforms have been undertaken. Today, hospital organization is inevitably evolving in a context of scarce resources, where innovation is advanced, and knowledge and technologies are becoming more and more abundant and complex, requiring a great deal of control (Réal, 2000).

It should also be pointed out that the hospital has been affected by budgetary rationalization, and given the restructuring required, this should encourage it to examine new resources and invest in the essential capital, which is the human resource, given the knowledge they produce and convey (Teoh & Cai, 2015). And in this sense, knowledge and organizational learning seem to be the perfect answer to accompany changes (Vallat et al., 2018).

Considering all these constant changes in the hospital environment, examining the notion of agility offers several rejoinders. Indeed, agility has been introduced as a strategic and organizational response to environmental fluctuations. It is recognized that agile organizations can react quickly and effectively

to all kinds of constraints to ensure sustainable growth and better integration into the environment (Barzi, 2011).

In this sense, the literature review reveals that various dimensions are included in talking about organizational agility (Zitkiene and Deksnys, 2018). It makes explicit, among others, human resources, new technologies, and the process of dynamic adaptation of the organization to change (Vickoff, 2008).

Agility remains a recent concept in management sciences and relates to different domains (Barzi, 2011). It can, therefore, be adopted by hospital organizations in a global approach that considers the dimensions specific to the hospital structure. This is of great interest because improving agility within any organization inevitably requires the interdisciplinary integration of human resources, knowledge, and technology (Kidd, 1995).

In this sense, the hospital is a knowledge-rich organization ideally suited to implement knowledge management to promote change (Boudallaa et al., 2021). This is because, among other things, the efforts of the various actors will be combined to collectively achieve better organizational performance (Ermine, 2003) while better managing shared resources.

The hospital is naturally complex, given the multiplicity of roles, actors, techniques, and expectations (De Kervasdoué, 2015). For this reason, the specific activity in hospitals is suitable for the implementation of organizational learning, as the information and knowledge generated must be taken seriously to anticipate health problems, provide quality care, contribute to the health security system, teach and conduct research (Vallat et al., 2018).

The implementation of knowledge management mainly involves organizational staff, technology, and communication. This fully promotes the commitment of the actors as they will be imbued with the organization's culture, facilitating their adhesion and participation in the change (Ermine, 2005).

Also, knowledge management offers ease of communication and thus better circulation of information (Wenger, 2000), optimizing informed documentation to avoid duplication of effort.

Without forgetting that the public hospital must seriously counter organizational amnesia, learn from its mistakes, no longer try to reinvent the wheel, and look more closely at the question of learning from its environment and its own rich and multiple experiences. In this respect, the hospital organization must have an internal capacity to acquire knowledge, assimilate it, and transform it into innovations in services and processes.

Knowledge management in health care is a real support to provide efficient and high-quality health care, reduce errors, improve knowledge sharing, facilitate knowledge updating, improve decision making based on reliable information and evidence, ensure staff competence and create value within healthcare institutions (Bentaleb, 2021).

Indeed, the fluidity of information offered by knowledge management ensures that the data is correct, understandable, adapted, and provided at the right time. Information is considered a resource in the hospital that should not be neglected. It enables the best decisions regarding care and allows the patient and family to be educated and informed appropriately (Beyragued et al., 2006).

All the information and knowledge managed, developed, and shared within the hospital affects the individual, family, and environment (Ballekom, 2008). Through its actors and patients, the hospital collaborates closely in a system open to the rest of society and interdependent. A community that today is in a real epidemiological transition is exposed to risks linked to lifestyles and which requires the hospital organization to provide care that allows a global and interdisciplinary approach to the person, thus evolving towards empowerment, education, and awareness of the whole population (Margat, 2018) (Fournier et al., 2021).

Hence, the hospital must adopt these managerial practices based on the mastery of knowledge which favors the implementation of change by integrating knowledge as a resource contributing to the strategic performance of any organization (Boudallaa et al., 2021).

Indeed, the hospital is marked by a very high degree of heterogeneity and variability, making its knowledge exceptionally complex (De Pourville, 1990). Without neglecting the

fact that it is constantly subject to a flow of reforms, it must be able to adapt to its environment, which is continually evolving and changing. And to do this, organizational learning remains the best way to facilitate and promote this adaptation (Vallat et al., 2018). Moreover, Gehani (2010) proposed several actions to formulate a strategy based on agility in an organization: team sharing, empowerment for decision making, and integration of available technologies. He placed great importance on integrating learning across the organization to adapt better.

