Qualification of health personnel: foundation for quality and accreditation of health services

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ABSTRACT

The quality of a healthcare organisation does not depend solely on advanced technologies or innovative protocols, but above all on the competence of the people working there. The...

The quality of a healthcare organisation does not depend solely on advanced technologies or innovative protocols, but above all on the competence of the people working in it. The qualification and management of staff competencies are an essential element in ensuring the safety, effectiveness and appropriateness of healthcare provision. In a context in which quality requirements are increasingly standardised and verifiable, staff training becomes a strategic element for achieving and maintaining institutional or voluntary accreditation.

An internationally shared principle

Accreditation today represents a widespread tool for ensuring compliance with pre-established requirements in terms of structures, processes and results. In both national and international accreditation systems, staff qualification is considered an indispensable prerequisite. The reference standards, while varying according to the application context (e.g. transplant centres, transfusion services, laboratories, LDCs, biobanks), present a substantial convergence on some basic principles:

- Every professional figure must be **properly trained before taking on operational tasks**.
- Training must be **continuous**, with updates consistent with regulatory, technological and organisational developments.
- &It is necessary to implement systems of periodic **evaluation of skills**, with objective evidence of their acquisition and maintenance.

The rationale behind these requirements is clear: an organisation can only guarantee quality

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performance if it has professionals who are adequately trained, monitored and supported in the development of their skills.

Why is it essential to invest in competence management?

1. Patient safety and clinical risk mitigation

One of the main purposes of accreditation is the prevention of adverse events and the improvement of patient safety. Inadequately qualified personnel may make diagnostic, therapeutic or organisational errors that jeopardise the outcome of care. In contrast, a trained professional:

- has an in-depth knowledge of protocols and guidelines;
- è able to recognise critical situations and intervene promptly;
- interacts correctly with the document system and technological devices;
- adopts behaviour consistent with a safety culture;

Training, therefore, is not only an ethical and deontological duty, but an operational tool for clinical risk reduction and the promotion of a safe environment.

2. Reliability and standardisation of operational processes

Every care or technical process requires accuracy, consistency and traceability. Particularly in complex structures (such as transplantation programmes, analytical laboratories or tissue banks), the presence of insufficiently trained personnel can generate variability in results and compromise the effectiveness of the entire system. Staff qualification allows:

- a greater adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs);
- the standardisation of activities, reducing the heterogeneity of practices;
- the traceability of responsibilities, an essential element for audits and reviews.

Each operator represents a critical node in the quality chain: an error at a single stage can compromise the entire process.

3. Regulatory compliance and passing inspections

In recent years, regulatory and inspection bodies have increased the level of thoroughness of their audits, requiring timely documentary evidence on staff training and competence. In fact, the most frequent nonconformities relate to:

- the lack of up-to-date competence registers;

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- the absence of formal authorisations to carry out critical activities;
- the lack of structured annual training plans;
- the lack of traceability of individual training courses;

The adoption of a structured competency management system, therefore, makes it possible not only to guarantee compliance with standards, but also to face any external inspection or audit with peace of mind.

4. Human Resources Enhancement and Organisational Development

Skills management is also a tool for enhancing human capital. An organisation that invests in training:

- promotes the professional growth of its operators;
- strengthens the sense of belonging and internal motivation;
- improves the organisational climate and the ability to attract new talent;
- guarantees operational continuity and long-term sustainability.

In addition, in contexts subject to turnover or the introduction of new technologies, having a system for the rapid retraining of personnel is a competitive advantage.

What the standards actually require

Accreditation standards, both national and international, lay down specific criteria for staff qualification. Here are the most recurring requirements:

- **Individual skills register**
  Each operator must be associated with a skills profile that includes educational qualifications, professional experience, training received and authorised activities. This register must be constantly updated and archived.
- **Mandatory initial training**
  Before taking up operational duties, the operator must receive specific training on the procedures, risks associated with the role and applicable standards. This training must be documented and verified.
- **Annual Training Plan**
  A training plan must be defined that is consistent with the organisation's needs, regulatory changes and technological innovations. The plan must include both general and area-specific training.
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- **Evaluation of competences**
  The organisation must provide for periodic verification of competences (tests, simulations, audits, shadowing). Evaluations must be recorded and used to decide on retraining or upgrading.
- **Formal authorisation to carry out activities**
  Each practitioner must be explicitly authorised to carry out technical, clinical or management activities, based on their verified competence. These authorisations must be tracked and periodically reviewed.
- The authorisations must be periodically reviewed.
- **Traceability and digitisation of the training system**
  &It is strongly recommended to use IT tools for the centralised management of data, documents, training schedules and reports. The adoption of a computerised system facilitates day-to-day management and compliance with inspection requirements.

Documentation as a guarantee of quality

The validity of the training system is measured not only by the quality of teaching or content, but also by the ability to demonstrate, in an objective and traceable manner, that each operator is actually qualified for the activities they perform. Therefore, it is essential to:

- maintain up-to-date and easily accessible archives;
- keep certificates, evaluation forms, minutes of shadowing;
- establish training effectiveness indicators and needs analysis;
- prepare summary dashboards for management and external auditors.

Conclusion

The qualification of personnel is not a formal obligation imposed by norms or standards, but a **strategic factor** for the quality, safety and reliability of any healthcare organisation. Investing in structured competence management means:

- reduce risks;
- increase perceived quality;
- improve operational effectiveness;
- ensure organisational sustainability;

Organisations that place the value of people at the centre are those that are most likely to achieve and maintain levels of excellence and are able to meet the future challenges of healthcare with solidity.

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