e-HRM effectiveness in a public sector organization: a multi-stakeholder perspective

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Electronic HRM is increasingly gaining importance within working organizations and many of its adherents assume and express its advantages. Scientific support, however, is scarce and there is a lack of clarity regarding the contribution of e-HRM to HRM effectiveness. This article presents results from a qualitative study conducted at a public sector organization. Line managers and employees were interviewed to examine the linkages between the use of e-HRM applications and perceived effectiveness of HRM. Results of the analyses indicate that the appreciation of e-HRM applications is associated with HRM effectiveness, and reveals differences in the use of e-HRM between line managers and employees. Based on the results we emphasize the importance of a multi-stakeholder perspective in e-HRM research.

Keywords: e-HRM; interviews; IT implementation; stakeholders

Introduction and research focus

This article contributes to the discussion on whether e-HRM supplies HRM effectiveness. A small number of academic studies have investigated this issue. For example, Ruel et al. (2007) show that individual assessment of e-HRM applications influences HRM effectiveness through the perceived quality of the structure of e-tools. Surprisingly, and contradictory to traditional research into implementations of information technologies (IT), the authors did not find significant correlations between usefulness and ease of e-HR applications and HRM effectiveness.

To partly close the knowledge gap, this paper presents the results of a qualitative study aimed at gaining insights in the contribution of e-HRM to HRM effectiveness.

This article first deals with the theoretical background as regards e-HRM studies. Second, we present the research framework. Subsequently, we explain the research methods, followed by the findings of our study. The article ends with a section on conclusions, discussion, and future research directions.

e-HRM intentions in companies

Organisations strive for different goals with the implementation of e-HRM. A typical argument for the adoption of e-HRM technologies is:

Use e-HRM and your organisation can reduce process and administration costs. Fewer HR professionals are needed because e-HRM eliminates the ‘HR middleman’. Furthermore,
e-HRM speeds up transaction processing, reduces information errors, and improves the tracking and control of HR actions. Thus e-HRM improves service delivery (Lengnick-Hall and Moritz 2003, p. 369).

Based on the case-study research in five large international organizations, Ruël et al. (2004) identified four types of goals for organisations making steps towards e-HRM: cost reduction/efficiency gains, client service improvement/facilitating management and employees, improving the strategic orientation of HRM, and allowing integration of HR functions (of different organisational units or entire organisations).

Lepak and Snell (1998) make a distinction in differentiating between: (1) operational HRM, (2) relational HRM, and (3) transformational HRM. The first area, operational HRM, concerns the basic HRM activities in the administrative area, for example salary administration (payroll), and personnel data administration. The second area, relational HRM, concerns more advanced HRM activities and its emphasis lies not on administering, but on HRM tools that support basic business processes such as recruiting and selecting personnel, training, performance management and appraisal, and rewards. The third area, transformational HRM, concerns HRM activities with a strategic character and refers to activities pertaining to organizational change processes, strategic re-orientation, strategic competence management, and strategic knowledge management.

These three areas can also be observed in practice. In some organizations, the HRM emphasis is on administration and registration, others focus on the application of operational HRM instruments, while others are primarily engaged with its strategic role. Within all of these types, choices are to be made in terms of which HRM activities will be offered face-to-face, and which will be offered through web-based applications (e-enabled). Regarding the operational type of HRM, management has to choose between asking employees to continuously update their own personal data by means of an HRM website, or have an administrative force in place to do this. For relational HRM, one has to choose between supporting recruitment and selection through a web-based application or using a paper-based approach (through advertisements, paper-based application forms and letters, etc.). Finally, in terms of transformational HRM, one might create an adaptable and flexible workforce by means of an integrated set of web-based tools that enables the workforce to develop in line with the company’s strategic choices, or to have paper-based materials.

Classifying companies according to e-HRM types does not mean assessing the quality of their e-HRM approach. No type can be judged as good or bad. Rather, it is shown that there is a ‘gap’ between e-HRM in a technical sense (the available functionality), and its use and adoption by line managers and employees.

Implementation and the use of e-HRM tools

Empirical reports have indicated that confidence in the use of Human Resources Information System (HRIS) has increased, although still mainly for administrative purposes and that HRIS projects mainly remain technology-driven events with a focus upon the growing sophistication of IT. Studies within this research domain focus on the qualities of IT necessary for its use by HRM departments (Kavanagh, Gueutal and Tannenbaum 1990; Haines and Petit 1997; Keebler and Rhodes 2002; Fisher and Howel 2004).

For example, in their survey of 152 users of HRIS, Haines and Petit (1997) found a number of individual/task, organizational and system conditions that support successful HRIS. Although the relationship with the system usage was found to be weak, the impact of the conditions upon user satisfaction is strong. This appears to be the case for many of
the system conditions such as training, documentation, presence of on-line applications, ease of use, and perceived usefulness of the system. Another quantitative study in 115 organizations actively using HRIS (Ball 2001) revealed that organizational size is a clear determinant of whether an organization has an HRIS at all and, second, whether it adopts certain modules (e.g., core personnel administration) over others (e.g., training and competence management). Type of HRIS is also shown to be determined by the organizational size, that is to say, smaller companies (≤500 employees) are more inclined to focus upon low cost and low risk HRIS, more flexible software, or software developed in-house (Thaler-Carter 1998; Ball 2001).

More recent studies into the implementation of e-HRM are shifting towards addressing the dynamic nature of the HRIS implementation, and towards the use of concepts such as innovation implementation, learning, change management, and the Technology Acceptance Model (Keebler and Rhodes 2002).

