



International Journal of Business and Marketing Management

Vol. 3(1): 16-30, January, 2015

ISSN: ISSN: 2350-1529

[www.resjournals.org/IJBMM](http://www.resjournals.org/IJBMM)

# An Evaluation of HR Strategies for Delivering Quality Health Care in the District Hospitals in Ghana

Isaac Ofori – Okyere and Philomena Aboagye

Department Of Marketing, Takoradi Polytechnic, Ghana, P. O. Box 256, Takoradi, Ghana.

Email for Correspondence: [isaacoforiokyere@gmail.com](mailto:isaacoforiokyere@gmail.com) and [philaboaden@gmail.com](mailto:philaboaden@gmail.com)

## Abstract

**This study evaluated HR strategies and the role they play in delivering quality health care in the district hospitals in Ghana. Data was gathered from four district hospitals; self-administered questionnaire were sent to 1000 selected medical staff used as participants with 250 given to each hospital. Interviews were conducted to complement the efforts of the questionnaire design as data collection tools. Primary data gathered from the field were analysed using simple percentages obtained from the SPSS software. It was concluded that majority of the respondents agreed that all the four hospitals believe in the practice of hiring best employees, but disagreed that Managements do the following: have steps in place to develop the employees, Provide the needed support systems, and retain the best employees to deliver service quality to clients(patients). Based on the results gathered and reported from the four hospitals, it is concluded that, majority of the respondents agreed that the hospitals hire the best employees with the purpose of delivering quality health care whereas, the same majority disagreed that the hospitals develop their best employees, provide support systems and lastly, retain the best employees to deliver quality health care to patients.**

**Keywords:** HR strategies, Quality health care, District hospitals, Patients, medical staff

## INTRODUCTION

The health-care industry has been the focal point for much discussion in recent years (Conant and Kleiner, 1998) with most of the extant literature showing the roles human resources management play in developing and providing quality healthcare service to patients. In the service sector, the linkage between employee performance and the delivery of high quality services has been well documented in the services marketing and hospitality literature (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000; Mohr and Bitner, 1995; Bettencourt and Gwinner, 1996). The effective and efficient management of human resources in the health institutions is essential to enable the delivery of quality medical services to achieve patient satisfaction (Elarabi, and Johari, 2014). Like most other service industries, the health care industry is considered as very labour intensive. The important reason that underlines the heavy reliance on an extensive work force in the service sector is that it is not possible to produce a “service” and store it for future consumption (Siddiqui and Kleiner, 1998). Within many health care systems globally, increased attention is being focused on human resources strategies to deliver quality health care. Specifically, human resources are one of three principle health system inputs, with the other two major inputs being physical, capital and consumables (World Health Report, 2000). Arguably, it can be maintained strongly that the most important of the health system inputs, the performance and the benefits the system can deliver depend largely upon the knowledge, skills and motivation of the right human resources, responsible for delivering quality healthcare services with the overall aim of achieving patients' satisfaction. Human resources, when pertaining to health care, can be defined as the different kinds of clinical and non-clinical staff responsible for public and individual health intervention (World Health Report, 2000). Effective human resource strategies are greatly needed to achieve better

outcomes from and access to health care in the district hospitals in Ghana.

During the last decades there has been a growing recognition of patients' right to participate in decisions about their medical care (Kassirer, 1993); consequently, measures of quality of care should include an evaluation of the doctor-patient relationship (Benbassat and Taragin, 1998). Kassirer (1994) opines that the escalating costs of health care have led to the recognition that its delivery should "be fair" and responsive not only to the needs of the patient at hand, but also to those of society; therefore, measures of quality of care should consider also the parsimonious distribution of health care resources. Researchers are of the view that health care is commonly assessed by a review of the health institution's structures (facilities and organisation), process (appropriateness, efficiency, cost-effectiveness), and outcome (mortality, adverse events, early readmissions) [e.g. Brook, McGlynn, and Cleary, 1996; Donabedian, 1988]. Similarly, during health care delivery process, the contact employees (that is, medical and non – medical staffs) are capable of influencing the patients' perception; the employees are deemed as the actual service delivered, that is, the whole health institution been packaged in the eyes of both established and prospective patients, and the marketers of the service brands. This lends credence to the fact that success of any health care institution largely depends on its valuable human resources or people who implement effective and most efficient strategies adopted by management of the facility. It is maintained strongly that employees, who are well-informed, understanding and caring about the customer's situation and goal (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler, 2008), in the case of a health care institution are capable of influencing the patients' line of thinking regarding decisions making.

By designing and implementing human resources strategies, which comprise of (1) hire the right people, (2) develop people to deliver service quality, (3) provide the needed support systems, and (4) retain the best people, (Wilson, et al., 2008). Through these, organisations can create an understanding and acceptance among employees for the companies' values, products, services delivery, and marketing campaigns (Grönroos, 2000). With a set of human resources strategies to maintain a consistent customer oriented workforce, a service firm can develop a more customer focused employees giving better service quality (Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006) which stems from person-to-person interaction always takes place in health care delivery and capable of strengthening the valued relationship existing between the parties.

A principal challenge that is bedeviling service industries in modern times is that, service personnel or people working for the players in the health sector have not always responded satisfactorily to the ever increasing demands of customers for improvement due to certain factors such as inadequacy of management; through accelerated growth; shortages in the supply of labour, a lack of training and high staff turnover; and lastly, the inadequacy of the reward system in service industries (Ofori-Okyere and Kumah, 2014). As a matter of fact, it is instructive to note that selecting the best employees to deliver quality health care seems a difficult task for human resource strategists in terms of recruiting and hiring.

Chen and Yu (2009) have used Wilson et al (2009) framework to study the importance of people on delivering service quality about a bank: Their study concluded that the bank realises the importance of people on delivering service quality. And then by choosing the right people, training them, supporting them, and retaining them as part of human resources strategies, the expected service quality is delivered. Ye and Liang, (2010) researched on human resource strategies with specific mentioning to the roles employees play in service delivery in terms of quality and quantity in two hotels in China and conclude that "hotels should recognise that the service employees' play an extremely important role on good service delivery as well as specially emphasise on the service quality delivery through integrating the service culture and human resource strategies into the hotels." Similarly, Elarabi, and Johari (2014) investigate on the impact practicing human resources management play on the quality of healthcare service and achieving patients' satisfaction. Mayer, (2002) studied "Human resource practices and service quality in theme parks in the USA. Siddiqui and Kleiner, (1998) and Galen and Kleiner, (1998) assessed "human resource management in the health care industry". Another study was focused on "What is adequate health care and how can quality of care be improved (Benbassat and Taragin, 1998).

Despite the extant body of research in existing studies, the evidence is glaring that though all these studies were conducted to focus on the health care sector, however, none focused on district hospitals and in Ghana. It is in this sense that the current researchers posit that there is still distinct lack of body of literature research regarding evaluating HR strategies for delivering quality health care in the district hospitals in Ghana hence the justification of the current research topic.

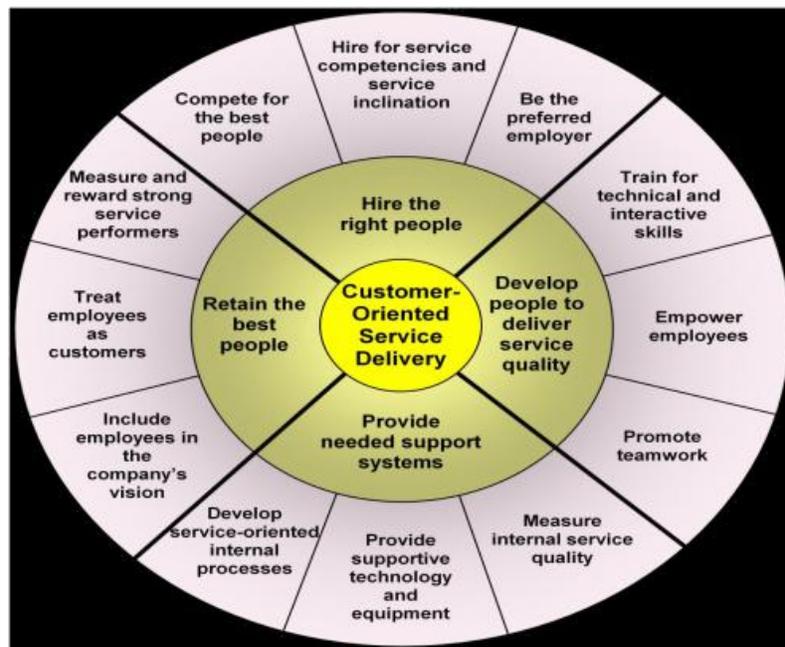
The main objective of this paper was to investigate the extent at which the "Human Resources Strategies Wheel" or "theory" as postulated by Wilson et al., (2008) are adopted by district hospitals in Ghana to enable their employees to deliver quality health care to their patients. So it was against this backdrop that the following research questions were posed to seek for answers: (1) How can district hospitals in Ghana hire the right people to deliver quality health care to their patients? (2) How can employees in the district hospitals in Ghana be developed to deliver service quality to their patients? (3) How can the needed support systems provided by the district hospitals to deliver service quality to their patients be identified? and (4) How can the district hospitals in Ghana retain the best people to deliver quality service to their patients?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Frontline employees are viewed as the organization's most important assets, who contribute to the achieving and sustaining of competitive advantage a company desires in any market place. As a result, the company should recognize the significant role played by its employees who represent and reinforce the brand image of the company and delivering the service effectively from customers' point of view. The frontline employees, represent the organization in the customers' eyes, and can have an impact on the image and reputation of the company. When the frontline employees provide quality service, the customer's desires could be met. As a result, the company gains a positive reputation hence that could give them a competitive edge (Wilson et al., 2008). The frontline employees, who are knowledgeable, understandable, and concerned about the customers' needs, also influence the five dimensions of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles (Wilson et al., 2008).

Therefore, the quality of service rendered by employees may have a direct impact on the overall service delivery of a firm in which health facilities operating in the districts in Ghana can be a specific reference. It is obvious from the foregoing discussion that lack of the suitable human resource strategies to develop employee's quality and quantity is the internal reason that commonly results to lower and deficient service quality delivery.

According to Wilson et al, (2008), for a service firm to be seen as delivering "customer or client oriented service", the contents found on the Human Resource Strategies Wheel (Figure 1) as explained below must be adopted and implemented strategically.



**Figure 1.** Human Resources Strategies Wheel  
Source: (Wilson et al, 2008)

### Hire the right people

In the age of trading professional skills, technical knowhow, expertise and competencies of as services for fees, hiring and recruiting of service frontliners or people have moved from normal recruitment to strategic hiring for the purposes of accessing the right people or best employees. These right or best people who are already endowed with the needed and vital professional skills, technical knowhow, expertise and competencies, accessed through strategic hiring are capable of contributing immensely to organizations' quests of delivering quality service to their customers (who are deemed as the most important personalities) if it comes to achieving success in any competitive market place they operate. This affirms the position of Lin and Kleiner (2004) which stress that an organization needs to decide strategically how to attract the best or right people, while the job candidate considers whether the organization and job fulfills his or her needs and goals. Wilson et al. (2008) explain that organizations can strategically hire the right personnel to deliver

quality service through adopting the following strategies: Compete for the best people; Hire for service competencies and service inclination; and lastly, Be the preferred employer.

### **Compete for the best people**

In competing for the best people, organizations need to identify the employee segmentation, job design and promotion of job availability, as possible as compete with other organizations in the labour market (Wilson et al., 2008). It is held as an acceptable view that to obtain the most satisfactory employees/ people, an organization can embark on either internal or external search or both. The search can be made possible through job posting, supervisory recommendations when it comes to internal recruiting (Denisi and Friffi, 2005). Concerning the external method, organization needs to open up recruitment efforts to the external community (Decenzo and Rovvins, 2002) through efforts such as advertisements (including Internet postings), employment agencies, schools, colleges and universities, professional organizations, and unsolicited applicants (Decenzo and Rovvins, 2002).

### **Hire for service competencies and service inclination**

In the pool of countless of job applicants, organization usually set up some basic selection criteria to help choose the most suitable employees for the job vacancy. Wilson et al. (2008) shed lights on service competencies and service inclination as part of the criteria strategic HR Managers base on to select right personnel or people for the job under question. Service competencies involve the skills and knowledge needed to do a particular job (Wilson et al., 2008). Quek (2005) contends that employers particularly advertise at the labour market for the purposes of accessing potential employees who are inherent with generic competencies such as interpersonal skills, leadership skills, teamwork, and oral and written skills for work specifics and performance. In addition to generic competencies, the author touched on cognitive skills as part of the competencies employers look for in their prospective job applicants. These skills according to the author include numerical skills, innovative skills, problem-solving skills, research skills and computer literacy skills. These also are needed for job specific and performance.

On the issue of service inclination, Wilson et al., (2008) maintain that employers normally consider applicants on the extent of their interests, attitudes toward service, and their orientation for serving customers effectively whilst on the job. Denisi and Friffi (2005) stress that certain employers would like to hire employees whose personal values, qualities, and attributes fit with the rest of the organization, instead of hiring someone who only has a high level of educational degree.

### **Be the preferred employer**

There are so many performance indicators that can exist to put a service organization or institution in to bracket that will make it seemed as a preferred employer in the job market. Some of these indicators include the quality products or services provided in the market place; the leadership or management team; the desirable treatments giving to its employees to advance in their respective careers; myriad of successes chalked in areas of enviable corporate social responsibilities; the value of its corporate image or brand comparable to competing ones; achievement of "firsts" in the areas of awards and honors, the extent and scope of its operations in both local and international (specifically, the position it occupies in the industry it finds itself both local and international) etc. Wilson et al. (2008) express that the preferred employer in a particular industry or in a particular location can be used to attract the best people. In order to be the preferred employer, an organization should accomplish the extensive training, career and advancement opportunities, excellent internal support, attractive incentives and quality goods and services (Wilson et al., 2008).

The satisfactory human resource practices embarked on by employers which health care providers are no exception go a long way to market the reputation and brand image of their institutions or outfits to prospective employees in the job market. The existing employees termed as internal customers in the form of doctors, nurses, lab technicians, and other paramedics can be relied on when it comes to the health care providers delivering quality services to their clients or patients in the health sector in Ghana.

### **Develop people to deliver service quality**

After hiring the right or best people for the right position out of the numerous applicants, Zeithaml, et al., (2006) maintain that it is very important to provide valuable training, empower employees and promote team spirit in the workplace to ensure the process of delivering service quality.

### **Train for technical and interactive skills**

Training involves an experienced employee or an expert who works with learners (trainees) to transfer to them certain areas of knowledge or skills to improve on their current jobs (McNamara, 2008). Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright (2000) viewed training generally as a planned effort by a company to facilitate employees learning of the job-related competencies. For the purposes of this study, these expected competencies possessed by the potential employees of any health care provider and which are capable of delivering quality health service or care include knowledge, skill, or behaviours that are critical for successful job performance. An effective training which is suppose to give birth to these expected competencies and which according to Bettencourt and Gwinner (1996) is viewed as critical to the job of the employee since it includes job-related skills and behavioral skills of the employee under training.

To make the delivering of quality health care possible to clients, effective training is capable of improving the competencies of medical employees and even related paramedics to deal with variety of clients' needs and complaints. It needs to be stressed emphatically that lack of necessary technical skills, knowledge and interactive skills, health employees or people are likely to fail to provide quality health service in the form of dealing with client's varying needs and complaints during the process of providing the service.

The current researchers share the same view with Lovelock and Wirtz (2007) that medical personnel (such as doctors, nurses, physician assistance, lab technicians etc.) like any other group of employees in other firms or institutions thus not only acquire these skills from formal education, but obtain technical and interactive skills from on-the-job training. Such skills are effective for the medical personnel or employees to provide quality service in the form of courteous, caring, responsive and empathetic to the clients. It is cautioned moreover that, training should fit or match the business goals and strategies of the organization (Zeithaml, et al., 2006) which in this case can refer to the health care providers. Tsui, Pearce, Porter, and Tripoli (1997), advise that a fitted training is a sign of top management's commitment to deliver service quality to clients through the employees.

### **Empowerment**

Companies need to empower their employees to make decisions and "*take action in a large number of potential problematic situations*" (Grönroos, 2000). Empowerment is defined by other authors as "*means of giving employees the desire, skills, tools and authority to serve the customer*" (Zeithaml et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2008). The significance of getting employees empowered is to help them identify and recognize their responsibilities (Grönroos, 2000) on the job and Wilson et al., (2008) consider it as a means of given employees the authority to make decisions on behalf of management. Bowen and Lawer (1992) claim that: "*Empowering employees means (1) providing them with information about the performance of the organization, (2) rewarding them based on the organization's performance, (3) creating a knowledge based that makes it possible for employees to understand and contribute to the performance of the organization, and (4) giving employees the power to make a decisions that influence organizational directions and performance.*" Empowerment demands an ongoing development of "*trusting relationships between management and employees*" (Khan,1997).

Empowerment is capable of making employees to provide relevant and quick responses to customer needs and dealing with dissatisfaction during service delivery (Boshoff and Janine, 2000). Additionally, empowerment enables subordinate employees to solve problems with different situations and in time, rather than taking time to ask permission from supervisors or managers. This is because since managers or supervisors are not on the front-line, if it comes to issues regarding service quality certain ideas from them may not be best suit for customers (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007).

### **Promote team**

Tjosvold, Moy, and Sasaki (1999), explain that teamwork can "enhance the commitment and ability of employees to deliver high quality service to customers". However, health care services are challenging, for they always need to deal with varieties of demands and needs from clients or patients. If employees work in a team, co-workers help each other and achieve the same institutional goals. In teams, employees will not feel alone, and they are able to maintain enthusiasm and provide quality service (Zeithaml, et al., 2006). Macaulay and Cook (1995) summarized that well-functioning team can be characterized as: mutual assistance, positive place, easily generating new idea, open environment, knowing what they have to do, having confidence to do well, taking ownership and responsibility for customer issues, development and contribution are recognized.

### **Provide needed support systems**

Wilson et al. (2008) acknowledge the fact that lack of enough internal support system, results to service employees

rarely effectively and efficiently delivers quality service. Paravantis (2009) support this idea by stressing that, the serving ability of a service employee mainly depends on the quality of internal processes, available resources and recognition. Provision of needed support systems can include the following: Measure internal service quality; Provide supportive technology and equipment; and Develop service-oriented internal processes.

### ***Measure internal service quality***

Kang et al. (2002) maintain that the measurement of internal service quality can provide specific data that can be used in quality management. It is a means to assess internal service quality and better understand how various dimensions impact overall service quality. Therefore measuring internal service quality would enable service organizations to efficiently design the service delivery process (Kang et al., 2002).

### ***Provide supportive technology and equipment***

The right and needed technology and equipment can assist the service employees in better service delivery (Wilson et al., 2008). In the health care providing institutions, these relate to the workplace and workstation design such as spacious consulting rooms for doctors and wards for patients, theatre for operations, spacious rooms for installing modern equipment like CT scan, MRI and other heavy duty equipment.

### ***Develop service-oriented internal processes***

Grönroos (2000) posits that the service production processes as well as a network of systems are built up by interrelations and interdependence with a number of sub processes. The author further explains that every service operation contains internal service functions which restrict each other. If poor internal service exists, the final service to the customer will be damaged. Therefore, an organization's internal processes should be defined with customer value and customer satisfaction in mind (Wilson et al., 2008), if they want to deliver quality service that can make customer satisfied.

### **Retain the best people:**

#### ***Include employees in the company's vision***

Company's vision entails what it intends doing in the future ahead which includes strategies as well as programmes to be adopted to achieve desired goals. In retaining the best employees for the purposes of delivering service quality in the health care delivery, institutions should involve their employees into their strategies and goals, and make them understand how their works fit within the goals set. If they feel valued and their needs are taken care of, they will prefer to stay in the organization.

#### ***Treat employees as customers***

One thing management of health care delivery institutions need to understand is that whatever strategies they need to adopt are commonly implemented by medical employees or staff. So there is need to perceive them as part of the most important personalities in the institutions. Wilson et al., (2008) affirm that it ensures employees feel valued and their needs are cared for by the organization, so they would like to stay along with this firm. Spetz and Butler (2008) observe that delicately treating of an organisation's employees as internal customers can be done through development, motivation, quality recruitment and the attractiveness of the job description.

#### ***Measure and reward strong service performers***

Reward can motivate employees to achieve high levels of performance (Zerbe, Dobni and Harel, 1998). Additionally, reward should be linked with the organization's vision and goal. A customer-oriented firm should reward performance based on customer satisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 2006). Lytle and Timmerman (2006) presented that "Management

provides incentives and rewards at all levels for service quality and not only for productivity". It needs to be noted that, effective reward system is central when it comes to keeping the best of service employees (Zeithaml, et al., 2006) in which in this case refer to varied medical staffs who are trained to deliver quality health care to patients or clients of these outfits.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study integrated both quantitative and qualitative data for the purpose of enhancing the value of mixed methods research (Bryman, 2006). In reality, the study gained the advantage of having the qualitative data been used to assess the validity of the quantitative findings; whereas, the quantitative data also helped to generate the qualitative sample or explained findings from the angle of qualitative data. "Combining both qualitative and quantitative data ensured effectiveness of the research process as one can enhance the findings of the other (Ofori-Okyere and Kumah, 2014). The combination of qualitative and quantitative as mixed approaches aimed at the following: First, qualitative was to help obtain detailed information so that the researchers later on can gain a deeper understanding of the problem (Yin, 2003), that is, an evaluation of Human Resources Strategies to delivering quality health care to the patients or clients of district hospitals. Whereas, quantitative sought to quantify the data and typically applied some form of statistical analysis (Malhotra, 2004).

Two sources of data were used which comprised of both primary and secondary. The primary data dealt with the researchers collecting first hand information in the premises of all the four district hospitals located in Ghana. The participants (that is, the selected medical staff and non medical staff) working with each of the four hospitals were served with self-administered questionnaire and follow-up interviews were done to clarify certain ambiguities regarding responses on the retrieved questionnaire. Whereas, the secondary source encompassed the researchers reviewing volumes of literature from text books, and published existing research papers or articles sourced out from peer review journals. In collecting and gathering data, two main devices or methods or tools were used, that is, questionnaire and interview. A self administered questionnaire was designed which focused on the literature review with the purpose of making it easier to be answered by participants selected for this study. This was distributed to 250 selected medical staffs and non medical staff (administrators) from each of the four hospitals. Some of the questionnaires were responded to in the physical presence of the interviewers, whilst others were filled and later on retrieved due to participants' busy schedules. The main reason was to find out from the selected medical staff the extent at which the hospitals they work for adopt the Wilson et al, (2008) framework of Human Resources Strategies Wheel to delivering quality health care to the patients or clients of the four district hospitals.

The participants for this study were selected through the adoption of non-probability sampling technique. Snowballing technique was used to refer the researchers to certain key respondents. With this sampling technique, the medical staffs and non-medical staff in the four district hospitals termed as specific elements or right respondents from the population were selected in a non-random manner. Also, in using the non-probability sampling technique, the current researchers conveniently and purposively selected the readily accessible medical staff and other non-medical staff composed of (employees) which in this case included selected doctors, nurses, midwives, lab technicians, pharmacists, accountants, and account clerks.

**Table 1.** Indicates response rate

<b>Selected Medical Staffs</b>			
<b>Selected cases of the district hospitals</b>	<b>No. of questionnaires distributed</b>	<b>No. of questionnaires retrieved</b>	<b>Valid percent</b>
Konongo Hospital	250	214	85.6%
Ejisu Hospital	250	209	83.6%
Bekwai Hospital	250	201	80.4%
St. Patrick (Offinso)	250	211	84.4%
Total	1000	835(83.5%)	N/A

The data on the table indicated that 250 self administered questionnaire was distributed to selected medical staffs from each of the four hospitals studied making 1000 in all. Out of that, 835 representing 83.5% were retrieved from the participants. By this, it is said that the current study had gained high response rate. The study was conducted in a period of five months that is, January to May, 2014.

## Statistical Analysis

In analysing the responses gathered from the field, the researchers had in mind to determine the valid percentages for responses from each hospital as a case study and the average percentage in terms of responses for all the four hospitals. Analysing the responses this way conformed to what has been done by an existing study conducted by Ofori-Okyere and Kumah, (2014) that used multiple case studies to investigate how SERVQUAL Dimensions are applied in the domestic airline industry in Ghana. This brought to the fore the mathematical formulae adopted to report the findings of the previous study which can be said to be relevant for this current study.

With these formulae, the selected staffs (serving as the respondents) from each of the hospital were asked to select as many as possible expected investigated item(s) for a particular question posed on the questionnaire. The total number of investigated items selected by the respondents (i.e. figures found in the bracket = nx) were divided by the total number of questionnaire retrieved, represented by (nqr). The value for  $\frac{nx}{nqr}$  was multiplied by 100 to get the valid percent for each case study hospital, that is equalled to (=y); given by the formula  $\frac{nx}{nqr} \times 100 = y$ . Lastly, it was ideal to find the mean of the percentages for the four hospitals to get the average percent (ap), that also is given by its formula  $\frac{\sum y_{1,2,3,4}}{4} = ap$ .

## RESULTS

### Hiring the right people (employees) by the hospitals

On table 2 below the data indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that the hospitals hire the right people(employees) representing 91.1% as against minority few who said NO that is, 18.2% and 0.8% for missing item(s) in terms of not responding to the question. On the main activities the hospitals embarked on to constituting their quests of hiring right employees, it is reported on average that, 54.9% recorded compete for the best people; 61.9% agreed that the hospitals hire for service competencies and service inclination; and lastly, 53.8% indicated that on average all the four hospitals are perceived as the preferred employers by the prospective applicants or employees.

**Table 2.** Indicating responses regarding the various activities embarked on by the four health facilities to constituting hiring of the right people (employees) to deliver quality health care

Selected Staffs					
Investigated Item (s)	Konongo Gov't Hospital	Ejisu Gov't Hospital	Bekwai Gov't Hospital	St. Patrick (Offinso)	Avg. percent
Agreed to the fact that the hospitals hire right people to deliver quality health care	86.3% (179)	88.9% (186)	99.0% (199)	90.5% (191)	91.1%
Disagreed to the fact that the hospitals hire right people to deliver quality health care	14.9% (31)	11.0% (23)	24.3% (49)	22.7% (48)	18.2%
Compete for the best people	54.2% (116)	56.9% (119)	51.2% (103)	57.3% (121)	54.9%
Hire for service competencies and service inclination	57.0% (122)	53.1% (111)	75.1% (151)	62.5% (132)	61.9%
Be the preferred employer	54.6% (117)	58.8% (123)	54.2% (109)	47.8% (101)	53.8%

The table 3 below, report on the responses concerning the agreement that the four hospitals develop people or employees to deliver service quality in terms of quality health care to clients or patients. On average 46.2% of the responses indicated participants' agreement to the fact that the hospitals develop their people or employees to deliver quality health to clients as against 53.8% who disagreed.

Concerning the various activities the four hospitals or health facilities embarked on to constitute their quests of developing the right people or employees employed to deliver service quality in terms of quality health care to the clients or patients, on average, minority of the participants agreed to training for technical and interactive skills representing

**Table 3.** Indicates the various activities the health facilities embarked on to constitute developing of the right people (employees) employed to deliver quality health care to the clients / patients

<b>Selected Medical Staffs</b>					
<b>Investigated Item(s)</b>	<b>Konongo Gov't Hospital</b>	<b>Ejisu Gov't Hospital</b>	<b>Bekwai Gov't Hospital</b>	<b>St. Patrick (Offinso)</b>	<b>Avg. percent</b>
Agreed to employees' development	46.2% (99)	48.3% (101)	47.7% (96)	42.9% (89)	46.2%
Disagreed to employees' development	53.7% (115)	51.6% (108)	52.2% (105)	57.8% (122)	53.8%
Training for technical and interactive skills	49.0% (105)	45.4% (95)	53.7% (115)	45.9% (97)	48.5%
Empowering of employees or people	55.6% (119)	55.9% (117)	40.2% (81)	37.4% (79)	47.2%
Promote team	49.5% (106)	49.2% (103)	48.7% (98)	46.4% (98)	48.4%

48.5%; 47.2% of the responses indicated agreement to empowering of employees or people and lastly, 48.4 % indicated agreement to promoting team.

### **Provide the needed support systems to the people or employees**

**Table 4.** Indicates the actual support systems put in place by the four hospitals in their quest of equipping their right people (employees) to deliver quality health care to clients or patients

<b>Selected Medical Staffs</b>					
<b>Investigated Item(s)</b>	<b>Konongo Gov't Hospital</b>	<b>Ejisu Gov't Hospital</b>	<b>Bekwai Gov't Hospital</b>	<b>St. Patrick (Offinso)</b>	<b>Avg. percent</b>
Agreed to the provision of support systems	50.9% (109)	49.7% (104)	49.2% (99)	47.3% (100)	49.2%
Disagreed to the provision of support systems	49.0% (105)	50.2% (105)	50.7% (102)	52.6% (111)	50.6%
Measure internal service quality	49.0% (105)	47.3% (99)	43.7% (88)	49.2% (104)	47.3%
Provide supportive technology and equipment	47.6% (102)	49.7% (104)	38.7% (81)	48.3% (102)	46.1%
Develop service-oriented internal processes	46.7% (100)	47.8% (100)	49.2% (99)	44.0% (93)	46.9%

The table 4 above reports on data regarding the agreement to the fact that the hospitals provide support systems to equipping their right people (employees) to deliver quality health care to clients which is 49.2% as against 50.6%. On the actual support systems put in place by the hospitals, on average, 47.3% of the responses indicated agreement to measure internal service quality; 46.1% indicated agreement to providing supportive technology and equipment and lastly, and lastly, 46.9% indicated agreement to the development of service oriented internal processes.

**Table 5.** Indicating responses regarding the main activities embarked on by the hospitals to get all their best people (employees) retained

<b>Selected Medical Staffs</b>					
<b>Investigated Item(s)</b>	<b>Konongo Gov't Hospital</b>	<b>Ejisu Gov't Hospital</b>	<b>Bekwai Gov't Hospital</b>	<b>St. Patrick (Offinso)</b>	<b>Avg. percent</b>
Agreed that the hospitals retain best employees	46.7% (100)	49.2% (103)	48.7% (98)	46.9% (99)	47.8%
Disagreed that the hospitals retain best employees	53.2% (114)	50.7% (106)	51.2% (103)	47.8% (101)	50.7
Include employees in the company's vision	46.7% (100)	47.3% (99)	43.7% (88)	45.9% (97)	45.9%
Treat employees as customers	47.6% (102)	49.7% (104)	47.2% (95)	46.9% (99)	47.8%
Measure and reward strong service performers	49.0% (105)	47.8% (100)	49.2% (99)	46.4% (98)	48.1%

The table 5 above reports on data regarding the extent at which the four district hospitals retain the best people (employees) to deliver service quality to their clients or patients. On average, 47.8% of the responses indicated YES as against 50.7% saying NO. Regarding the main activities embarked on by the health facilities to get all their best people (employees) retained, it is reported that, on average, 45.9% of the responses indicated agreement to inclusion of employees in the hospitals' vision statement; 47.8% indicated agreement to treating of employees as customers and lastly, 48.1% indicated agreement to measure and reward strong service performers.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

### ***Hiring the right people (employees) by the hospitals***

It can be concluded that majority of the respondents agreed that all the four hospitals believe in the philosophy of hiring the best people or employees to deliver quality health care to clients or patients. There are various activities embarked on by the four hospitals if it comes to their quests of hiring the right people (employees) by the hospitals. These include competing for the best people; hiring for service competencies and inclination; and being the preferred employer. The statistical figures attached to these activities as investigated items according to the researchers do not appear encouraging in terms of percentages and average percentages. All these hospitals do not embark on direct recruitment. In the case of the three Government hospitals such as Konongo, Ejisu, and Bekwai, employees are recruited by the Ministry of Health that is governmental level and posted to these district hospitals. So the issue of competing for the best employees; hiring for service competencies and inclination and being the preferred employers cannot be said to be high extent part of the hiring activities of the three case study government hospitals. The same thing applies to the St. Patrick's hospital (that is the fourth hospital) which is also a member of Christian Hospitals Association of Ghana (CHAG), which is responsible for the eighty percent of the recruitments of its members hospitals' employees. There is clear indication that these responses gathered from the field in line with exiting studies (e.g. Lin and Kleiner, 2004; Decenzo and Rovvins, 2002; Quek, 2005; Denisi and Friffi, 2005; Wilson et al. 2008).

Apart from the above activities used to design the questionnaire as investigated items, the respondents also made mention that the following activities can be embarked on by the hospitals to constitute their recruiting and hiring of best people or employees to deliver quality health care. They include advertising vacant positions in the press for suitable applicants given the chance to turn up for competitive interviews conducted by level headed panel who can ask both necessary general questions and job related questions. Other employees seemed best materials can be poached from competing hospitals.

### ***Developing people (employees) to deliver service quality***

Majority of the participants interacted with on the field do not agreed to the fact the these hospitals put in place steps to have employees developed in terms of their technical and inter-personal skills which are vital for their work as health employees. It was gathered that majority of employees who want to grow and develop in their career as health workers

sometimes engage in self financing regarding the cost of training and developing themselves through further educations, training seminars and conferences. However, there are others who also believe that the hospitals in the lower extent engage in the training of the employees for interactive and interactive skills, empowerment, and promote teams. This means that the line of responses from the participants do not conform to the position of extant studies (e.g. McNamara, 2008; Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright, 2000; Bettencourt and Gwinner, 1996; Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, and Tripoli, 1997; Grönroos, 2000; Zeithaml et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2008 Bowen and Lawer, 1992, Khan, 1997; Boshoff and Janine, 2000; Tjosvold, Moy, and Sasaki, 1999; Macaulay and Cook, 1995). The respondents willingly provided the following as what the management of the hospitals can put in place to constitute developing people to deliver service quality: Providing listening ears for employees – open door policy, established enabling working environment, and organising on – the - job – training schemes.

### ***Provide the needed support systems to the people or employees***

Majority of the respondents disagreed to the fact that the hospitals provide the needed support systems in the form of measuring internal service quality; provision of supportive technology and equipment; and develop service-oriented internal processes. It was found out from the respondents on the field that all the departments making up the entire hospitals as health institutions must work together as integrated form for the purpose of achieving and exceeding organizational goals, missions and visions. This trend of conclusions made so far can be said to be incongruent with previous studies (e.g. Paravantis, 2009; Kang et al. 2002; Wilson et al., 2008; Grönroos, 2000). The participants provided the following as some of the activities that can be embarked on by management of the four hospitals to constitute needed support systems: provision of improved and quality medical logistics and equipment, and conducive working environment.

### ***Retain the best people (employees) to deliver service quality***

The hospitals face the herculean challenge of retaining specific people (employees) termed as best for quite a long time to deliver quality health care to their clients or patients. These specific employees include specialist doctors, house officers (doctors), and nurses. The fact of the matter is, right after school, most of the medical staffs like the doctors, and nurses accept postings into the district hospitals for short –time field training which they have been using to ply their trade in the hospitals located in the big cities. The specialist doctors do not want to work full time and on contract basis. Majority of them have been failing to do contract extension due to discouraging service conditions. On the contrary, other respondents agreed that the following activities (include employees to vision of the hospitals; treating of employees as customers; measure and reward strong performers) are embarked on by the hospitals to retain some of their best people or employees to deliver quality health care to the clients or patients. This contrary line of conclusion can be said to conform with previous studies (e.g. Wilson et al., 2008; Spetz and Butler, 2008; Zerbe, Dobni and Harel, 1998; Zeithaml et al., 2006; Lytle and Timmerman, 2006).

It was gathered from the respondents that apart from what were provided on the questionnaire, employees can also be retained through the ability of the hospitals management caring for their needs and wants in the form of avoiding the situations where an employee will work for almost two years without been paid of his or her salary; delayed promotion, non -payment and delay in the payment of arrears after promotion, non-payment of risk and rent allowances. Others include lack of improved logistics and equipment to work with to facilitate ease of service to clients. Other employees are of the view that they want to be treated as the one of the most important stakeholders so far as the existence of the hospitals is concerned. This is because, whatever strategy these hospitals have are duly implemented through these able-bodied employees.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY FORMULATION**

From a managerial point of view the following recommendations are brought to the fore of the management of the four district hospitals studied. These recommendations are made base on the analyses done on the extent at which the four district hospitals have being adopting the “Human Resources Strategies Wheel” adopted by Wilson et al, (2008) to help hire the right people to deliver quality health care to patients.