Therefore, public hospitals will have to lead change better and take an interest in developing a real knowledge management strategy to make hospitals real learning organizations (Boudallaa et al., 2022). Indeed, in an era where knowledge is essential, this type of organization needs a management system that will improve the use of its human potential and its development by establishing a culture of continuous learning and progress. This system will enable the hospital organization to open up to new knowledge, develop, improve, and, above all, innovate (Mignon et al., 2015) (Boudallaa et al., 2022).

Indeed, knowledge management encourages cultural change and strongly supports innovation by improving the organizational context, and innovation can be administrative, managerial, social, technological...etc.

Adopting promising knowledge management approaches optimizes the access and mobility of ideas and develops an innovative culture (Dari, 2019). A creative culture makes it possible to be open to change and, therefore, to reform. Actors become more open to doing things differently and transform into real leaders. In sum, the innovation produced by Knowledge Management can support the execution of new strategies, generate new activities, facilitate problem-solving (Grundstein, 2003) and allow an optimal response to the demands and requirements currently experienced by the public hospital.

It can be said that the adaptation of the organization starts with the change, and its response is represented by action or practice, which leads to an outcome, such as the development of a new service or product or a change in procedures. This process of adapting

to environmental change increases the organization's level of agility, mainly through sharing experiences. As the environment of an organization is constantly changing, the agile organization also always applies its means, capabilities, and practices to adapt to these changes (Zitkiene and Mindaugas, 2018).

That being said, the hospital organization will need to manage its knowledge well and consider three main factors essential for organizational learning: a supportive learning environment open to change, learning processes and practices in place, and responsive and supportive leadership at all levels. In this sense, Katzenbach and Smith (1993) have reported that team management has proven to be a very effective facilitator of organizational agility. Among other things, management plays a central role in getting the full potential of the teams in the whole organization. Similarly, Christopher (2000) mentioned that to achieve greater agility, developing a human resource strategy that leads to multi-skilling and encourages cross-functional working is essential.

Investing in knowledge management and organizational learning is an investment in intangible capital. This investment supports the evolution of a learning organization. Indeed, Yusuf et al. (1999) also suggested that organizations to become agile should implement strategies that would help to develop well-trained and motivated staff and provide them with a good set of working tools. Trained and motivated actors would be able to provide the organization with the right set of skills, expertise, and knowledge to support its agility (Patri et al., 2017).

Rightly, the learning organization can "Create, acquire, interpret, transfer and retain knowledge to change behavior by integrating new knowledge and understanding" (Garvin, 2000). Therefore, this type of organization allows agility to follow naturally as the human, technological and procedural components are strengthened. It remains essential for organizations to detect and respond quickly and effectively to future needs (Overby et al. 2006). These elements corroborate that an agile organization is a real community that regulates its processes continuously (Vickoff, 2008).

In concrete terms, and a situation of multiple changes often experienced laborious, the learning public hospital will cope better with complex and constantly changing conditions. Its actors will be more committed and learn to implement the best actions by adopting better and improving their productivity. That said, learning will not only be about correcting mistakes and solving problems. It will also develop innovative approaches (Boudallaa et al., 2021).

### Limitations of the study

However, there are limitations to this study, which arise from the extensive literature identified that could not be addressed and which could have provided more material to develop and enrich this study.

### Declaration of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest in this article.

### CONCLUSION

Knowledge management is intended to be concrete and action-oriented. It is essential to evolve the public hospital in an unpredictable environment that generates uncertainty and doubt. It is a new perspective, developing and bringing about large-scale changes in the hospital management culture in Morocco to

make the hospital organization the foundation of the national health system and thus be able to take up the challenge of the changes that are currently being sought by controlling the risks of uncertainty and by responding adequately to current requirements.

Rethinking management in this way will ultimately enhance agility within these hospital organizations and make them more resilient. Good knowledge management will sharpen their ability to adapt to the ever-changing environment, transform themselves, and endure in all circumstances. The hospital will be more agile in providing care and education to all its patients.

We believe that this study can provide a basis for a scientific debate on the necessary improvement of hospital management by adopting knowledge management to strengthen their agility and keep their performance on course even in times of crisis.

Making the hospital organization learn implies a change in the organization, a different way of conceiving and organizing work to rely more on the valorization, the empowerment, and the commitment of all the actors as the organizational structure is the most crucial factor of agile performance in health organizations.

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