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**Introduction**

Operations management as is known today started during the 20th century. During this century, many organizations experienced growth which necessitated operations management approaches for proper handling of business processes. The Second World War also proved to be very supportive of operations management. The War necessitated the development of means to help in the efficient allocation of resources, and the industrial revolution that followed the War further increased interest in operations management. Founded in 1972, Community Health Center Inc. is one of the organizations that have experienced operations management first hand. Community Health Center Inc. has been part of and a recipient of the significant forces behind shifts and changes in operational management in recent years, and how it has responded to these forces in terms of addressing the ensuing obstacles, business operations, organizational structures, and operations management philosophy interesting.

**Significant forces behind operations management and how they impacted business operations of the organization**

One of the greatest forces behind operations management is the growing interest in concepts like Total Quality Management (TQM). Throughout the 1980s, TQM emerged as a particular area of interest to operations managers. TQM was seen as the best way of overseeing all processes of an organization to improve the quality of output of every process (Bayraktar et al., 2007). Years that followed the 1980s witnessed an explosion of interest in increasing quality. For the service industry, especially, quality became very crucial as it was the selling point. Healthcare organizations included in their mandate to provide affordable care the idea of quality. As one of the organizations that were formed during this period, Community Health Center Inc. had created a selling point by focusing on quality.

The 1970s is a period in which there was a lot of interest in the development of information systems. At the time, there were massive research and developments in computer integrated systems to help in the management of information. Although the computational power of most of the systems developed during this time was very low, computers remained a crucial aspect of operations management. Computers were used to store information relating to different processes, retrieve information, plan inventories, make projections, and establish the point of efficiency. Community Health Center Inc., as do other healthcare organizations of the time, were very lucky to have computers at their disposal. In 1972, for instance, Regenstrief Institute developed the first electronic medical record. Although the first EHR systems were very expensive to be afforded by the then smaller organizations such as Community Health Center Inc., their availability prompted many of these organizations to develop cheaper internal systems to streamline the storage and management of patient information (Evans, 2016). Besides TQM and information systems, technological advancements in the areas of production have also played a big role in pushing operations management towards what it is today. Advancements in medical technologies, for instance, have made it possible for healthcare organizations to streamline operations as they are efficient.

**Key obstacles to management as a result of the evolution of operations management**

Any process of evolution brings with it rapid shifts and changes that make the business environment very unstable. The evolution of operations management brought with it many shifts in the way business operations are carried out, and some of these changes necessitated the restructuring of organizational processes. There have been many operations management philosophies that have been developed over time and many of them are still in the testing phases. One challenge faced by early adopters is higher risks especially when organizations are yet to effectively train staff on new techniques. Also, rapid technological advancements in the field of operations management force organizations to adapt quickly to new technologies or else risk going obsolete and old-fashioned. In many cases, adoption of any new technology, especially in the healthcare industry, comes at huge costs that many organizations are not always able to suffice. This sometimes forces organizations to sacrifice other important business aspects to adopt technology to keep pace with the rest of the players in the industry.

Another obstacle that organizations have had to deal with concerning the evolution and development of operations management is environmental consciousness. Previously, companies did not have to be concerned so much about how their operations impacted the environment. Of late, however, governments have come up with regulations to govern the interactions between organizations, people, and the physical environment. Things like climate change and environmental pollution have become a big concern for modern operations managers, and this has resulted in the development of concepts such as the triple bottom line and lean manufacturing. Triple bottom line (TBL) encourages operations managers to not only focus on profits but also to pay attention to the environment and communities (Gimenez, Sierra & Rodon, 2012).

Community Health Center Inc. has invested in research and innovation as a way of staying ahead in matters of technological advancements. For instance, the organization has over the years taken part in the national All of Us initiative which pioneers research and development in the area of health. The organization further works with the Weitzman Institute in research and innovation, and this helps it to keep tabs with the latest in the area of technology. Remaining ahead of the rest in matters of technology is often the best way to make sure one is not left behind. Besides this, Community Health Center Inc. has also tried to incorporate the concept of sustainable business operations in its operations as a way of addressing the challenges associated with environmental conservation.

**Changes to operations management philosophies and organizational structures**

The recent few years have seen many business operations become very complex. This has been prompted by various factors including liberalization and opening up of borders, new consumer demands, globalization, technological advancements, and the emergence of new business challenges. In response, operations managers have had to come up with new operations management philosophies as well as re-engineer organizational structures. One of the key changes in operations management is the introduction of business process management (BPM). BPM involves a focus on key business processes individually to identify areas of improvement. In recent years, many organizations have shifted focus from systems theory to BPM. Systems theory looks at processes as a single system with integrated processes and aspects. In contrast, BPM tends to analyze every process individually to establish issues, and this gives operations managers a better understanding of each process and how they integrate with the rest of the organization (Del Giudice et al., 2018).

Also in response to the evolving complexities of business operations, many organizations have invested in research and development of inventory management approaches to minimize costs and improve efficiency. Just-in-time (JIT) system, for instance, has become very popular in the management of inventory. JIT was introduced by Toyota but it has since become widespread. Today, even healthcare organization appreciate the benefits of aligning inputs with operations management. Under the JIT philosophy, inventories are held only to the level they are required in the production of goods and services. Also, lean production has gained prominence in healthcare. It involves, for instance, eliminating unnecessary tests and procedures and forecasting only on practices that add real value to patients (Protzman, Mayzell & Kerpchar, 2018). Lean has been leveraged in healthcare to increase the quality and safety of care while at the same time reducing the overall cost of care.