Incorporation of the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw 1989) into e-HRM studies has resulted in the notion that the use of e-HRM by targeted employees is highly determined by the level of usefulness and ease of use of the HR IT (Ruta 2005). While the design of HRIS is considered complete at the end of the traditional development stage, it is not considered fixed. A recent example can be found in a study into the implementation of an HRM employee portal within the Italian subsidiary of Hewlett-Packard (Ruta 2005). The study built upon an approach that used the frameworks of both the IT user acceptance model and the change management model. Specifically, within the framework of the IT user acceptance model, one aims to better understand what intentions one has using the HRM portal, while change management theory aims to understand how intentions to use the HR portal could be influenced. It was shown that the usage of HRIS increased when IT user acceptance principles were integrated with change management principles, and that by analysing the context (at both the industry and company levels), change agents managed to adopt the most appropriate actions to support the HR portal implementation.

**Integration of HR- and IT-sides in e-HRM effectiveness**

In building our theoretical framework, we draw on two theoretical notions: first, the concept of strategic and technical HRM effectiveness (Huselid, Jackson and Schuler 1997), second, the TAM, technology acceptance model (Davis et al. 1989).

Huselid et al. (1997) introduced the concept of the technical and strategic effectiveness of HRM guided by the idea that HRM seeks approval for its activities in ‘socially constructed environments’ (p. 172). For HRM, meeting the stakeholders’ expectations implies gaining legitimacy and acceptance within the working organizations and in the eyes of external entities. Research by Tsui, Pearce, Porter and Tripoli (1997) indicates that expectations of ‘traditional’ HRM activities, or HRM services (Wright, McMahan, Snell and Gerhart 2001), tend to be similar for all firms. These traditional or so-called ‘technical’ HRM activities (Huselid et al. 1997) are shown to be more effective in the eyes of the stakeholders.

In contrast to technical HRM activities, ‘strategic’ HRM activities are considered to be HRM innovations for companies. Huselid et al. (1997) notice that, despite an absence of full agreement on strategic HRM, there is a broadly shared view that it involves the development and implementation of policies aligned with business strategy. They found that strategic effectiveness was significantly associated with firm performance, while technical HRM effectiveness was not.
The research into the implementation of Information Technologies (IT) broadly shows the importance of considering understanding of IT by different groups of stakeholders (Orlikowski and Gash 1994; Ciborra 1999; Walsham 2005). We propose to evaluate the success of e-HRM from the perspectives of different stakeholder groups (e-HRM users).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis et al. (1989) states that users will accept and therefore use a system if it has a significant perceived usefulness and ease of use. People tend to use an application to the extent that they believe it will help them with their job performance (perceived usefulness, or job relevance). Further, even if people believe that a given application is useful, they may believe that the systems are too difficult to work with, and that the performance benefits of usage are outweighed by the efforts required (ease of use). The TAM also indicates that usefulness is more strongly linked to the behavioural intentions of users, and actual system use compared with ease of use. Across the many empirical tests of TAM, perceived usefulness is consistently a strong determinant of the usage intentions of employees (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis 2003). Several other studies indicate that users are willing to work with a certain technology if it proves to have proper technological qualities (content functionality) (Taylor and Todd 1995; Igbaria and Tan 1997; DeLone and McLean 2002).

Building upon TAM, we have developed a framework (see Figure 1) that supports the notion that HRM practices do not have a direct impact upon employees’ behaviours and organizational outcomes. Rather, these practices are first perceptually filtered and interpreted by the employees (Ostroff and Schmitt 1993; Klein and Sorra 1996; Tsui et al. 1997).

**Methodology**

The qualitative study aimed to explore the relationships between the perceived usefulness and ease of use of e-HRM tools and HRM effectiveness as seen by two different social groups: line managers and employees.

The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations in The Netherlands (hereafter called ‘the Ministry’) is one of the ministries of the Dutch central government. In the 1990s there was a growth in the use of IT at the Dutch ministries. Almost all work spaces were equipped with personal computers, access to the Internet was provided, e-mail replaced messages on
paper and memos, and all ministries developed their own Intranet. Intranet became an important medium for communication among all parties; the personnel department especially liked using it to announce news and to provide information about HRM-related issues. At first, Intranet replaced paper folders and manuals for HRM, putting them online.

In 2001–2002, the Ministry introduced the so-called Emplaza system as an e-HRM tool to provide HR personnel, managers, and employees with instruments and information to perform their personnel tasks correctly. Emplaza is divided into three parts: one for an employee, one for a manager, and one for an HR specialist.

Measures for the qualitative study
We chose one particular e-HRM application (e-Career Development) for two reasons. From the interview with the Emplaza project manager it became clear that the Ministry had special interests in promoting this particular application. Moreover, this application was already being actively used by line managers and employees, which allowed us to conduct interviews among both groups of respondents.

Ease of use of e-tools for career development was defined as the amount of efforts needed according to the users of e-career development tools. Four components were addressed during the interviews: (1) friendliness of the interface; (2) clarity of the structure; (3) speed of working with the e-tool; and (4) ease of navigation.

Usefulness, defined as the degree to which users assume that using e-career development tools will improve their career development, included three components that were addressed during the interviews: (1) quality of information provided via e-tools; (2) importance of the e-tools for career development; and (3) match with the usual way of working on career development issues.

Job relevance was defined as the degree to which users assumed that e-career development tools were critical for their career development. