Exploring Employee Involvement in Hotels in Lebanon: A Case Study

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Many large companies in the Arab world have been emphasizing HRM in their organizations as they learned about the benefits of HRM in the west. But what is the real picture? This case study of international luxury hotels in Lebanon shows that although the managers of these hotels stress that employee involvement is applied in their organizations, the reality on the ground is rather different. Hotel employees noted that they are not involved in the design of their jobs and that their input is often left out in performance appraisals. The paper ends by offering some valuable recommendations and insights.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of human resource management (HRM) in the 1980s came as a response to the hard economic pressures brought about by high competition from international markets. Organizations were under global competitive pressures to lower costs, make employees more productive, and do things better and less expensively. In this context, new ways of people management were sought: enter human resource management. Ultimately, the developments in HRM are seen as a response to the changing context of work brought about by intense competition (Redman and Wilkinson, 2001). Centralized organizations, characterized by rigid hierarchies and traditional personnel management policies, were no longer feasible for firms facing global competition (see Warner, 2004, for example). Downsizing, delayering, and decentralization have characterized the new organizational structures to meet the challenges of intense competition; flexibility was the main objective, with complementary culture change programs such as total quality management, performance management, and lean production, to name a few. Eventually, the highly competitive market environments, with the resultant organizational restructurings that followed, have naturally pressed for *new* forms of people management that would accompany these restructurings (Redman and Wilkinson, 2001). Notably, the new designs of people management break away from the traditional management style of strict employee control by offering employees higher discretion in performing their tasks and responsibilities needed to fit the logic of the new business structures of decentralization.

Compared to traditional personnel management, HRM offered employees more autonomy in the workplace (Guest, 1987). While personnel management seemed to focus on compliance-based systems of control (i.e., strict rules and close employee supervision), HRM advocated a commitment-based approach to managing people (Guest, 1991) by empowering employees (Walton, 1985). Indeed, probably the biggest theme of HRM is related to higher employee involvement (Wood and Wall, 2002; Pfeffer, 1998). Although the notion of participation and involvement are not new, HRM tended to emphasize this image (see Legge, 1995a).

While many US companies have long embraced the concepts of employee involvement and participation in their organizations (Peters, 1987; Tsiganou, 1991), the picture in the Arab world remains unclear. Research in HRM in general in the Arab region is lacking (see Budhwar and Debrah, 2002; Rees et al., 2007; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2006), and to a greater extent in the area of employee involvement in particular. In the latter, the available previous research has focused more on general managerial styles from an Arabian culture macro perspective (Badawy, 1980; Al Faleh, 1987). This research focuses explicitly on *workers'* overall perceptions of the actual employee involvement practice in hotels in the country of Lebanon. The present paper contributes to the understanding of employee involvement in the region, where it is recognized that more research is needed. Furthermore, this research advances the knowledge of HRM and employee involvement in two additional ways. This study follows an "employee-centered" research approach using qualitative research methods. It is argued that the claims of HRM are often the voices of management, with little or no attention to the views of employees, who are actually the end receivers of these policies (Legge, 1995b; Mabey et al., 1998; Marchington et al., 1994). Moreover, a major gap in the HRM literature is the overreliance on quantitative surveys, with less emphasis on qualitative research interviewing (see Mabey et al., 1998). A second contribution is that this will be one of the first studies that looked into employee involvement in international luxury hotels in Lebanon, which can further the HR knowledge in this sector with several academic and management implications. A brief background of the country and the human resources in the hotel sector follows.

