

## ASTUDY ON EDUCATING HEALTH SECTOR EMPLOYEES OF JAPANESE FIVE Ss CONCEPT (A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF BATTICALOA TEACHING HOSPITAL)

R. Pathmaranjan<sup>1</sup>

Productivity improvement is one of the important challenges faced by almost all organizations today. Particularly service sector organizations which involve high direct customer contact should strive for constant productivity improvement in order to provide efficient services to customers. Japanese 5Ss concept has been proved as a good strategy for improving productivity. Five words in Japanese language such as Seiri, Seiton, Seiso, Seiketsu and Shitsuke were coined as 5Ss by joining the first letter of 'S' of each word, provide a useful strategy for maintaining organizational productivity and quality of work life of employees at no cost at all. Good house keeping and factory / office maintenance is the key focus of the concept. The concept is being currently applied by many state as well as private sector organizations in Sri Lanka. However, there are many barriers to effective implementation of 5Ss concept in state sector organizations although the importance of the concept has been immensely realized throughout the entire state sector. The barriers are identified as originating from a variety of sources.

This study focuses in exploring the barriers to effective implementation of 5Ss concept for productivity improvement from the view point of employees. A research model was formed by incorporating the variables contained in the 5Ss concept. Five variables such as Appropriateness to state service, Improving efficiency, Reducing unnecessary delay, Psychological motivation, and Reducing internal conflicts were conceptualized as the factors on which employees feel importance about the 5Ss concept. Similarly, five variables such as Cultural background, Rules and regulations, Leadership, Working conditions, and Attitudes were conceptualized as the factors which employees feel as barriers to effective implementation. Teaching hospital of Batticaloa has been selected for the study. Analyses were carried out through questionnaires administered among various categories of employees attached to the hospital. Observations and direct conversations were also followed where necessary to enrich data collection process further. Qualitative research approach was adopted for analyzing the research issue in question.

Findings reveal that the majority of employees are in opinion that the 5Ss concept as an important tool for productivity improvement. They attached high values to such factors in the 'importance scale' as improving efficiency, reducing unnecessary delay and causing psychological motivation. But, at the same time, the similar proportion of employees expressed their grave concerns over the barriers to effective implementation of the concept. Leadership and working conditions were the major obstacles which cause difficulties in implementing 5Ss concept effective from the point of view of employees. On the contrary, top level management emphasizes 'attitude' was the main barrier. Cultural values and norms also play vital role in inhibiting attitude change as witnessed by findings.

Analyses further reveal that 'bureaucracy' of the government operational procedures causes problems in both sides. However, the hospital is on the right track of taking up the exercise as the first step for Total Quality Management (TQM). The study, after taking into account of designing a proper mechanism at all sub-systems level of the 5Ss concept, proposes some strategies for the effective implementation of the concept in the surveyed institution. Implications for other service organizations were also addressed by the research.

**Key words:** Productivity, Service Quality, Health Service, Japanese-style Management, Five Ss Concept, Bureaucracy, Total Quality Management.

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<sup>1</sup>Department of Management, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, Oluvil-32360, Sri Lanka