

## **282: ADDRESSING THE UNMET NEEDS OF MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN MOROCCO. THE POTENTIAL OF SCIENTIFIC GUIDANCE TO BREACH BUREAUCRATIC CONSTRAINTS TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

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### **Objective:**

To assess the potential of scientific guidance (SG) -a form of coaching- of management teams, to improve decision-making and open space for creativity and innovation in the Moroccan health system.

### **Methods:**

We report the results of a project that tests the effectiveness of SG as a relevant strategy to support quality improvement by provincial management teams in Morocco. SG is a form of coaching that promotes systematic, rational decision making in management. It was implemented in four 'provincial delegations' in Morocco. The National Institute for Health Administration of Morocco (INAS) implemented SG with assistance from the Institute of Tropical Medicine -Antwerp.

This paper focuses on stakeholders' perception of the effectiveness of scientific guidance to increase the capacity of provincial management teams for decision-making and promoting change. We conducted a qualitative study to (i) *assess*, and (ii) *understand why* managerial capacity increased (or not) and led (or not) to decisions and change implementation. In-depth interviews were done in October 2002 at the end of the project with the four provincial managers, with the members of the teams they lead, with the staff from INAS providing the guidance and with some key stakeholders of the ministry.

The interviews explored five key areas with each category of respondent: First, their perception, through a narrative, of the implementation of project related interventions or decisions; Second, their understanding of the concept of guidance and its evolution along the project; Third, their interpretation of the reason for successes (or failures) of change initiatives and their sustainability; Fourth, their perception of the role played by the institution providing the guidance, INAS, its assets, its limits; Fifth, the interaction of the guidance with other systems or initiatives to strengthen management for quality improvement.

A qualitative analysis was done on each of these areas. The results were then synthesized to identify the key mechanisms and conditions that contribute to the effectiveness of scientific guidance to improve management capacities and leadership in support of quality improvement initiatives.

### **Results:**

The results confirm the hypothesis tested by the project. Management capacity increased with SG. The specificity of the approach, flexible and distinct from ministry lines of command, was acknowledged and perceived as connected but different from traditional supervision.

(i) All respondents acknowledged increased capacity. Decisions were taken and change implemented through a wide variety of initiatives, that were perceived as linked to SG approaches that were tailored to local context and needs. (ii) The understanding of the concept of SG evolved. Its logic of responsiveness to context specific needs was gradually acknowledged, moving away from the classical logic of programme implementation supervision. (iii) The flexibility in the selection of SG approaches was perceived as key to the success but sustainability depends on managers' stability and system's openness to creativity. (iv) The institutional position of INAS as an academic institution outside the hierarchical lines of command and control of the ministry appeared crucial. (v) SG was perceived as complementary to other quality improvement and management strengthening initiatives. Still its articulation with standard supervision is a challenge.

**Conclusions:**

The potential of SG to raise management's capacity to plan, design and implement decisions and quality improvement initiatives is confirmed. Our results show the huge potential of provincial management team if properly supported. However, they also reveal the wide gap between the support they traditionally get and the support they need if they are to be proactive in decision-making and change management.

Our findings call for a distinct institutional anchoring of two conflicting system of logic. A normative logic, in line with public policy implementation on the one hand, and a creative logic, responsive to emerging needs on the other, best facilitated from outside the hierarchy of the ministry.