ABSTRACT:

Introduction: There are five Bulgarian medical universities in the cities of Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Pleven and Stara Zagora. A major priority of medical universities is to encourage research activities mainly aimed at preparation and implementation of research projects. Projects are managed by the participating organizations called “beneficiaries”. Beneficiaries develop projects, apply for finances and if approved they implement those projects.

Aim: The purpose of our study is to examine the organizational structure of research project activities on the macro level and on the micro level in Bulgarian medical universities.

Material and methods: In order to define the separate elements of the organizational structure and to analyze the relations and interaction between them we have applied a documentary and sociological approach.

Results: During the last six years there was a significant increase in the number and the overall annual financial value of the projects performed at medical universities in Bulgaria. The reasons for such increase are: managers realizing the advantages of and benefits from the implementation of research projects ensuring high quality modernization of research units’ equipment and facilities; access to innovative technologies; development of interdisciplinary relations, etc. Benefits arising from improved results motivate us to consider as appropriate some additional investments aimed at increasing the number of team members and further optimization of the currently existing structures (research centers) in charge of research with the purpose of achieving even better results in this particular field.

Conclusion: The role of research project activities in medical universities’ research field is of vital importance for the educational institutions’ success. Taking into consideration the changed conditions, European possibilities and the highly competitive environment, realizing this aspect will be essential for the future research results for the relevant research institution.

Key words: Bulgarian medical universities, research projects, organizational research structure, project team.
Fig. 1. Organizational structure of research project activities

The frame of the entire organizational structure includes five key elements that have specific functional characteristics:

1. Resources – financial and non-financial
   a) country
   b) EU through programs
   c) private funds
   d) others
   - donations by private persons;
   - companies - they prefer to invest resources and funds in all important causes and activities considered as having fast and obvious results;
   - foundations - foundations’ policy is different - they prefer to encourage activities directly related to the civil sector development, which requires more time in terms of creating positive and obvious results that are often difficult to measure and estimate.

2. Facilitator (mediator)
   The meaning of the word comes from the verb to facilitate [fa’silitet] - to make easier, ease, assist the progress of, help forward, support. This is the literal meaning of the word facilitate. In practice facilitation is a process of making easier, assisting and supporting the development of something and the emergence of some change. The person performing this process is called facilitator. This is not simply a role that anybody can play. Facilitation requires certain skills that are subject to being studied. In terms of significance a facilitator’s role equals the role of the project manager. [3]

3. Research teams
   In the broadest sense of the word science is systematic knowledge that can be explained through logic. In a narrower sense this is knowledge that can be experimentally checked on grounds of the scientific method.
   Research teams perform research and development (i.e. advance, development, progress) activities that can be treated as systematic creative work aimed at producing new knowledge to be developed in a new application (products, processes, services). [6]

4. Research products (processes, services)
   Research products are the results from the research team’s activities performed during a research project. They are meant to be innovative, i.e. they should offer something new and be useful at the same time, i.e. they should satisfy society’s specific needs.

5. Needs
   Everybody has their own specific personal needs but when such needs become a group of people’s needs then they are transformed into social needs (social interest). These are the entire society’s needs and they are defined, realized and controlled by:
   - The government
   - Municipalities
   - Local authorities
   - Universities
   - Individuals
   Medical universities belong to the Universities group.

II. Research project activities on the micro level
   The research team and the consultants form a highly qualified interdisciplinary group of experts that can come
from different institutions and countries. Between team members there are dynamic relations in certain project related fields.

Its purpose is to contribute for the creation of a high quality research product that is to meet any relevant needs. McDaniel et al. state that „research design is not a prescription that defines what to do when but rather is the development of tentative guides for action“.[2]

Research teams include:
- Manager having an academic rank
- Team of scientists - professors, associate professors, PhDs.
- Service unit - PhDs, students, laboratory workers.

To perform the second task we analyzed:

III. Competition and project financing system

The system of competition and project financing at Bulgarian medical universities comprises of 5 key elements with complex interrelations and interconnections:

1. Research team

Major aim of the research team is to turn the original research idea into a research product. The multidisciplinary principle has to be applied, which allows participation of specialists from different spheres. Effective research management requires close collaboration of researchers, sometimes specialized in different scientific areas and residing in various locations.[7, 1] The challenges during implementation are often unpredictable and the effectiveness depends on the quality team selection.[5, 4]

2. Base organization (recipient)

The base organization is the academic institution where the project activities are performed. It provides basic conditions for the team’s operation including any facilities – working premises, equipment, general expenses. Thanks to the financing, tangible fixed assets related to the project objectives are purchased during the project. Besides their basic units such as faculties, departments and medical college medical universities also include university hospitals that are trade companies having an independent legal status. This allows them to perform a much wider range of activities.

3. Financing institution (financing body; assignor)

The financing institution is the one providing financial resources that are usually granted at different stages in order to ensure monitoring of the resources being spent in compliance with the project objectives. With regards to medical universities the assignor may be as follows:
- The medical university using budget resources or their own revenues.
- National research programs at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (through the Science Research Fund), at the Ministry of Health, etc.
- International research programs.

4. Control bodies

Monitoring is multidirectional and is performed by:
- The base organization controls the way of using the provided facilities and through its employees (legal advisor, accountant, etc.) monitors the compliance with all legal and statutory requirements.
- The financing body controls the financial parameters by means of regular inspections, monitoring the procedures specified in the Public Procurement Act, checking interim and final financial statements, etc.
- Contractors are required to observe the principles of professionalism and ethics and not to damage the educational institution’s good reputation.

5. Statutory framework

It is institutional - containing all rules, regulations and instructions at the relevant institution, i.e. medical university and national - containing system related laws and regulations of the Republic of Bulgaria.
During the last six years there was a significant increase in the number and the overall annual financial value of the projects performed at medical universities in Bulgaria. The reasons for such increase are: managers realizing the advantages of and benefits from the implementation of research projects ensuring high quality modernization of research units’ equipment and facilities; access to innovative technologies; development of interdisciplinary relations, etc. Benefits arising from improved results motivate us to consider as appropriate some additional investments aimed at increasing the number of team members and further optimization of the currently existing structures (research centers) in charge of research with the purpose of achieving even better results in this particular field.

**CONCLUSION**

The role of research project activities in medical universities’ research field is of vital importance for the educational institutions’ success. Taking into consideration the changed conditions, European possibilities and the highly competitive environment, realizing this aspect will be essential for the future research results for the relevant research institution.
REFERENCES:


