

# How to improve organizational commitment among young employees by means of HRM.

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**Abstract.**

The supermarket industry has to cope with high turnover rates of young employees. High turnover rates are costly and affect customer satisfaction. Organizational commitment can increase the commitment of employees to the company and lower turnover rates. In this empirical study the influence of HC-HRM practices on the level of affective commitment of employees between 15 and 24 years old are investigated. 83 questionnaires were filled in by the workforce of 2 Albert Heijn supermarkets. Results show that the study population attach value to all of the HC-HRM practices, except for job security. Regression analyses shows that direct influence of HC-HRM practices on the study population are noticeable for participative decision making, team work and training and development of employees. These results show that these HC-HRM practices can help supermarket owners to increase the organizational commitment and help reduce the turnover rate of young employees.

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High Commitment Human Resource Management

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## General Introduction

The focus of this research lies on the supermarket sector of the Netherlands. The supermarket sector in the Netherlands employs a remarkable high percentage of young employees. The workforce of one of the main market leaders consists for 73.6% of employees who are younger than 25 years old ([www.jumborapportage.nl](http://www.jumborapportage.nl)). Often these employees are (school) students, further mentioned as young employees, performing a side job in their spare time. It is remarkable that this sector deals with a yearly employee turnover rate of 65% ([www.adfobase.nl](http://www.adfobase.nl)). High turnover rates are costly and affect customer satisfaction ([www.sanaccent.nl](http://www.sanaccent.nl)). Previous studies show that organizational commitment lowers employee turnover (Mowday; Porter; & Steers, 2013). This makes organizational commitment an interesting topic for the supermarket sector, since it can reduce costs associated with turnover. Given the high turnover rates and the costs associated with it, it's undeniable that the young employees, who are a large percentage of the workforce, are an important group of employees to get committed to the organization. Additional benefits of organizational commitment include increase of job performance (Petty; McGee; & Cavender 1984) and motivation (Angle & Perry, 1981), and decrease of absenteeism (Somers, 1995) and tardiness (Angle & Perry, 1981).

In order to decrease turnover rates and benefit from other effects of organizational commitment this research will focus on the question: 'How to improve organizational commitment among young employees?'. Earlier research proved the effectiveness of the use of High Commitment Human Resource Management, which is designed to improve organizational commitment by implementing the practices *participatory decision-making, training and development, job security, teamwork, rewards, and communication and information sharing*. This research will focus on the influence of these practices on the level of organizational commitment of young employees in the supermarket sector.

To answer the main research question the concept of organizational commitment will be clarified. Furthermore the different practices of High Commitment Human Resource Management will be described and elaborated on how they can influence the level of organizational commitment. From the literature study a hypothesis will be formed. Data needed to accept or reject the hypothesis will be obtained from a questionnaire. A regression analysis must provide results to answer to the research question. The goal of this study is to provide an advice for organizations to make their young employees more committed.

## Literature

### Organizational Commitment.

Commitment of employees towards an organization is investigated for several decades. One of the first definitions of organizational commitment was provided by Porter (1974). He stated that organizational commitment can be characterized by at least three factors: (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, (c) a definite desire to maintain organizational membership (Porter et al., 1974). Later on, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) tried to establish one general model. Their work is primarily based on the Three-Component model of Meyer and Allen and it reflects three general themes: Affective attachment to the organization, perceived costs associated with leaving the organization, and obligation to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). They labelled these concepts as: Affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. These concepts are the bases of the Three-Component Framework of Meyer and Herscovitch. Their definition of the concepts is the following:

**Affective commitment;** *Refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. With affective commitment employees continue employment with the organization because they want to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1991).*

**Continuance commitment:** *Employees with a strong level of continuance commitment are primarily concerned about the costs associated with leaving the organization. These employees feel committed to stay with the organization, because they need to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1991).*

**Normative commitment;** *Reflects the feeling of obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).*

This research focuses on affective commitment, this will be used as a measure of organizational commitment among young employees. The aim of this study is to find a way to increase the willingness, and thus affective commitment, of a young employee to remain in an organization. Nevertheless, the level of continuance and normative commitment will be measured as well, since this can provide information about other reasons for young employees to remain in an organization. Since previous literature did not provide answers about the level of commitment among young employees, it is hard to make assumptions. However, based on the fact that supermarkets have high employee turnover rates in combination with a workforce containing a high percentage of young employees, the expectation is that they do not feel a strong sense of commitment.

### High Commitment Human Resource Management

Assuming that this assumption is true, it is in favour of the organization to find a way to increase organizational commitment among young employees. In order to increase organizational commitment in general, several scientists became interested in human resource management (HRM). HRM is about managing the firms human resources in order to raise a type of employee behaviour that is essential to the success of their competitive strategy (Schuler, 1987; Dowling and Schuler, 1990). When HRM is used in order to improve organizational commitment it is called high commitment human resource management, further mentioned as HC-HRM. The practices of HC-HRM aim to increase the efficiency of the organization by creating conditions where employees become highly involved. Building their identification with organizational goals and values make the employees work hard to

accomplish the organization's goals (Whitener, 2001). In this way it is assumed that they will perform consistently at a high level, as well as show initiative and a willingness to put themselves out for the organization (Wood and de Menezes, 1998). It has been repetitively proven that the HC-HRM practices have positive influence on employees' affective commitment towards the organization (Rucinski, 2013). The six HC-HRM practices that are used in this research are: **1.** Participatory decision making, **2.** Training and development, **3.** Rewards, **4.** Communication/information sharing, **5.** Team working, and **6.** Job security (Zeidan 2006). Work of Zeidan (2006) with some additions made by Rucinski (2013) are used to explain the different practices and why these practices increase the level of commitment.

### **Practice 1. Participatory Decision making**

*Participatory decision making* is a process in which influence is shared between superiors and their subordinates. It is also known as joint decision making (Zeidan, 2006). An explanation for the influence on commitment is that *participatory decision making* increases the feeling of responsibility (Salancik, 1977). Providing employees with greater opportunities for decision latitude, challenges, responsibility as well as self-determination, is expected to result in employees who are more likely to reciprocate with higher levels of commitment to their organizations (Wayne, Liden, & Sparrowe, 2000).

### **Practice 2. Training and development**

Training of the employees causes an improvement of the employees skills and therefore their performances. It also improves employees' overall perception of organizational environment and strengthen internal bonds (Rucinski, 2013). The strengthened internal bonds are caused by the fact that the organization made an investment by *training and development* in as well in current as future employee performance (Zeidan, 2006). The strengthened internal bonds causes a desire to remain in the organisation. Also, provision of *training and development* implies a high level of concern for employees which in turn increases identification with their organization (Zeidan, 2006). According to Meyer and Allen (1991), affective commitment refers to identification with the organization. So an increased level of identification will result in an increase in affective commitment.

### **Practice 3. Rewards**

Fair payments for the employees have impact on their performance as well as their willingness to remain in the organization (Rucinski, 2013). Employees tend to remain with their organization when they feel their capabilities, efforts and performance contributions are recognised and appreciated (Zeidan, 2006). Guest and Conway (1997) found evidence that employees had a preference for working in organisations that attempted to link payment to performance. An important note is that the supermarkets in this case do not reward their employees financially, so there exist no performance-reward criterion ([www.fnv.nl](http://www.fnv.nl)).

### **Practice 4. Communication/information sharing**

Effective communication with employees increases their feelings of being valued by the organization (Zeidan, 2006). According to Pfeffer (1998), open communication about financial performance, strategy and operational measures, convey a symbolic message to employees that they are trusted. Further, earlier research proved that the communication climate of an organization influences the level of affective commitment. The key to a good communication climate is horizontal information flow (Crino and White, 1981) openness, vertical information flow, and reliability of information (Dennis, 1974). Van den Hooff & de Ridder (2004) found that a constructive communication climate positively influences the level of affective commitment.

### **Practice 5. Team working**

Teams are often portrayed as having the capacity to empower employees and make a major contribution to labour productivity. Team work has positive influence on the level of satisfaction among co-workers, which is strongly correlated with commitment of employees. (Rucinski, 2013). Therefore teamwork seems to be an important factor for the commitment level of employees towards the organization.

### **Practice 6. Job security**

Job security is an important practice of HRM since it is not realistic to ask employees to offer their ideas, hard work and commitment without the expectation of job security (Zeidan, 2006). Pfeffer (1998) suggests that job insecurity influences employees attitudes and behaviour towards the organization, and will have consequences to the level of commitment. Studies of Armstrong-Stassen (1993), McFarlane Shore (1991) and Yousef (1998) support this suggestion with proving a strong negative relationship between job insecurity and organizational commitment (Sverke, Hellgren and Naswall, 2002). Jacobsen (2000) already showed that those employed on short-term contracts are less normatively committed than those with long-term arrangements. This finding is supported by Feather and Rauter (2004). The contracts are in this case mainly temporary and last varying from 6 months to 36 months. After this period it is a possibility that a permanent contract is offered to the employee ([www.fnv.nl](http://www.fnv.nl)).

Since HC-HRM practices are designed to improve affective commitment, the aim of this research is to see if this also holds when an organization employs young employees in particular. The previous theory has proven the effectiveness of HC-HRM. However, the six practices of HC-HRM of the previous research are not used on young employees in particular. It is possible that young employees will not attach any value to the practices of HC-HRM. Therefore it is useful to gain some knowledge about work preferences of young employees. Gamberale (1995) carried out a research among 2349 high school students to investigate their preferences at work. He established a list of job characteristics ranked from important to less important. Nine of the characteristics can be categorized into one of the six HC-HRM practices, as shown in figure 1. The characteristics are ranked as follows; **1.** Friendly workmates; **2.** Work is recognised and appreciated; **3.** Develop competence; **4.** Good pay; **5.** Be well informed; **6.** A secure job; **7.** Opportunities for advancement; **8.** Good relationship with immediate supervisor; **9.** Independent work.

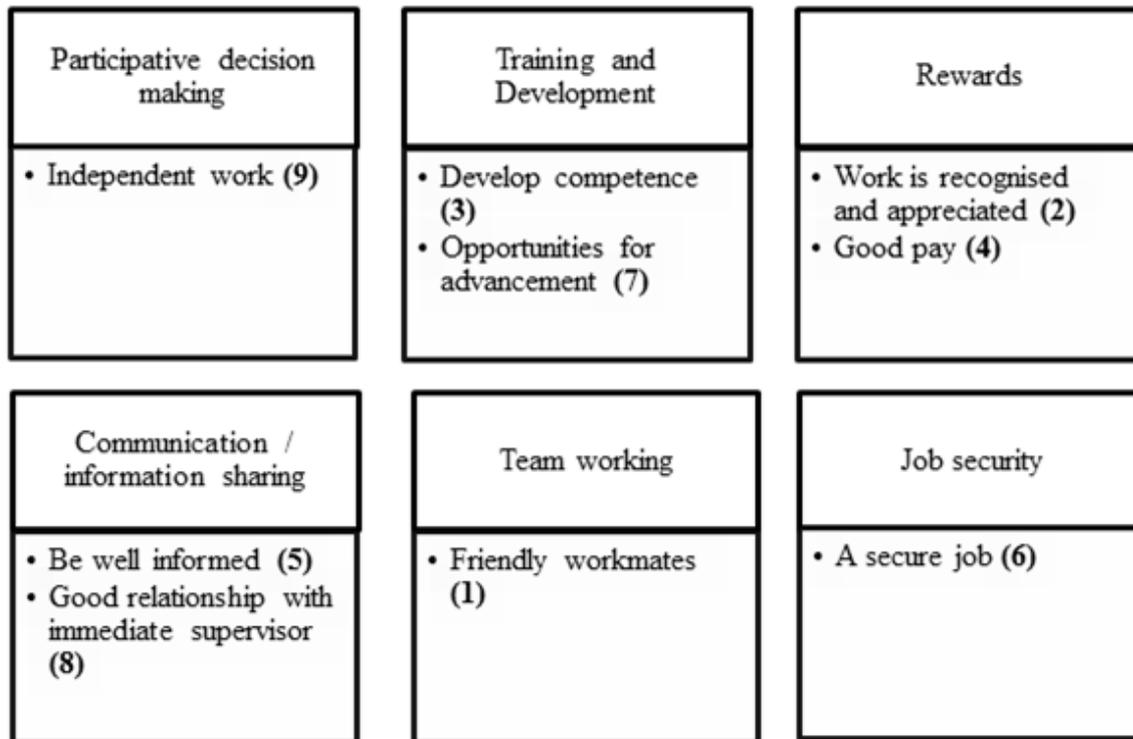


Figure 1. Work characteristics categorized by HC-HRM practices

This suggests that the young employees will attach value to the practices. It is possible that there exists some kind of hierarchy among the six practices. According to the work of Gamberale (1995), it is expected that the young employees find ‘*Team working*’ the most important practice of HC-HRM and ‘*Participatory decision making*’ the least important practice. So in order to provide a good advice, it will be investigated if the practices of HC-HRM are useful to increase the level of affective commitment and which of the practices have the strongest influence. Therefore the following hypothesis is formed;

*Hypothesis 1: The High Commitment Human Resource Management practices (a) participatory decision making, (b) training and development, (c) rewards, (d) communication / information sharing, (e) team working and (f) job security have a positive influence on affective commitment among young employees.*

As mentioned before, to see whether affective commitment is the most important factor of organizational commitment to remain in an organization, the importance of the three types of organizational commitment will be investigated as well.

## Methodology

To investigate the research question if the level of affective commitment can be increased by the use of HC-HRM practices and to test the constructed hypothesis we chose to conduct an empirical study. There is made use of a questionnaire.

### Sample

The focus of the study are workers of two Albert Heijn supermarkets in the Netherlands, located in Alphen aan den Rijn and Ede. An ANOVA analysis showed there are no significant differences between the two supermarkets. The choice of the two selected supermarkets is mainly based on convenience reasons for the researcher. The questionnaire was answered 84 times, from which one was incomplete. Therefore this one was not taken into account.

The target group of the supermarkets are employees with an age between 15 and 24 years old. According to CBS this group perform a side job next to their school program. Most of them (two-thirds) work less than twelve hours a week ([www.cbs.nl](http://www.cbs.nl)). The sample exists of 66 women and 17 men. The major part of the employees are in the category 16 till 19 years old, as shown in figure 2. The remainder of them did not exceed the maximum age of 24. Figure 3 shows the degree programs in which the employees where enrolled at the time the questionnaire was taken. Since the respondents are Dutch students, the Dutch educational system was used. An explanation of the system is attached in appendix 5.

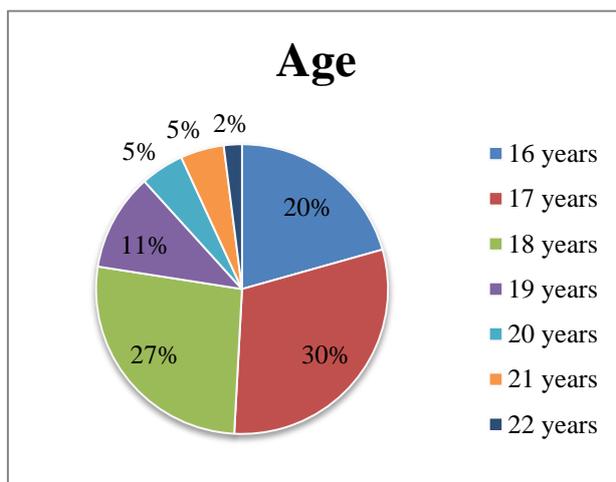


Figure 2. Age respondents

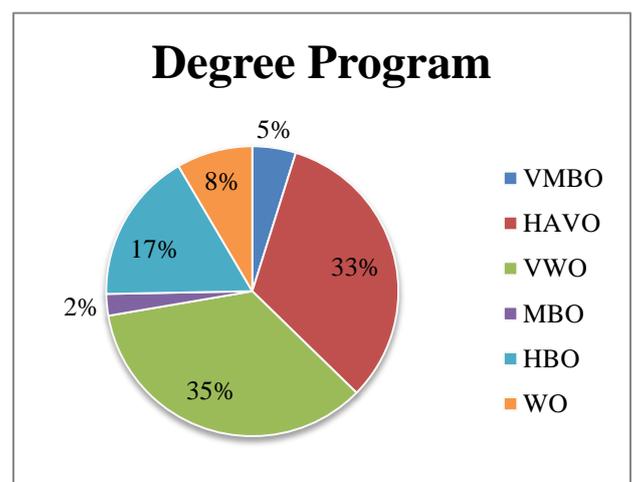


Figure 3. Degree program respondents

### Procedure

The questionnaire was provided to the target group on paper in the canteen of their workplace. In this way, the employees were able to fill in the questionnaire during work-hours. The reason behind this was to get a response as high as possible. It was made possible for the employees to respond anonymously.

### Construction of the questionnaire

The questionnaire (appendix 2) consist of a combination of questionnaires constructed by different researchers. The questionnaire contains questions from the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) by Porter et al. (1974), Jak and Evers (2010), Rucinski (2013), and Zeidan (2006).

Some of the questionnaires are originally constructed in English language, while the target group consist of native Dutch speakers. To avoid misinterpretation of the questionnaire it was translated into a Dutch version. To prevent mistranslations the help of a professional with a Master degree in English language was enabled.

### **Instruments, factor and reliability analysis.**

The questionnaire starts with an introduction page. This page contains information about the purpose of the questionnaire, about how to answer the questions and how much time it takes to complete the questionnaire. It also contains information about the anonymity of the respondents. This information is directly followed by some general questions about the age, the gender, and the work experience of the employee.

On the second page of the questionnaire 48 statements appear. The participants can reflect their feelings towards the statement on a scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree. The statements are divided into 10 categories, which will be elucidated in the following sections. They also include results of reliability analyses which allowed selecting items to be implemented in the final set of analyses, since it is possible that not every statement is useful to the research.

### **Organizational Commitment**

Items from Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), and revised by Jak and Evers (2010) into a Dutch translation which was distributed to the participants. The statements for the sections Affective and Continuance commitment are used as constructed by Meyer and Herscovitch. This is also the case for normative commitment, however the statement “I feel I’m kind of obliged to my parents to remain in the organization” was added by the researcher.

#### **Section 1. Affective Commitment**

The section ‘affective commitment’ contains five statements. A reliability analysis (appendix 2) gives a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.870, therefore all five questions will be taken into account for the final analysis. Factor analysis shows that all five statements rely on one factor. Together, this factor explained 66% of the variance of the five items.

	Component 1
Q1. I feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization	.894
Q2. I feel "emotionally attached" to this organization	.777
Q3. I feel like "part of the family" at my organization	.884
Q4. This organisation has a great deal of meaning for me	.843
Q5. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	.638

**Table 1. Factor analysis affective commitment**

#### **Section 2. Continuance Commitment**

The section continuance commitment contains four statements. A reliability analysis on this section shows (appendix 2) that the reliability overall has an alpha above 0.7, which is acceptable. However, without statement nine the reliability increases to 0.854 which is considerably higher. Therefore statement nine will be left out for further analysis. A factor analysis shows that statement six, seven and eight rely on one component. Together, this factor explained 77.5% of the variance of the three items.

	Component 1
Q6. It would be hard for me to leave the organization right now, even if I wanted to.	.701
Q7. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization	.962
Q8. If I quit know, it would be hard to find a comparable job.	.952

**Table 2. Factor analysis continuance commitment**

### **Section 3. Normative Commitment**

The section Normative commitment contains five statements. A reliability analysis (appendix 2) shows that the statements together are not an acceptable scale of normative commitment. The overall Cronbach's alpha is equal to -0.027, therefore it can be concluded that this scale is not reliable. A factor analysis shows that the scale exists of two components. Statement ten, eleven and fourteen together rely on one component and statement twelve and thirteen on the other. The reliability analysis show that a scale with statement ten, eleven and fourteen included scores a Cronbach's alpha of 0.229. The reliability of the scale increases to 0.709 when only statement ten and eleven are taken into account and therefore statement fourteen will be excluded from further analysis. The reliability of scale with statement twelve and thirteen together scores a Cronbach's alpha of 0.563, which is considerably lower. Therefore for further analysis the scale normative commitment will only consist of statement ten and eleven.

	Component 1	Component 2
Q10. I feel I'm kind of obliged to my current employer to remain in the organization.	.601	.651
Q11. It would feel inappropriate to resign now.	.347	.812
Q12. At this moment I wouldn't resign, because I owe the people at my work something.	.620	-.490
Q13. I owe a lot to this organization.	.784	-.118
Q14. I feel I'm kind of obliged to my parents to remain in the organization.	-.670	.412

**Table 3. Factor analysis normative commitment**

### **High Commitment Human Resource Management**

The previous sections of organizational commitment are followed by the six practices of HC HRM. These sections are added to measure at which level the organization makes use of the practices of HC-HRM according to the employees. The statements were provided by Zeidan (2006) and translated by Rusinski (2013). At the end of every section a question is added by the researcher to check the importance of the practices towards the employees (appendix 2).

### **Section 4. Participatory decision making**

In this section the first practice of HC-HRM is examined. For example, the employee is asked for his opinion about freedom in his working conditions and the authority to do his work. The reliability analysis (appendix 2) shows a Cronbach's alpha of 0.898, which is high. This means this scale is a reliable measure for this practice. Therefore all five statements will be

included for further analysis. A factor analysis supports this by showing just one component. Together, this factor explained 71.3% of the variance of the five items.

	Component 1
Q15. I have sufficient authority to fulfil my job responsibilities.	.662
Q16. I have enough input in deciding how to accomplish my work.	.903
Q17. I am encouraged to participate in decisions that affect me.	.883
Q18. I have enough freedom over how I do my job.	.856
Q19. I have enough authority to make decisions necessary to provide quality customer service.	.894

**Table 4. Factor analysis participatory decision making**

### **Section 5. Training and Development**

*Training and development* is the second practice of HC-HRM examined, containing statements as ‘I have the opportunity to grow within this organization’. The reliability analysis (appendix 2) gives a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.710, which is acceptable. Therefore all the statements will be included for further analysis. A factor analysis supports the reliability analysis by showing one component explaining 53.5% of the variance.

	Component 1
Q21. Training is regarded as a way to improve performance.	.633
Q22. I have the opportunity to expand the scope of my job.	.859
Q23. I have been well trained by this organisation for my job.	.603
Q24. I have the opportunity to improve my skills in this organization.	.798

**Table 5. Factor analysis training and development**

### **Section 6. Job security**

The section *job security* contains statements about the fear the employee has losing the job and the likelihood of actually losing the job. Reliability analysis (appendix 2) gives a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.883, which implies that the scale is reliable. The factor analysis shows just one component. Together, this factor explained 81.7% of the variance. All three statements are taken into account for further analysis.

	Component 1
Q26. I am worried about having to leave my job before I would like to	.944
Q27. There is a risk that I will have to leave my present job in the year to come	.846
Q28. I feel uneasy about losing my job in the near future	.919

**Table 6. Factor analysis job security**

### **Section 7. Team working**

*Team working* is the fifth practice of HC-HRM and is measured by five statements. The questions vary from ‘this organisation encourages people to work in teams’ to ‘teamwork exists in name only here’. Factor analysis shows (appendix 2) that all statements load on one component. Together this factor explained 72.5% of the variance of the five items. A

reliability analysis scores a Cronbach's alpha of 0.897, which is quite high. The scale seems reliable so all the statements are included for further analysis.

	Component 1
Q30. This organisation encourages people to work in teams	.878
Q31. Working in teams is considered very important in this organization	.779
Q32. Management organise work so that most people work in teams	.902
Q33. People here work individually rather than as members of teams	.855
Q34. Teamwork exists in name only here	.839

**Table 7. Factor analysis team working**

### **Section 8. Rewards**

The sixth practice of HC-HRM is *rewards*. Containing statements as 'I feel this organisation rewards employees who make an extra effort'. The reliability of this scale is very high, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.913 (appendix 2). Also a factor analysis shows that all the statements load on just one component. Together this factor explained 71.3% of the variance of the six items. Therefore all the statements are included for further analysis.

	Component 1
Q36. My performance evaluations within the past few years have been helpful to me in my professional development.	.847
Q37. There is a strong link between how well I perform my job and the likelihood of my receiving recognition and praise.	.906
Q38. There is a strong link between how well I perform my job and the likelihood of my receiving a raise in pay/salary.	.773
Q39. Generally, I feel this organisation rewards employees who make an extra effort	.827
Q40. I am satisfied with the amount of recognition I receive when I do a good job	.869
Q41. If I perform my job well, I am likely to be promoted	.838

**Table 8. Factor analysis rewards**

### **Section 9. Communication / Information Sharing**

The last practice is *communication and information sharing*. The statements vary from 'Organisation policies and procedures are clearly communicated to employees' to 'Management makes sufficient effort to get the opinions and feelings of people who work here'. The reliability of this scale is 0.711 and the factor analysis also shows one component (appendix 2). Together, this factor explained 47% of the variance of the five items. All the statements are taken into account for further analysis.

	Component 1
Q43. Organisation policies and procedures are clearly communicated to employees.	.511
Q44. Most of the time I receive sufficient notice of changes that	.671

affect my work group.	
Q45. Management takes time to explain to employees the reasoning behind critical decisions that are made.	.730
Q46. Management makes a sufficient effort to get the opinions and feelings of people who work here.	.747
Q47. Management tends to stay informed of employee needs.	.740
<b>Table 9. Factor analysis communication/ information sharing</b>	

## Results

### Descriptive statistics.

Table 12 contains the means and standard deviations for all variables, as well as the correlations between the variables. The mean of the scale affective commitment shows that the respondents have a low level of affective commitment. The mean scores 2,316 at a scale of 5 with a standard deviation of 0.6530. The mean of continuance commitment is even lower with a score of 1.9639 and a standard deviation of 0.83295. For normative commitment a mean of 2.2952 with a standard deviation of 0.59998 came out of the analysis. Overall the level of organizational commitment among young employees is below the scale average. Control variables age ( $r=.652$ ,  $p<.01$ ), education ( $r=.493$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and work experience ( $r=.694$ ,  $p<.01$ ) seem to be related with affective commitment. Suggesting that the older and more experienced the respondent, the higher the level of affective commitment. Continuance commitment was related to all the control variables, gender ( $r=-.275$ ,  $p<.05$ ), age ( $r=.802$ ,  $p<.01$ ), education ( $r=.748$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and work experience ( $r=.795$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Suggesting that male respondents have a lower level of continuance commitment than female respondents, and that the older and more experienced the respondent is, the higher the level of continuance commitment. The control variables did not relate to normative commitment. The control variables education and work experience relate with each other ( $r=.777$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and with age ( $r=.771$ ,  $p<.01$ ,  $r=.953$ ,  $p<.01$ ). This seems logical, the older the employee is, the further he is in his education programme and the more work experience he has.

The mean analysis of the importance of the practices according to the employees shows that the practices rewards is very important to them with a score of 4 out a scale of 5. Followed by *participatory decision making* (3.83), *training and development* (3.65), *teamwork* (3.19), *communication and information sharing* (3.05) and *job security* (2.57). This suggests that the respondents attach value to all the practices, except for *job security*.

Importance of practice	Mean	St. deviation
Rewards	4	.383
Participatory decision making	3.83	.559
Training and development	3.65	.723
Teamwork	3.19	.594
Communication	3.05	.516
Job security	2.57	.752

Table 10. Importance of HC-HRM practices

The mean analysis of the test variables shows the level of usage of the HC-HRM practices by the organization according to the respondents. The practice *training and development* scores a 3.3886 out a scale of five, followed by *participatory decision making* (3.0651), *teamwork* (2.9253), *communication* (2.8145), *rewards* (2.5803) and *job security* (2.4418). This suggests that the use of the practices is not very high, or it is not noticed by the respondents.

Use of practice	Mean	St. deviation
Rewards	2.5803	.64358
Participatory decision making	3.0651	.64928
Training and development	3.3886	.49733
Teamwork	2.9253	.63223
Communication	2.8145	.42344
Job security	2.4418	.80329

Table 11. Use of HC-HRM practices

The test variables all relate to affective commitment, this supports literature findings. The strongest relation appeared with *participatory decision making* ( $r=.685$ ,  $p<.01$ ), followed by *rewards* ( $r=.623$ ,  $p<.01$ ), *training and development* ( $r=.613$ ,  $p<.01$ ), *communication* ( $r=.583$ ,  $p<.01$ ), *teamwork* ( $r=.515$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and *job security* ( $r=-.440$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Indicating the higher the use of the practices, the higher the level of affective commitment. Surprisingly, all the test variables also relate to continuance commitment; *rewards* ( $r=.733$ ,  $p<.01$ ), *training and development* ( $r=.675$ ,  $p<.01$ ), *teamwork* ( $r=.663$ ,  $p<.01$ ), *participatory decision making* ( $r=.652$ ,  $p<.01$ ), *communication and information sharing* ( $r=.594$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and *job security* ( $r=-.460$ ,  $p<.01$ ). This suggests that the more use of the HC-HRM practices, the higher the level of continuance commitment. The test variables do not relate to normative commitment.

	Mean	St dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Affective	2.316	.6530	1												
2. Continuance	1.9639	.83295	.592**	1											
3. Normative	2.2952	.59998	.167	.091	1										
4. Participatory	3.0651	.64928	.685**	.652**	-.078	1									
5. Training	3.3886	.49733	.613**	.675**	.214	.621**	1								
6. Job security	2.4418	.80329	-.440**	-.460**	-.050	-.519**	.412**	1							
7. Teamwork	2.9253	.63223	.515**	.663**	.078	.570**	.491**	-.389**	1						
8. Rewards	2.5803	.64358	.623**	.733**	.206	.689**	.773**	-.503**	.605**	1					
9. Communication	2.8145	.42344	.583**	.594**	-.075	.660**	.494**	-.416**	.410**	.543**	1				
10. Gender <sup>a</sup>	.80	.406	-.002	-.275*	.001	-.041	-.114	.007	-.592**	-.092	-.025	1			
11. Age	17.73	1.482	.652**	.802**	.110	.773**	.753**	-.535**	.621**	.779**	.640**	-.112	1		
12. Education	2.19	1.401	.493**	.748**	.200	.646**	.675**	-.405**	.498**	.616**	.554**	-.166	.771**	1	
13. Experience	17.39	15.900	.694**	.795**	.176	.785**	.799**	-.587**	.591**	.825**	.672**	-.050	.953**	.777**	1

**Table 12. Mean, st. deviation and correlation analysis**

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

<sup>a</sup> 0 = male, 1 = female

### Regression analysis: testing the hypotheses.

To test the hypothesis “*The High Commitment Human Resource Management practices (a) participatory decision making, (b) training and development, (c) rewards, (d) communication / information sharing, (e) team working and (f) job security have a positive influence on affective commitment among young employees*”, a regression analysis was performed.

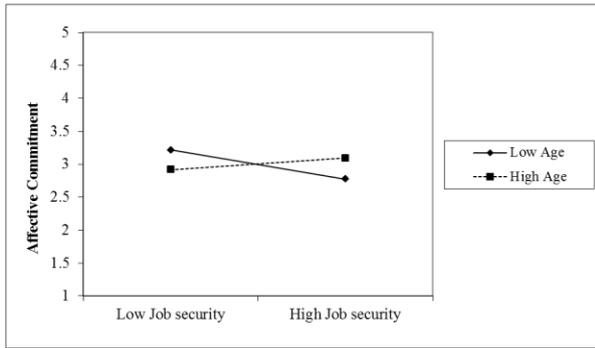
The regression analysis with the control variables showed that work experience influences the level of affective commitment ( $\beta=.826$ ,  $p<0.005$ ). This result disappears when the test variables are added to the analysis. It shows that gender influences the level of affective commitment; female employees seem to be more committed than their male colleagues ( $\beta=.194$ ,  $p<0.09$ ). The hypothesis is partly confirmed by the data, the regression analysis with the test variables shows that the practices *participatory decision making* ( $\beta=.257$ ,  $p<0.06$ ), *training and development* ( $\beta=.246$ ,  $p<0.08$ ), and *teamwork* ( $\beta=.310$ ,  $p<0.04$ ) increase the level of affective commitment.

Table 13. Regression analysis

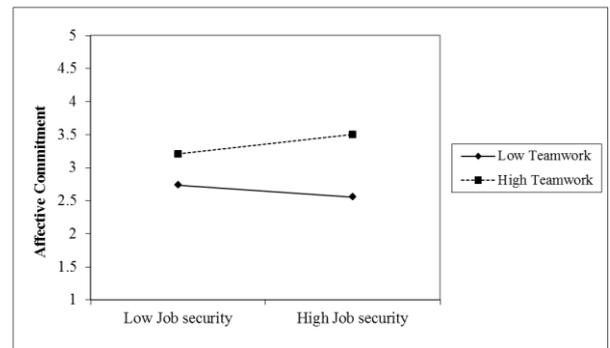
Variables	Affective Commitment		
	Model	1	2
Gender		.016**	.089*
Age		-.050**	.530
Education		-.109	.248
Work Experience		.826	.310
Participatory decision making			.060*
Training and development			.079*
Job security			.998
Teamwork			.035*
Rewards			.711
Communication			.122

\*\*= $p<.05$  \*= $p<.1$

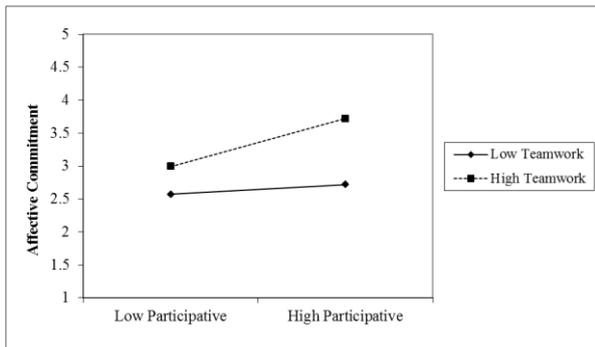
To check for interaction between the control and test variables an additional regression analysis was performed. This analysis showed that age is a moderator between *job security* and affective commitment. As shown in figure 4 at a younger age *job security* seems to have a negative influence at affective commitment. At a higher age, the results are vice versa ( $p<0.055$ ). Also *teamwork* is a moderator between *job security* and affective commitment. As shown in figure 5 the more use of working in teams, the higher the effect *job security* on the level of affective commitment has ( $p<0.06$ ). *Teamwork* is also a moderator between *participatory decision making* and affective commitment, as shown in figure 6 ( $p<0.07$ ). High use of *teamwork* increases the effect of *participatory decision making* on affective commitment.



**Figure 3. Job security moderated by age**



**Figure 5. Job security moderated by teamwork**



**Figure 6. Participatory decision making moderated by teamwork**

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This research tested the assumption that practices of HC-HRM have impact on the level of affective commitment among young employees. Prior research resulted with conclusions proving a positive influence of HC-HRM practices on affective commitment in general. However, these studies did not focus on young employees in particular.

The first assumption made in this research regards the level of affective commitment among young employees. Based on the high employee turnover rates in combination with a workforce consisting particularly of young employees, it was assumed young employees don't feel a strong sense of affective commitment, since they do not remain for long in the organization. The descriptive statistics of this research supports this assumption by showing that the level of affective commitment is below average. The same holds for continuance and normative commitment. In this paragraph possible explanations for the low level of affective commitment are given. The discussion includes comparison of the results regarding control variables, and the outcomes referring to the hypothesis. Finally, the hypothesis is verified with the overall results of this research.

### **Control variables.**

The control variables which were included in the research were gender, age, education and work experience. Gender did not correlate with the level of affective commitment. This is in line with results of various researchers who measured the influence of gender as correlate of affective commitment (Goswami et al., 2007; Meyer et al., 1993; Morrow & Wirth, 1989; Yousaf, 2010; Yousaf et al., 2011; Rucinski, 2013).

The control variable age was positively correlated with affective commitment. This means the older an employee is the feeling of affective commitment increases. The study of Yousaf (2011) and Rucinski (2013) also showed that age can show up as a correlate of affective commitment. However, there are studies that do not support this finding (Meyer, 2002).

Another control variable that appeared as a positive correlate of affective commitment is the education of the employee. The higher the level of education, the higher the level of affective commitment. However this result is significant, it is difficult to draw conclusions since it is questionable if the education scale is ranked properly. Since education correlates with control variable age, one could argue that the further the employee is in his educational program the higher the level of affective commitment.

The control variable work experience also correlates with affective commitment. This indicates that the longer an employee works for an organization, the higher the level of affective commitment becomes. Work experience also correlates with control variable age, which seems arguable, since older employees are likely to have more work experience than their younger colleagues.

### **The influence of High Commitment Human Resource Management on the level of affective commitment among young employees.**

The assumption that HC-HRM practices influences the level of affective commitment among young employees is partly confirmed by the data. The correlation analysis showed that all the six HC-HRM practices correlate with affective commitment. This indicates that the higher the use of the HC-HRM practices, the higher the level of affective commitment. The regression analysis partly confirmed this finding. It showed that *participatory decision making, training*

*and development*, and *teamwork* increase the level of affective commitment. Therefore hypothesis (a), (b) and (e) are confirmed by the data. This is supported by literature findings. However, it is noteworthy that all the employees were likely to be exposed to the same amount of these practices. So it's arguable that this is not the effect of the practices itself, but the perception of the young employees on this practices. Another side note is that the results could be vice versa. It is a possibility that more committed employees do participate more to decision making and trainings. More research is needed in order to draw conclusions based on this speculation.

The influence of the practices *job security*, *rewards*, and *communication and information sharing* could not significantly be proven by the data. So hypothesis (c), (d) and (f) are not confirmed by the data. However, it's noteworthy that age functions as a moderator between *job security* and affective commitment. Which means that at a higher age the practice *job security* influences the level of affective commitment. However, this research focuses on young employees and therefore *job security* won't be considered as an influencing factor.

Additionally, the data provided the importance of the six HC-HRM practices towards the young employees. The most important practice to them is *rewards*, followed by *participatory decision making*, *training and development*, *teamwork*, *communication and information sharing*, and *job security*. This result is slightly different from previous research (Gamberale, 1995). Remarkable is that, according to the data, the HC-HRM practice *rewards* does not influence the level of affective commitment. The use of this HC-HRM practice by the organization is low according to the young employees. It is possible that this is an misperception, which might affect the outcome of the study.

### **Conclusion.**

The hypothesis “*The High Commitment Human Resource Management practices (a) participatory decision making, (b) training and development, (c) rewards, (d) communication / information sharing, (e) team working and (f) job security have a positive influence on affective commitment among young employees.*”, is partly confirmed by the data. The practices *participatory decision making*, *training and development*, and *teamwork* have a positive influence on the level of affective commitment. Therefore hypothesis (a), (b) and (e) are confirmed by this research. The level of affective commitment among young employees itself is low. Therefore it is recommended to the concerned organizations to make use of these practices in order to increase affective commitment. Since it is not proven that the HC-HRM practice *rewards* influence the level of affective commitment, despite the high valuation by the employees, further research on this topic is recommended by the researcher.

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## **Appendix 1. Questionnaire Dutch**

### Affective Commitment.

1. Ik heb het gevoel dat ik echt bij deze organisatie hoor.
2. Ik voel me emotioneel gehecht aan deze organisatie.
3. Ik voel me als 'een deel van de familie' in deze organisatie.
4. Deze organisatie betekent veel voor mij.
5. Wanneer ik klaar ben met mijn opleiding zou ik graag de rest van mijn loopbaan bij deze organisatie blijven werken.

### Continuance Commitment.

6. Het zou voor mij op dit moment moeilijk zijn om weg te gaan bij deze organisatie, ook al zou ik dat willen.
7. Ik heb het gevoel dat ik te weinig andere opties heb om nu ontslag te overwegen.
8. Als ik ontslag neem wordt het moeilijk om een vergelijkbare baan te vinden.
9. Ik blijf bij deze organisatie werken omdat dit noodzakelijk is, niet omdat ik dit zo graag wil.

### Normative Commitment.

10. Ik vind dat ik het aan mijn huidige werkgever verplicht ben om te blijven
11. Het zou onbehoorlijk zijn om nu ontslag te nemen
12. Ik zal op dit moment geen ontslag nemen, omdat ik de mensen op mijn werk iets verschuldigd ben
13. Ik heb veel te danken aan deze organisatie
14. Ik vind dat ik het aan mijn ouders verplicht ben om hier te blijven werken

### Participatory Decision Making.

15. Ik heb genoeg bevoegdheden om het werk waar ik verantwoordelijk voor ben te vervullen.
16. Ik heb genoeg inbreng in hoe ik mijn werk kan volbrengen
17. Ik word gestimuleerd om deel te nemen aan beslissingen die mijn werk beïnvloeden.
18. Ik heb genoeg vrijheid in de uitvoering van mijn werk.
19. Ik heb genoeg bevoegdheden om beslissingen te nemen die nodig zijn voor een goede klantenservice.
20. Voorgaande stellingen (15 t/m 19) zijn belangrijk voor mij

### Training and Development.

21. Training wordt gezien als een middel om mijn prestaties te verbeteren
22. Ik heb de mogelijkheid om te groeien binnen mijn baan.
23. Deze organisatie heeft mij goed opgeleid binnen mijn baan.
24. Ik heb de kans om mijn vaardigheden te verbeteren in deze organisatie.
25. Voorgaande stellingen ( 21 t/m 24) zijn belangrijk voor mij

### Job Security

26. Ik maak me zorgen om mijn baan eerder te moeten opgeven dan ik zou willen
27. Er is een risico dat ik in de nabije toekomst mijn baan kan verliezen.
28. Ik voel me ongemakkelijk bij het idee dat ik mijn baan in de nabije toekomst kan verliezen
29. Voorgaande stellingen (26 t/m 28) zijn belangrijk voor mij

#### Teamwork.

30. Deze organisatie stimuleert mensen om in teams te werken
31. Werken in teams wordt als zeer belangrijk beschouwd bij deze organisatie.
32. Het werk is zo georganiseerd dat de meeste werknemers in teams werken.
33. Werknemers zijn vaker individueel aan het werk dan als leden van een team.
34. Teamwork bestaat hier alleen in theorie, niet in de praktijk
35. Voorgaande stellingen (30 t/m 34) zijn belangrijk voor mij

#### Rewards.

36. Mijn prestatie beoordelingen van de laatste jaren hebben mij geholpen om mij te ontwikkelen in mijn carrière.
37. Er is een sterk verband tussen hoe goed ik presteer op mijn werk, en de kans op ontvangst van erkenning en waardering.
38. Er is een sterk verband tussen hoe goed ik presteer op mijn werk en de kans op salarisverhoging.
39. Over het algemeen heb ik het gevoel dat de medewerkers die extra inspanning leveren beloond worden.
40. Ik ben tevreden met de hoeveelheid van de erkenning die ik krijg wanneer ik mijn werk goed doe.
41. Als ik mijn werk goed doe, heb ik een aanzienlijke kans om te promoveren.
42. Voorgaande stellingen (36 t/m 41) zijn belangrijk voor mij

#### Communication and Information Sharing.

43. Het beleid en de procedures van de organisatie worden duidelijk gecommuniceerd naar de werknemers.
44. Meestal krijg ik voldoende informatie over veranderingen dat mijn werk beïnvloed.
45. Het management neemt de tijd om uit te leggen aan werknemers wat de redenering is achter belangrijke beslissingen die gemaakt worden.
46. Het management besteedt aandacht aan de meningen en gevoelens van de werknemers.
47. Het management neemt de moeite om op de hoogte te blijven van de behoeften van de werknemers.
48. Voorgaande stellingen (43 t/m 47) zijn belangrijk voor mij

## Appendix 2. Reliability and factor analysis.

Table 1.

Item	Reliability if item deleted	Factor analysis Component 1
Q1. I feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization	0.812	0.894
Q2. I feel "emotionally attached" to this organization	0.853	0.777
Q3. I feel like "part of the family" at my organization	0.816	0.884
Q4. This organisation has a great deal of meaning for me	0.833	0.843
Q5. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	0.885	0.638
Overall	0.870	

Table 2.

Item	Reliability if item deleted	Factor analysis Component 1
Q6. It would be hard for me to leave the organization right now, even if I wanted to.	0.695	0.701
Q7. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization	0.408	0.962
Q8. If I quit know, it would be hard to find a comparable job.	0.440	0.952
Q9. Right now, staying with this organization is a matter of necessity.	0.854	0.043
Overall	0.727	

Table 3.

Item	Reliability if item deleted	Factor analysis	
		Component 1	Component 2
Q10. I feel I'm kind of obliged to my current employer to remain in the organization.	-0.466	0.601	0.651
Q11. It would feel inappropriate to resign now.	-0.464	0.347	0.812
Q12. At this moment I wouldn't resign, because I owe the people at my work something.	0.085	0.620	-0.490
Q13. I owe a lot to this organization.	-0.177	0.784	-0.118
Q14. I feel I'm kind of obliged to my parents to remain in the organization.	0.532	-0.670	0.412
Overall	-0.027		

Table 4.

Item	Reliability if item deleted	Factor analysis
Q15. I have sufficient authority to fulfil my job responsibilities.	0.916	0.662
Q16. I have enough input in deciding how to accomplish my work.	0.856	0.903
Q17. I am encouraged to participate in decisions that affect me.	0.865	0.883
Q18. I have enough freedom over how I do my job.	0.873	0.856
Q19. I have enough authority to make decisions necessary to provide quality customer service.	0.859	0.894
Overall	0.898	

Table 5.

Item	Reliability if item deleted	Factor analysis Component 1
Q21. Training is regarded as a way to improve performance.	0.701	0.633
Q22. I have the opportunity to expand the scope of my job.	0.523	0.859
Q23. I have been well trained by this organisation for my job.	0.712	0.603
Q24. I have the opportunity to improve my skills in this organization.	0.596	0.798
Overall	0.710	

Table 6.

Item	Reliability if item deleted	Factor analysis Component 1
Q26. I am worried about having to leave my job before I would like to	0.766	0.944
Q27. There is a risk that I will have to leave my present job in the year to come	0.921	0.846
Q28. I feel uneasy about losing my job in the near future	0.814	0.916
Overall	0.883	

Table 7.

Item	Reliability if item deleted	Factor analysis Component 1
Q30. This organisation encourages people to work in teams	0.864	0.878
Q31. Working in teams is considered very important in this organization	0.901	0.779
Q32. Management organise work so that most people work in teams	0.852	0.902
Q33. People here work individually rather than as members of teams	0.873	0.855
Q34. Teamwork exists in name only here	0.875	0.839
Overall	0.897	

Table 8.

Item	Reliability if item deleted	Factor analysis Component 1
Q36. My performance evaluations within the past few years have been helpful to me in my professional development.	0.897	0.847
Q37. There is a strong link between how well I perform my job and the likelihood of my receiving recognition and praise.	0.887	0.906
Q38. There is a strong link between how well I perform my job and the likelihood of my receiving a raise in pay/salary.	0.909	0.773
Q39. Generally, I feel this organisation rewards employees who make an extra effort	0.900	0.827
Q40. I am satisfied with the amount of recognition I receive when I do a good job	0.894	0.869
Q41. If I perform my job well, I am likely to be promoted	0.901	0.838
Overall	0.913	

Table 9.

Item	Reliability if item deleted	Factor analysis Component 1
Q43. Organisation policies and procedures are clearly communicated to employees.	0.712	0.511
Q44. Most of the time I receive sufficient notice of changes that affect my work group.	0.666	0.671
Q45. Management takes time to explain to employees the reasoning behind critical decisions that are made.	0.648	0.730
Q46. Management makes a sufficient effort to get the opinions and feelings of people who work here.	0.636	0.747
Q47. Management tends to stay informed of employee needs.	0.641	0.740
Overall	0.711	

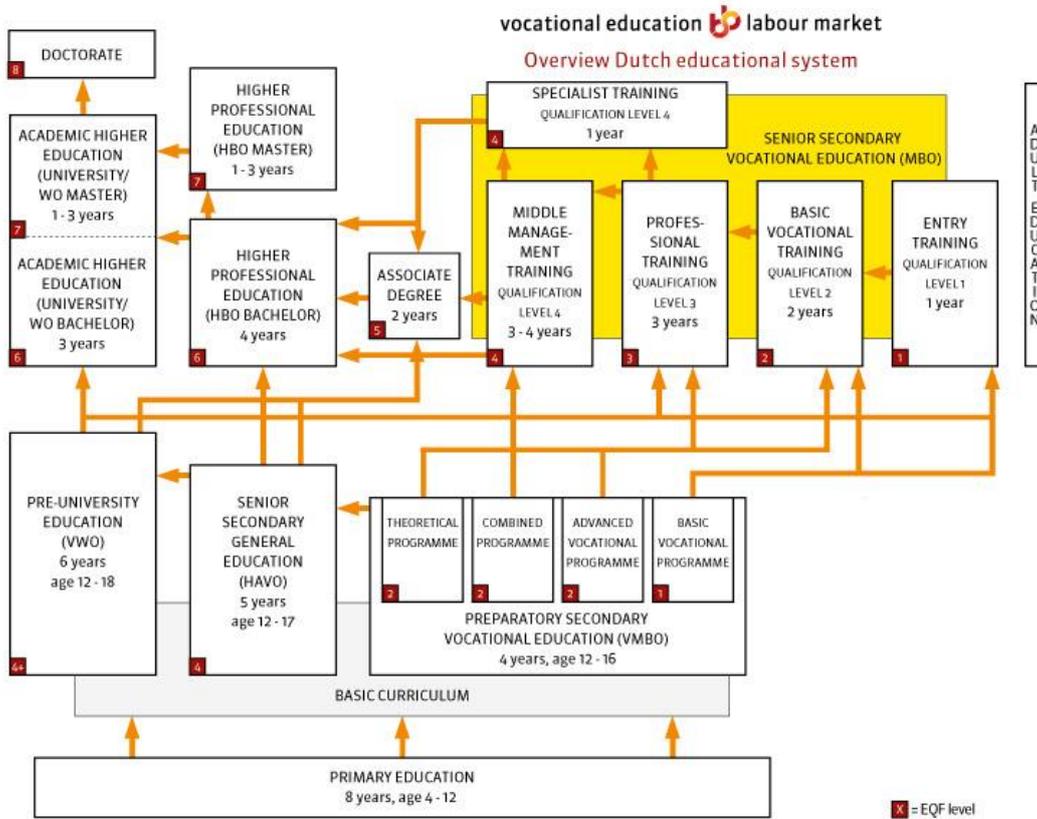
**Appendix 3. Factor analysis HC-HRM practices**

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Q15	.522	-.437				
Q16	.747					
Q 17	.820					
Q 18	.715					
Q 19	.833					
Q 21					.411	
Q 22	.741					
Q 23	.465					.667
Q 24	.673					
Q 26	-.518	.428	.431	.483		
Q 27	-.731					
Q 28	-.471		.477	.529		
Q 30	.683	.482				
Q 31	.582					
Q 32	.711	.405				
Q 33	.640	.532				
Q 34	.620		-.441			
Q 36	.866					
Q 37	.780					
Q 38	.703					
Q 39	.745					
Q 40	.724					
Q 41	.745					
Q 43						
Q 44	.532	-.430				
Q 45	.595					
Q 46	.476				-.459	
Q 47	.496				-.507	

#### Appendix 4. Factor analysis commitment scales

	Component		
	1	2	3
Q1	.848		
Q2	.689		
Q3	.810		
Q4	.702		-.486
Q5	.524	.504	
Q6	.534		
Q7	.814		
Q8	.804		
Q9			.645
Q10		.774	
Q11		.869	
Q12	.562		
Q13	.707		
Q14	-.708		

## Appendix 5. Explanation of the Dutch educational system



Overview Dutch educational system ([www.s-bb.nl](http://www.s-bb.nl))