Lebanon is primarily a services-based economy, with the services sector representing almost 80% of its GDP, according to the most recent estimates from the World Bank. Lebanon relies heavily on tourism for economic growth, attracting tourists mainly to its beaches, mountains, and nightlife. Experts claim that before the civil war, tourism contributed as much as 20% to the economy. Today, although this figure has fallen, tourism still accounts for an average of 10% of GDP, according to reports from the World Travel and Tourism Council. The hotel sector, which is considered one of the most developed sectors in the country, plays a major a role in the economy. Tourist spending on hotel and apartment accommodation was reported to be US$203 million in 2009, according to the Ministry of Tourism in Lebanon. However, for 2011, the figures were generally lower, affected by the political instability in the region. In this context, the room yield of Beirut's hotels attained US$123 in the first nine months of 2011, down by 31.2% from the same period in the previous year (Audi Bank Report, 2011). Many hotels that are part of large international hotel chains have opened in the country, and several more are in construction. As of 2011, there are about 7,000 rooms in Beirut, with an expected increase of around 3,000 in the next three years, according to the Syndicate of Hotel Owners Association in Lebanon.

In the hotel sector, human resources have a critical role in building distinctive customer service. To the researcher's knowledge, there is not enough research to draw conclusions about the state of human resources in the hospitality sector in Lebanon; however, there is a general consensus that Lebanon's human resources represent a major strength of the hospitality sector and are considered one of the most competent in the region. A strong educational background combined with multilingual capabilities and a long history of customer service culture offer hotel owners an opportunity to capitalize on these strengths for enhanced guest services. Nevertheless, several challenges remain, such as weak coordination between educational institutions and the hospitality industry (Awad, 1999) and a failure to implement HR policies strategically in Lebanese organizations according to emerging anecdotal evidence.

The purpose of this article is twofold: first, to acquire preliminary views from management on whether they involve employees in decision making in the hotel; and second, to actually explore workers' perceptions of employee involvement in HR policies on the ground, which is the main objective of this article.

The article begins with an overall review of employee involvement. The next section deals with the research methodology employed. The findings and discussion are then outlined in the following section. The article closed with the conclusions and practical implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Broadly speaking, employee involvement is referred to as a *participative* process to use the entire capacity of workers, designed to encourage employee commitment to organizational success (Cotton, 1993, the researcher's emphasis). This participation process, however, can take different forms. In their review, Cotton et al. (1988) found that different forms of involvement or participation may exist: participation in work decisions, consultative participation, short-term participation, informal participation, employee ownership, and representative participation. For example, the first category, participation in work decisions, includes formal schemes in which workers have a major influence on decisions relating to the work itself. Here, the participation in decisions is focused on how the work is organized, who does it, and what is done. On the other hand, organizations might not have formal schemes of participation; however, participation might still take place through interpersonal relationships between managers and workers: this is what is called informal participation.

Regardless of the forms of participation or involvement, the core idea is that there is shared decision making that is taking place (Locke and Schweiger, 1979) between managers and their subordinates (Wagner, 1994). In this paper, employee involvement will follow this conceptualization in that it describes shared or joint decision making between managers and workers. At the most basic level, however, management must be ready to share company-wide information with their employees for effective employee involvement programs (Lawler, 1988). The primary focus in the article is on the participation or involvement of employees with HRM policies relating to performance appraisal and job design.

Over the last two decades, American corporations have been big advocates of employee involvement and participation (Peters, 1987; Tsiganou, 1991). The focus on employee involvement on the part of organizations is in line with the positivistic HRM paradigm, which recognizes employees as an important resource that should be involved with decisions in the workplace (Guest, 1990), in contrast to a control-oriented environment where employees are viewed as a cost to be controlled (Walton, 1985). Research has shown that organizations that had higher levels of employee involvement and participation programs, among other HR practices, experienced higher productivity and lower turnover compared to organizations that followed a control-oriented approach (Arthur, 1994). In fact, studies on high-involvement practices in the HRM literature show that such practices have a strong positive impact on employee attitudes (Mendelson, et al., 2011) and performance (Guthrie, 2001; Pfeffer, 1998). In the hospitality industry, too, employee involvement seems to play an important role in hotel success, according to senior management accounts (Adler, 2005).

More works focused on employee participation also show that employee involvement is highly associated with positive outcomes. Spector (1986) presented a meta-analysis of 88 studies of workers' perceived control on several outcomes. He found that employee participation was associated with lower intentions to quit and turnover, and higher motivation, performance, job satisfaction, and commitment. A more recent study by Scott-Ladd et al. (2004) in a sample of 495 employees from small to medium-sized organizations showed that a higher level of employee participation in the organizations studied was associated with significantly higher perceptions of performance effectiveness. Additionally, the study found that employee participation was directly linked with job satisfaction and commitment. In sum, studies do show the importance of employee participation in generating positive attitudes and organizational performance (e.g., Cotton et al., 1988; Miller and Monge, 1986; VanYperen et al., 1999); however, this not to discount the impact of contextual factors that may moderate the impact of participation (see Cotton, 1993, for a review).

There are several explanatory models for the effects of employee involvement (Locke and Schweiger, 1979), including cognitive and affective models (Miller and Monge, 1986). The goal here is not to review them all. Suffice it to say, however, that many of the models proposed focus primarily on the motivational aspects (Locke and Schweiger, 1979) in that employee involvement leads to motivation, which then results in higher productivity. The reasoning is that involving or engaging the employee with organizational matters can result in higher employee self-esteem and greater attainment of higher-order

needs, which lead to higher satisfaction and motivation in the workplace and, in turn, to higher productivity and corporate performance (Tomer, 2001; Guest, 1990; McGregor, 1960). Ritchie and Miles (1970) stated that "managers who hold the Human Relations theory of participation believe simply in involvement for the sake of involvement, arguing that as long as subordinates feel they are participating and are being consulted, their ego needs will be satisfied and they will be more cooperative" (p. 348, cited in Miller and Monge, 1986). This is what Miller and Monge (1986) frame as the affective model. On the other hand, the cognitive models propose that employee involvement is effective because it enhances the flow and use of important information in organizations. Given that the employees are closest to the area of operations and therefore have developed specialized knowledge (Appelbaum, et al., 2000), the involvement of core employees can then lead to better quality decisions and hence improve organizational performance. The two models have been tested, and both seem to play a role in explaining the effects of employee involvement (see, for example, Miller and Monge, 1986; Wagner III et al., 1997).

In conclusion, the review above shows that employee involvement is an important concept that is related to several positive outcomes related in terms of higher job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity. In the following, the review will focus on the benefits of involving employees in HRM policies on job design, and performance appraisal.

Job Design

Over the past decades, many concepts have been proposed and tested in the field of job design (Garg and Rastogi, 2006). Our aim is not a full review of those concepts, which can be found elsewhere (Parker and Wall, 1998; Oldham and Hackman, 2010), but is limited to employee involvement with job design.

The aim of job design is to increase both motivation and productivity (Rush, 1971). In fact, the job itself is seen as one of the strongest motivators compared to other facets (Saari and Judge, 2004). Uninteresting jobs may result in several problems that have been linked to negative organizational outcomes, including job boredom (see, for example, Fisher, 1993).

A lot of research has been conducted to alter jobs and make them more interesting on the part of management (Oldham and Hackman, 1980). Work models where employees themselves are involved in making suggestions to management about ways to alter their own working procedures have several benefits for the firm. First, it may help improve the quality of working lives (e.g., Cotton, 1993). It is understood that different employees have different work needs and demands, and when they are able to modify their work according to their needs, may increase their quality of working lives and improve their attitudes (Bailyn, 1993). Second, suggestions from employees may also serve to solve problems inherent in their current work procedures and hence increase efficiency and performance (Appelbaum, et al., 2000). Finally, participation in work redesign may also increase psychological ownership (e.g., Pierce et al., 2001), which has been associated with improved employee attitudes (Van Dyne and Pierce, 2004). In sum, employee involvement in job design is linked to better employee attitudes and performance.

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal can be critical to a firm's success. The goal is to evaluate employees' actual performance and provide feedback to improve future performance. Strategically, performance management can help management in aligning employees' behaviors and attitudes to the goals and strategies of the firm. The benefits of effective performance appraisals include increased corporate performance (Delery and Doty, 1996), in addition to more positive attitudes (Brown et al., 2010).

However, traditional performance appraisals have often been disliked by employees, and the result of this dissatisfaction has reduced the value of the appraisals (Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). In a traditional appraisal, the manager often retains full control of the process. Employees feel a significant lack of ownership and control of the appraisal process, which reduces employee acceptance (e.g., Dachler and Wilport, 1978).

An alternative approach, and one that solves the problems with traditional appraisals, is to encourage employee participation in the performance appraisal process (Carroll and Schneier, 1982; Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). In fact, the benefits of participative performance appraisal in terms of higher appraisal

satisfaction and acceptance were clearly demonstrated in a meta-analysis of 27 studies (Cawley et al., 1998). Effective participation with the performance appraisal process consists of *joint* supervisor-employee development of performance standards and goals that satisfy both organizational and employee development needs (see Roberts, 2003).

The above review has focused on the strategic benefits of employee involvement in HR policies related to job design and performance appraisal. The aim of this report is to explore the extent of employee involvement in such policies in hotels in Lebanon, which could give a picture of how far hotels are actually capitalizing on those benefits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology followed here is essentially qualitative. Indeed, qualitative research is very useful for discovering the underlying motivations, feelings, values, attitudes, and perceptions of people, and uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings (Hoepfl, 1998). Moreover, qualitative methods can be used not only to better understand any "phenomenon about which little is yet known" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) but also to gain new perspectives on things about which much is already known or to gain more in-depth information (Hoepfl, 1998).

The study is based on data collected as part of a PhD thesis (X, 2006), which, for the purpose of this paper, originally investigated the implementation of modern HRM practices in the international hotel chain sector in the country of Lebanon. All international hotels operating in Beirut were contacted to request for permission to conduct personal interviews with their employees. However, only two international luxury hotels granted permission to conduct the interviews, made possible through the help of external personal contacts and acquaintances. The two hotels represent 20% of all international hotels in Lebanon as of 2006. At the time of this research, there were around 10 international hotel chains operating in the country.

The manager in each hotel specified a day in which to conduct interviews with employees during their work break. Prior to asking the questions, the researcher informed the employees on the spot about the study and the value of their views and opinions in improving HRM in Lebanon and their working conditions in the long run. The employees were orally asked short open-ended questions relating to their views and perceptions regarding different types of HRM practices, including the job design and performance evaluation. In particular, under the area of job design, employees were asked, "Do you get bored in your jobs?" Regarding performance appraisal, they were asked: "What do you think of the performance appraisal process in the hotel?" The questions were similar to those used in HR studies (Guest and Conway, 1998). The duration of the interviews was relatively short. The researcher assured the employees that their names and personal details would remain strictly confidential. The employees were generally frank and approachable.

During the date and time specified by the manager, the researcher managed to interview 14 employees in Hotel A and 19 employees in Hotel B. Overall, there were 33 respondents from the two hotels, all of whom were service employees, including waiters, reception personnel, and recreational staff. The hotel managers responsible for HR matters also took part in the study. However, their participation was limited to answering structured questionnaires in the form of an HR checklist previously used in Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD) studies in the UK (Patterson et al., 1997). The HR checklist comprised 10 questions relating to 10 different HR practices. The items include, for example, "Do you keep employees well informed?" and "Do you try to make jobs as interesting as possible?"; these are answerable with "yes" or "no." The managers from the two hotels were both in charge of HR activities; however, the manager from Hotel A had dual responsibilities relating to both HR and operations management.

Hotel A opened in Lebanon in 2002 and is part of an international hotel group that has branches worldwide, especially in Europe. Hotel B also opened in 2002 and belongs to an international hotel chain with branches in several parts of the world, mainly concentrated in the Middle East (see Table 1 for a summary of the hotel sample).

TABLE 1
HOTELS STUDIED

Hotel	Year Opened in Beirut	International Span	Ownership	Scale of Operation (worldwide)
A	2002	Has hotels worldwide (concentrated in Europe)	European	50+ hotels
B	2002	Has hotels in several parts of the world (concentrated in the Middle East)	Gulf	6+ hotels

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Managerial Rhetoric

It is worth noting that the managers from the two hotels in this study indicated that they fully implement HR policies in their hotels and that, based on their completed questionnaires, all HR practices are followed in their workplace. In particular, they specified that they involve employees in decision making in the workplace. In other words, the managers in this study have fully embraced the tenets of HRM as being an employee champion (e.g., high employee involvement). However, as will be presented in the next sections, the reality was rather different.

The management rhetoric emphasizing the involvement of workers was not met on the ground, according to the interviews with the employees themselves in this study. Keeping all things constant, this finding is consistent with several research papers in the HRM literature, which showed a wide gap between management rhetoric and reality (Hales and Klidas, 1998; Truss, 1999; Grant, 1998; Hallier and Leopold, 1996; Marchington and Grugulis, 2000). For example, a study (Hales and Klidas, 1998) on HRM implementation in practice among 10 five-star hotels in Amsterdam showed that despite managers' claims that their employees were fully involved with decisions and empowered to act exclusively on their own in making those decisions, the reality in practice did not match their claims. Their results showed that none of the hotel managers allowed full decision making on the part of the employees but only limited discretion. As Hales and Klidas (1998: 92) argued: "employee autonomy was limited in both scope and depth."

The contextual variables, including economic and cultural factors that may affect HRM implementation on the part of management, may differ from one country to another. However, the main point of concern here, as will be presented next, is that the management rhetoric does not always match the reality.

Employee Involvement in Job Design

A number of issues were observed in the area of job design. According to the employee interviews, the managers do not seem to involve or offer employees the opportunity to discuss new ways to improve their job tasks or update the work methods to make them more interesting. In fact, several employees stated that their jobs become very boring, especially in the low season. For instance, one waiter in the study noted that "during the low season, we are really not in the mood to talk to each other. You see everyone [colleagues] depressed and not in the mood for anyone. It is so depressing during that period."

Interesting jobs are an important antecedent for positive attitudes in the workplace (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). Indeed, the job itself, out of several other job features, has long been regarded as the main motivator in the workplace (Judge and Church, 2000; Jungensen, 1978) (cited in Saari and Judge, 2004). This is not to say that well-designed compensation programs and effective supervision (i.e., other types of personnel policies) are not important; rather, it is that much can be done to influence job satisfaction by ensuring that the work is interesting and challenging (Saari and Judge, 2004). Although the HR managers stressed that they try to make employees' jobs as interesting as possible, this may not be the case on the ground, as found in this study. A comment from one of the employees in this study highlights this further: "there are ways that they [managers] can do to revive the hotel and lift us [motivate us] during the [low] season, such as lowering room rates to attract people or rotating us between departments."

The fact that managers in Lebanon do not take job design matters very seriously seems to be due to the continued practice of classical management concepts (e.g., Taylorism) by many managers in the Middle East; these concepts maintain that employees generally dislike work and are only interested in earning their pay (Suliman, 2001). Accordingly, as can be inferred from employee interviews in this study, managers pay little attention to work design.

Suliman (2001) argued that these classical management concepts may have played a role in improving the profitability of companies in the Middle East; their role, however, has been marginal and temporary. Arab organizations it follows should attempt to re-design jobs which necessarily empower employees to participate in designing their own jobs in line with their career needs and aspirations. Jobs models that do not satisfy the employees' needs (e.g., achievement needs) lead to dissatisfaction, bitterness, and alienation, which could eventually be translated into low organizational profitability (Schein, 1980).

Employee Involvement in Performance Appraisal

In the area of performance appraisal, the findings also suggest that there are limitations on the part of management. Although the employees seemed to value the general idea of performance appraisal in itself for organizational and employee development, they had a somewhat negative image of it in their hotels. To them, the performance appraisal process seemed biased, serving to fulfill management agenda at the expense of the employees' needs and aspirations.

Many employees stated that their input is often left out and that they have no say in co-setting performance objectives or development plans. In other words, based on the results of the study, performance objectives and the criteria to reach those objectives were not being mutually set by the manager/rater and the employee; rather, they appeared to be solely set by managers driven by business needs alone. Put simply, employee participation in the performance appraisal process is very limited. The comment of one employee in this study illustrates this: "They need to listen to our views. We cannot improve performance if there are certain issues that need to be solved. Many of our suggestions are not taken into consideration by management; they only do what they want to do." It follows that employees are not offered the opportunity to develop performance objectives in line with their career aspirations; hence, the employees' needs are overlooked in setting performance criteria. Another worker in this study noted: "Our careers are really not being developed here. This is how it is in many of the workplaces in this country, and this is very demotivating to me."

In fact, employers in many developing countries mistakenly view their employees as having limited potential and capabilities (Jaeger, 1990) (cited in Vallance, 1999), and therefore, their involvement in the process may be curtailed. In other words, managers in those contexts underestimate their employees' qualifications for involvement in the performance appraisal process.

In sum, active employee involvement and participation in job design and performance appraisal seem absent, according to the employee interviews in this study. Generally, when asked if managers involved them in decision making, employees noted that there was minimal involvement, if at all. This seems unfortunate, given that employee involvement is considered the central element in the human resource management paradigm (Wood and Wall, 2002). Involving or engaging the employee in organizational matters can result in higher employee self-esteem, leading to higher employee commitment and

satisfaction in the workplace (Tomer, 2001). At the rhetorical level, as seen in this study, although the managers embraced the tenets of HRM as being an employee champion (e.g., high employee involvement), the reality was rather disappointing for employees.

A number of studies in the Arab world do show that managers do not encourage employee involvement and even punish rather than reward it (Al-Faleh, 1987; Mouna, 1980; Suliman and Iles, 1999) (cited in Suliman, 2001). Suliman (2001) argued that most Middle Eastern managers still manage their organizations based on traditional western ideas and concepts that had originated in the 1960s and 1970s. These concepts are based on the assumption that workers do not like work and hence should be threatened and forced to produce. Employee input/suggestions or their participation in organizational decision making is therefore not supported and valued by management, as demonstrated in this study. Similarly, the results of a study in the hotel sector in Lebanon (Awad, 1999) reflected the low regard that HR managers have towards their employees. In this respect, management still sees their human resources as a cost and not as an investment, and therefore, their involvement is seen as "pointless."

The organizational structure itself in the Middle East region does not support the system of employee involvement. Lebanese and Middle Eastern managers in general tend to centralize their decisions at the highest levels of management. Hence, managers neither share information with their subordinates nor involve them in decision making (Bakhtari, 1995; Badawy, 1980). It follows that Middle Eastern managers tend to follow a somewhat authoritarian style of management. Bakhtari (1995) argued that this stems from the authoritarian political regimes particular to Arab countries:

> *The preference for the coercive management style among Middle Eastern relative to U.S-born managers can be traced to the authoritarian element in the political and social environment in the Middle East, an element springing from several factors that have shaped the norms, values, and beliefs of contemporary Middle East societies. (p. 110)*

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

The main contribution to knowledge that this study offers is related to the practice of employee involvement in a developing country in the Arab world. Employee interviews offered a valuable contribution to knowledge in the field of HRM, particularly in the Lebanese hospitality sector. The findings from the employee interviews in this study indicated that HRM, and employee involvement in particular, remains largely rhetoric (i.e. Legge, 1995a). Specifically, limited involvement in job and performance appraisal is evident. Hotel employees are rarely given the opportunity to participate in improving or adjusting their work standards. Employees noted that their jobs sometimes become very boring. Finally, the interviews demonstrated that employee participation in performance appraisal is often discouraged. It seems that appraisals are a one-sided activity in the hotels studied. The bureaucratic and traditional ideology of managers in Lebanon, as discussed in the previous sections, ultimately translated to a low overall employee involvement climate.

The problems in HR practice reported by the employees present an agenda for improving the employee involvement practice in Lebanon, a developing country in the Arab world. In this respect, a number of management recommendations for the hotel sector in Lebanon follow. First, for a successful employee involvement climate, management should share with employees more information related to strategic and financial issues. In other words, managers are to be more open to their employees. Second, performance appraisal should be developed to ensure that employees participate more in setting their performance goals and objectives, taking into account their career development aspirations in the hotel. Finally, management must exert serious effort to give employees opportunities to suggest ways to make their jobs more interesting.

Furthermore, it was inferred from the study that senior managers should adopt giving more support to human resources as an overall management philosophy and actually follow through on it (Pfeffer, 1998). This philosophy requires greater managerial support so that the outcomes of employee involvement relating to higher employee commitment and performance can be achieved. In this respect, managers may

have to abandon their bureaucratic attitudes and recognize that human resources are an investment and not a cost (Awad, 1999). In this respect, employers are advised to initiate cultural change programs aimed at encouraging managers in the organization to realize the importance of human capital and in turn increase the involvement of their employees. An important issue here is related to management education (Rosow and Zager, 1990). Research has found that management education is considered the most important predictor of attitudes (Triandis and Brislin, 1980). Thus, it is highly recommended that hotel owners educate their managers about the concepts of employee involvement itself, including the strategic importance and benefits of involvement. Management development programs can help bring about a change in culture and attitudes on the part of management (e.g., Jackson, 1992). Nevertheless, organizations cannot expect to move from its current management style to participation overnight. It follows that some traditional line managers might view the change with skepticism, especially when a real change of management philosophy occurs (Klein and Sorra, 1996; Klein, 1984), and they might resist the change strongly (Fenton'O-Creevy, 1998). Actually involving line managers and supervisors in the initial planning and design of the means and processes of participative decision making can facilitate the shift from the control to the participation philosophy (Harrison, 1992) and therefore help them accept the change with less resistance. Furthermore, managers should also be convinced that the employees have the required knowledge and abilities to participate. Managers may not have confidence in the abilities of their subordinates and may therefore be reluctant to involve them in decision making (Leana, 1987). Accordingly, HR managers have a critical role in convincing managers that the employees hired are highly capable. This hiring process could thus include actual participation of line managers, in addition to considering the resumes, training sessions attended, degrees achieved, and other relevant information regarding employee qualifications. Finally, managers must also receive training (e.g., Choi and Dickson, 2010) directed at managing employee involvement successfully in organizations (Cotton, 1993). This could include training on issues related to organizing and structuring the decision-making process for employees, offering timely feedback to employees' suggestions, and ensuring equal opportunities for involvement for all concerned employees (Fox, 1977). Importantly, for a successful cultural change to take place, support must come from the top (Daily and Bishop, 2003; Tesluk et al., 1999). Senior executives must be ready to fully sponsor and lead the program throughout the organization in a gradual, non-hasty process over time.

As in all research, certain limitations exist in this study. The purpose of this research was to explore employee involvement in several important HR policies in hotels. However, the fact that only two hotels were studied could limit the generalization of findings to the entire hotel sector in the country. Nevertheless, the hotels studied are representative of fine international hotels, which makes them good cases for study given that such hotels may follow certain standards to remain competitive in the market. More studies in this field are necessary to increase confidence in the findings.

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