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## Developing a conceptual model illustrating how HRM practices support each other in order to improve service quality

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### Abstract

In previous work, it was found that there were six HRM practices, which are most crucial in supporting service quality. The purposes of this paper are, firstly, to clarify the individual relationships among the six HRM practices and to examine how those practices support each other, and secondly, to develop a model which incorporates all of the inter-relationships among the six HRM practices. Previously, each individual relationship has tended to be considered in isolation in the literature. Therefore, in this paper, the various inter-relationships were unified into a single model. In this new conceptual framework, the six HRM practices are inter-linked so that each of them may have a joint function in supporting service quality. The model can therefore be used to identify problem area(s) in order to improve service quality. For example, since all of the six HRM practices are important in supporting each other, if one or more of these practices are considered to be unsatisfactory, the model will indicate potential practice(s) which may have been causing the problem(s) or which might have been affected by the substandard practice(s). Since the six HRM practices are not stand alone items, it is important to pay proper attention to all six practices in order to support service quality. As these inter-relationships are not specific to a certain type of service business, the model is likely to be applicable to a wide range of service industries.

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### 1. Introduction

Issues concerning service quality appear in a variety of literature, in particular Total Quality Management (TQM), especially the soft aspects of TQM, areas of service marketing, including internal marketing and what is

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known as the service quality literature. Within the TQM literature, especially the soft aspects of TQM have been seen a vital to the service sector (Wilkinson, A. and Allen, P., 1991), (Wilkinson, A., 1992), (Wilkinson, A., 1994), (Rees, C., 1995), (Thiagarajan, T. and Zairi, Z., 1997), (Collinson, M., Rees, C., Edwards, P. and Inness, L., 1998), work on internal marketing has highlighted its role as a means to developing a service culture and to encouraging quality service delivery (Zerbe, W.J., Dobni, D. and Harel, G.H., 1998), (Grönroos, C., 2007), and from the service quality literature, the study of strategies to close 'Gap 3' (service quality specification – service delivery gap), has also contributed to the debate on the improvement of service quality (Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, L.L., 1985), (Kasper, H., Van Helsdingen, P. and Gabbott, M., 2006), (Zeithaml, V.A., Bitner, M.J. and Gremler, D.D., 2009), (Wilson, A.M., Zeithaml, V.A., Bitner, M.J. and Gremler, D.D., 2012). From a comparative study of the literature on TQM, internal marketing and the strategies to close Gap 3, seven practices common to all three areas of literature were found: recruitment & selection, training, teamwork, empowerment, performance appraisals & reward (including measurement and recognition), communication (two-way, internal), and the seventh practice was culture of the organisation (Ueno, A., 2010). All of the seven practices are drawn from three areas of literature all of which are concerned with the search for service excellence in a wide range of service industries, and each practices is argued to be critical for the management of quality in the service sector. However, although culture is one of the practices, which support service quality, it seems that culture has a distinctive function over and above the other six features. Management's HR practices which communicate standards of excellence to employees can create a service-oriented culture, and this has a direct impact on employees' behaviour/service delivery, and which in turn affects customer perceptions of the service quality which they receive (Zerbe, W.J., Dobni, D. and Harel, G.H., 1998), (Schneider, B., 1980), (Schneider, B. and Bowen, D.E., 1985), (Schneider, B. and Bowen, D.E., 1993), (Schneider, B. and Bowen, D.E., 1995), (Schneider, B., Wheeler, J.K. and Cox, J.E., 1992), (Siehl, C., 1992), (Clark, M., 1997), (Schneider, B., White, S. and Paul, M.C., 1998), (Bowen, D.E., Schneider, B. and Kim, S.S., 2000). Any attempt to improve service quality must first focus on managing service providers' performance/behaviour before customer-employee contact takes place (Mills, P.K. 1986) cited by (Zerbe, W.J., Dobni, D. and Harel, G.H., 1998). Therefore, in order to develop a service culture and to support service quality, the six HRM practices become vital. Hence, this paper focuses solely on the six HRM practices.

The purposes of this paper are, firstly, to clarify the individual relationships among the six HRM practices and to examine how those practices support each other, and secondly, to develop a model which illustrates the inter-relationships among the six HRM practices. This article begins by reviewing each inter-relationship by illustrating what has been established in the literature about how each of the six HRM practices support each other. Then, a model is developed which integrates all of the inter-relationships among the six HRM practices. This paper ends with an overview of how the model works.

## 2. Literature review

Based on an extensive review of the literature on each practice, it was found that there are fifteen inter-relationships among the six HRM practices. The individual inter-relationships from (1) to (15) and the way these practices affect each other will be clarified below.

### *Focus on recruitment & selection reduces the level of, and the cost of training*

Research by Campbell, E., Lockyer, C. and Scholarios, D. (2000) found that larger hotels tend to use formal recruitment procedures and appropriate selection criteria, and recruit people with the required skills, because they suggest that training costs can be reduced. This view is also supported by Jameson, S.M. (2000). He refers to the findings of Hendry, C., Jones, A. and Arthur, M. (1991) and argues that a high level of investment on recruitment is very likely to result in a low level of training. Hence, the use of formal recruitment procedures and appropriate selection criteria for front-line staff as well as the cost of recruitment & selection will result in a decrease in the level of, and the cost of, training.

### *Recruitment & selection of team-oriented people enhances teamwork*

The identification of candidates who can perform well in a team is an important part of the selection process since organisational success partly depends on how successful they continue recruiting and maintaining team-oriented people (Crain, D.W., 2009). In order to create effective teamwork, recruitment could be more concerned about the selection of team-oriented people (Macaulay, S. and Cook, S., 1995). Therefore, recruitment & selection of team-oriented people may affect the effectiveness of teamwork.

### *Training for teamwork leads to better co-operation between teams*

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