Another way that organizations have tried to respond to the growing complexities in business operations is through the adoption of Collaborative Planning, Forecasting, and Replenishment (CPFR). CPFR is an emerging supply chain management philosophy whereby trading partners work together through the use of standardized business procedures and information technology to increase their intelligence, planning, and forecasting of the market. As processes become complex, it had dawned on many organizations that working together is mutually benefiting. This approach encourages organizations to work closely with suppliers and customers so that all of them get the best out of the supply chain management process.

Other changes include globalization, e-commerce, and outsourcing. Many organizations have assumed a global perspective in efforts to take advantage of wider markets. One of the key aspects of globalization is going digital and abandoning traditional brick and mortar stores. As a result, many companies now maintain websites and mobile applications from where customers can access goods and services. Besides having websites and mobile platforms, business enterprises are now utilizing modern means of communication and marketing through things like social media. The internet has become an important asset in marketing. Outsourcing has also become rampant. Operations managers understand the importance of outsourcing processes that the business itself does not enjoy sufficient leverage to engage in. At the same time, however, operations managers are aware of and plan for the challenges associated with outsourcing.

**Business operations of Community Health Center Inc.**

**Organizational processes**

Community Health Center Inc. is a community-based health organization albeit with a national reach. The organization offers a variety of healthcare services including medical and dental services, behavioral health, urgent care, and school-based health. These services are provided by a team of dedicated professionals from different disciplines such as research and training teams, medical team, and support staff. As a community health provider, the organization makes use of simple organizational processes. The process starts at the reception where a patient is observed for the seriousness of his/her conditions. After this point, a patient is invited into a triage where a doctor does a physical examination and decides the necessary tests. After these tests, a treatment plan is designed. As with most healthcare organizations, Community Health Center Inc. works under the First come first served regime. However, patients who require urgent care are given priority.

**How business operations support the organization’s strategic plan, mission, and vision**

The mission of the organization is to provide healthcare for everyone, and it is a non-profit organization. This means that making profits is not a priority for the organization. Rather, the organization depends on grants and donations from the government, other organizations, and well-wishers. The organization focuses on providing social services and primary care especially to low-income persons who may not be able to access these services from other institutions. To achieve this mission, Community Health Center, Inc. has adopted a business model that is based on the cooperation with different agencies, commitment, and promotion of human rights and dignity, and consumer control.

Also, the organization is determined to go beyond traditional care to offer and promote preventive care, treatment, and management of illnesses all in one visit. This multifaceted approach to care ensures that the organization has a wider angle to care. CHC also utilizes modern technology and innovative techniques to ensure care is taken where it is needed when it is needed. Making healthcare affordable is yet another business aspect that the organization uses to achieve its mission. Its focus on the underserved is particularly important in designing affordable care to those who may not afford the same care elsewhere but need it to lead healthy and happy lives.

**Factors that affect productivity and profitability**

One of the factors that affect productivity at CHC is technology. The technology behind processes such as billing, patient records management, inventory management, and referrals is very critical in affecting how efficient and effective things are done. Better technologies are associated with higher productivity. Personnel factors also affect productivity. Mood, motivation, inspiration, and satisfaction, for instance, affect how productive the medical and support staff will be. It is for this reason that the organization has taken time to develop effective leadership to ensure the working environment is conducive for everyone. Financial factors also affect productivity. Access to experienced staff and the best technology depends on the availability of financial resources. CHC is a non-profit organization. However, some of the factors that affect profitability include salaries and wages, rent in places where the organization does not own premises, and other expenses. The number of patients served is also a factor of profitability whereby many people served attract higher profits.

**Trends in production, quality, resource, and information management and their impact on business operations**

One key trend in healthcare is telehealth. This is the provision of healthcare services over electronic media as opposed to physical contact between a patient and a doctor. Telehealth is increasingly changing the healthcare environment, and it remains to be seen how CHC will incorporate it into its operations. If successfully used, telehealth could create new opportunities for serving many people and reducing traffic at the physical health centers. Drug management is yet another trend that is slowly taking shape in the healthcare industry. The Internet Of Medical Things (IoMT) technology, for instance, is expected to assist in the administration of drugs. This technology will make it possible for practitioners to know exactly when a patient took a particular drug or even alert the hospital when a wrong prescription is given to a patient. The impact of drug management is that it will increase treatment monitoring and adherence while also reducing medical errors associated with the wrong prescription. There is also a trend in patient safety as a way of minimizing costs. Patient safety, defined as the prevention or reduction of patient harms, is expected to reduce the cost of care. It will reduce the level of readmission and the need to use extra resources to address issues of patient harms. Smart biosensors, big data, AI, and medical record accessibility are all trends that are expected to revolutionize information management.

**Conclusion**

In summary, Community Health Center Inc. has experienced the impacts of operations management first hand. Developments in TQM and information systems are some of the forces behind operations management. Some of the obstacles brought about by developments in operations management include unstable technological environment and environmental consciousness. However, CHC has established systems and mechanisms to turn these obstacles into assets. Some of the adjustments CHC has had to make in response to the complexities brought about by operations management include the adoption of business process management techniques, just in time philosophies, collaborative planning, forecasting and replenishment, globalization, and e-commerce. Factors that affect productivity include personnel, technology, and financial factors. Some of the trends that have an impact on business operations of CHC include drug management, telehealth, and patient safety.

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