First and foremost, on the issue of hiring the right people or employees; management should duly define or specify job for the prospective and existing employees– since it will enable them to collect the right information about the duties and

responsibilities, necessary skills, outcomes, and work environment of the facilities. The HR department should pre – screen the applicants so that it will save time during the selection process. There should be existence of a policy document in other words a blueprint that will serve as directive for the four hospitals. Part of this directive should include strategy planning for recruiting prospective employees which is considered as vital.

Similarly, the selection and recruitment committees of the hospitals should create check list – which will help to systematise their processes of hiring. Specifically, it will help match the expected attributes or traits expected by the selection and recruitment committee with the ones inherent in the prospective employee. It will help to keep track of recruiting efforts and communicate progress to interested employees and the hiring authority. This is capable of helping the hospital to access the right employees needed to deliver quality health-care in the hospitals.

Additionally, the recruitment committees should endeavour to diligently scan through the credentials of applicants, write their names in order of priority to help with the short listing for the interview. Necessary checks should be done in to background of prospective employees – to help track whether past or recent work histories are effective and can contribute to success of the hospitals.

Furthermore, on the issue of developing people to deliver service quality; management should provide listening ears for employees – thus open door policy should work. The hospitals should organise Fun parties or events such as health walk, Clean-up exercises, annual dinner dance and awards nights. Such occasions can be used to reward deserving employees. This will help create desired expectations and motivations for employees in general and that particular positive efforts put up can lead to outcomes or rewards that he/she values. Others include organising on – the - job – training (in service training, further education, sponsored seminars). This will give trainees with practical experience on jobs to be entrusted to their care. Management must ensure that the staffs are part of the success story of the hospitals. Management should share with employees past and current achievements and laurels must surely go to the staffs after a remarkable feat has been performed by the hospital.

In the main, the following steps can be put in place to add to the availability of support systems in the hospitals:

There should be the provision of improved and quality medical logistics. It was gathered from some of the respondents that key logistics such as Thermometers, Sphygmomanometers, and Stethoscopes are inadequately supplied in terms of quality, hence the existing ones not of quality type keep on breaking down regularly thereby putting pressure on the few ones left. Again, provision of conducive working environment (office space, lockers) is necessary. Consulting room spaces are so small that examination tables cannot be fitted in. In some of the hospitals, consulting rooms are without washrooms. There has been reported cases of regular shortage of key drugs at the various emergency centers e.g. adrenaline, atropine

Also, regarding the issue of how to retain employees to deliver service quality, the following recommendations are essential: Open door policy should work in the hospitals. Specifically, comments that enter into suggestion boxes should be attended to and the appropriate responses are provided so that management will be considered as the listening type. Management should empower the staff to make good use of their own discretion to contribute to strategies development of the hospitals.

Lastly, premium should be placed on establishing trust between management and staff. The objective will be to build confidence and reassurance. This can be achieved through ensuring that promises made to employees are kept (in the form of putting those due for promotion on to the right scale; avoiding long defer- payment of allowances, wages, honorarium, provision of other work incentives), and reply swiftly to queries, problems and complaints. Management should avoid divide and rule tactics that consciously or subconsciously exist of being capable of breeding nepotism and favoritism that work against effective team spirit that is vital for productivity. Staffs should be properly remunerated in the form of performing effectively and productively on the jobs assigned to them in terms of paying them the right wage, allowance, honorarium etc.

## **LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Academic study of this nature like any other scientific study cannot be completely carried out without the study being prone to limitations. The current study is prone to the following limitations. The first limitation associated with the current study is that it was conducted in one industry (health sector), and in a specific part or region of a country, that is Ashanti Region in Ghana. So the authors advise that the findings cannot be generalised to other service sectors and different geographical areas. Therefore, the study needs to be replicated in other industry settings such as, airline, hospitality (hotel and restaurants), automobile, education, and banking or across industries and other different countries before conclusions can be completely generalised. A second limitation refers to the type or the sample strategy used in this study. This study used purposive or judgmental and convenience as non- probability sampling methods consisting of one thousand selected medical and non-medical staffs (250 from each hospital). Future studies can overcome this

limitation by maintaining the same sample or larger but randomly-selected, and which may provide a more comprehensive result.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors express their sincere thanks to all the management and staff of the four hospitals who volunteered to provide the needed information to help carry out this study.

## REFERENCES

- Benbassat J and Taragin M (1998). "What is adequate health care and how can quality of care be improved?", *International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance* 11 (2): 58 - 64
- Bettencourt LA and Gwinner K (1996). "Customisation of the service experience: the role of the frontline employee", *International Journal of Service Industry Management*. 7 (2): 14
- Brook RH., McGlynn EA and Cleary PD (1996). "Quality of care. Part 2 – measuring quality of care", *New Engl J Med* (335), 966-70.
- Bryman A (2006). "Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Research: How Is It Done?" *Qualitative Inquiry* 6(1): 97-113
- Boshoff Cand Janine A (2000). "The Influence of Selected Antecedents on Frontline Staff's Perceptions of Service Recovery Performance", *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 11(1), 63-90
- Bowen DE and Lawler III EE (1992). The Empowerment of Service Workers: What, Why, How, and When. *Sloan Management Review*, p. 31-39.
- Chen D and Yu M (2009). The Importance of People on Delivering Service Quality: A study in Svenska
- Chi CG and Gurosoy D (2009). Employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and financial performance: An empirical examination. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28(245-253).
- Conant G and Kleiner BH (1998). "Human resource management in the health#care industry", *Health Manpower Management*, 24(3): 114 – 118
- Creswell J., Fetters M and Ivankova N (2004). Designing a mixed Methods Study In Primary Care. *Annals of Family Medicine* (2)7-12
- Decenzo DA and Robbins SP (2002). "Human resource management", New York: John Wiley
- Donabedian A (1998). "The quality of care: how can it be managed?", *JAMA*, (260), 1743-8.
- Elarabi HM and Johari F (2014). The Impact of Human Resources Management on Healthcare Quality. *Asian Journal of Management Sciences and Education* 3(1): 120-129
- Handelsbanken of Gävle. (Master's thesis). Available from University of Gävle. Department of Business Administration Dissertations and Theses database.
- Irfan SM., Mohsin M and Yousaf I (2009). Achieving Service Quality Through its Valuable Human Resources: An Empirical Study of Banking Sector of Pakistan *World Applied Sciences Journal* 7 (10): 1222-1230.
- Kassirer JP (1993). "The quality of care and the quality of measuring it", *N Engl J Med*, (329), 1263-1264.
- Kassirer JP (1994). "Incorporating patients' preferences into medical decisions", *N Engl J Med*, (330) 1895-6.
- Khan S (1997). The Key to Being a Leader Company: Empowerment. *Journal of Quality and Participation*, 20(1): 44-50.
- McDaniel C and Gates R (2008). Marketing research essentials. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons
- Macaulay S. and Cook S. (1995). "Practical teamwork for customer service", *Team Performance Management An International Journal*, 1 (3): 35-41
- McNamara C (2008). *Employee Training and Development: Reasons and Benefits*. New York: Authenticity Consulting, LLC. [<http://www.managementhelp.org/index.html>], ( Accessed 16/03/2009).
- Mohr LA and Bitner MJ (1995). "Process factors in service delivery: what employee effort means to customers", in Swartz, T.A., Bowen, D.E. and Brown, S.W.(EDs), *Advances in Services Marketing and Management*, Vol.4, JAI Press, Greenwich, CT.
- Noe RA., Hollenbeck JR., Gerhart B and Wright P (2000). *Human Resource Management: Gaining Competitive Advantage*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Irwin/McGraw Hill.
- Ofori – Okyere I and Kumah SP (2014). An Investigation Of SERVQUAL Dimensions In The Delivery Of Satisfied Services To Customers In The Domestic Airlines Industry In Ghana *International Journal of Management and Sustainability*, 2014, 3(1): 279-294
- Papasolomou I and Vrontis D (2006). "Using internal marketing to ignite the corporate brand: The case of the UK retail bank industry", *Journal of Brand Management*, 14 (12): 177-195
- Parasuraman A., Zeithaml V and Berry L (1988). SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Consumer

- Perceptions of Service Quality. *Journal of Retailing*. Vol. 64, No. 1, spring 1988. 1-29.
- Schneider B., White S and Paul M (1998). Linking service climate and customer perceptions of service quality: test of a causal model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 83(2): 150-63.
- Siddiqui J and Kleiner BH (1998). "Human resource management in the health care industry", *Health Manpower Management*, 24 (4):143 – 147
- Spetz E and Butler L (2008). "*The influence of People: the service marketing benefits of training*", (Master's thesis). Available from Handelshögskolan vid Umeå universitet, Department of Business Administration Dissertations and Theses database.
- Tjosvold D., Moy J and Sasaki (1999). "*Co-operative teamwork for service quality in East Asia*", *Managing Service Quality*, 9 (3): 209–216
- Tsui AS., Pearce LJ., Porter WL and Tripoli MA (1997). "*Alternative Approaches to the Employee-Organization Relationship: Does Investment in Employee Pay Off*", *Academy of Management Journal*, 40(5):1089-1121
- Vandenberghe C., Bentein K., Michon R., Chebat JC., Tremblay M and Fils JF (2007). An examination of the role of perceived support and employee commitment in employee- customer encounters. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(4): 1177–1187.
- Wilson A., Zeithaml VA., Bitner MJ and Gremler DD. (2008). "*Services marketing: integrating customer focus across the firm*", published by McGraw-Hill Education, 1st European Ed.
- World Health Organization: *World Health Report 2000. Health Systems: Improving Performance*. Geneva 2000 [[http://www.who.int.proxy.lib.uwo.ca:2048/whr/2000/en/whr00\\_ch4\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int.proxy.lib.uwo.ca:2048/whr/2000/en/whr00_ch4_en.pdf)].
- Yin RS (2003). Application of case study research. Sage Publications.
- Ye X and Liang Z (2010). *The Employees' Roles on Service Delivery: Case study on Haibin Hotel and Westin Hotel in China* (Bachelor's thesis) Available from University of Gavle. Department of Business Administration Dissertations and Theses database.
- Zeithaml V and Bitner MJ (2000). *Service Marketing: integrating Customer Focus across the Firm*, 2nd ed., Irwin McGraw – Hill
- Zerbe WJ., Dobni D and Harel GH (1998). "*Promoting Employee Service Behaviour: The role of perceptions of human resource management practices and service culture*", *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences* 15(2): 165-179

**QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE**

**SECTION A: Hiring the right person**

- (1). If it comes to delivering quality health to clients or patients, does this health facility believe in the need to hire the right people for the job? YES NO
- (2). If answered YES in question one above which of these can comprise of the various activities the health facility embarked on to hire the right people(employees) to deliver quality health care to its clients/ patients?
  - (a). Compete for the best people
  - (b). Hire for service competencies and service inclination
  - (c). Be the preferred employer
  - (d). If others, please specify.....

**SECTION B: Develop people to deliver service quality**

- (3). Does the facility develop/ its people to deliver service quality? YES/ NO
- (4). If answered YES in question three above which of these can comprise of the various activities the health facility embarked on to constituting developing of its right people(employees) to deliver quality health care to its clients/ patients?
  - (a). Train for technical and interactive skills
  - (b). *Empowerment*
  - (c). *Promote team*
  - (d). If others, please specify.....

**SECTION C: Provide needed support systems**

- (5). Do you accept the fact that this health facility have in place support systems if it comes to equipping its right employees or people to deliver quality health care to clients? YES NO
- (6). If answered Yes to question five above, which of these do you agree as constituting the systems put in place to support the health facility's quest of equipping its right employees to deliver quality health care to clients or patients.
  - (a). Measure internal service quality
  - (b). Provide supportive technology and equipment
  - (c). Develop service-oriented internal processes
  - (d). If others, please specify.....

**SECTION D: Retain the best people**

- (7). Can this health facility be described as been able to retain best people to deliver quality health care to its clients or patients? YES NO
- (8). If you answered YES in question seven above, which of these do you think as constituting activities embarked on by the health facility to get all its best people or employees retained?
  - (a). Include employees in the company's vision
  - (b). Treat employees as customers
  - (c). Measure and reward strong service performers
  - (d). If others, please specify.....