

Olle Jonsons Stipendium

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Aim:

The study aims to identify learnings from how production planning and control (PPC) and the information connected to this process, between and within the three hierarchical planning levels at Skaraborg Hospital Group (SHG), were managed during the pandemic and suggest how these learnings can improve and refine the production planning and control process at SHG post-Covid-19.

Research questions:

RQ 1. What learnings can be drawn from how the three hierarchical planning levels at SHG managed the pandemic?

RQ 2. How can these learnings improve the production planning and control processes post-Covid-19?

Summary:

The healthcare system is complex and Swedish healthcare is struggling with capacity. During the Covid-19 pandemic starting in 2020, the healthcare system was put under enormous stress and capacity became an even more crucial variable to consider. The Covid-19 pandemic came with damaging consequences, and healthcare was forced to adapt to the new circumstances. One area that received more attention was how production planning and control were conducted at the hospitals in Sweden.

It is important to not lose this opportunity to learn from such a transformative event. This study investigates the learning from how the three hierarchical planning levels at a Swedish hospital managed the pandemic and how these learnings can improve the production planning and control process at the hospital after the pandemic.

The findings of the study showed proof of the crucial role of having a holistic perspective when conducting production plans. The study also identified the need for clarification of roles and mandates to improve the structure of the planning process. The implementation of planning levels should be further investigated. Well-functioning information flow and collaboration enhanced understanding and enabled collaborative planning. These learnings and their contribution to the hospital after the Covid-19 pandemic can help to improve the PPC process at SHG to increase capacity utilization.

To address the scope of the study, a case study method with an abductive approach has been conducted. The case study was carried out in accordance with Yin's method (2014).

Qualitative data was collected during semi-structured interviews with managers from the three hierarchical planning levels: the Hospital Board, department managers, and unit managers at SHG. 20 interviews with managers at the hospital were conducted during the early spring of 2022. A questionnaire was sent out to all managers at the hospital, 172

managers, with a response rate of approximately 34 %, to ensure the capture of the general perception.

As a basis, Glouberman and Mintzberg's (2001a, 2001b) framework explaining the four worlds in healthcare was used. A combination of the framework for production control presented by Vissers et al. (2001) and the theory of manufacturing, planning, and control by Jonsson and Mattsson (2009) was used to understand and explain production planning and control in a healthcare context. With communication and collaboration as central aspects to consider in a well-functioning organization, theory on these subjects was used as well. As the study aims to make use of and refine learnings generated during the Covid-19 pandemic, theory for individual and organizational learning first and foremost by Illeris (2003) and Crossan et al. (1999) were used. With an abductive research approach, iteration of data, theory, and analysis was needed and the ability to modify and make changes to the theory was possible.

As the study was a case study the knowledge is limited to a specific context according to theory, but knowledge from one context still can be found relevant in others. As more or less all Swedish hospitals were affected and as capacity was a problem for the majority, we believe that other hospitals can benefit from the identified learnings at SHG to in turn improve their production planning and control processes. With different types of resource shortages at many institutions in Sweden, an improved production planning and control process and an increased degree of utilization of resources can be useful and beneficial from both an employee and patient point of view.

Concluding, we recommend that SHG implements a more structured planning process for PPC, and further develops the learning process. In addition, SHG should maintain and continuously develop the information flow and the collaboration to improve the PPC process at the hospital.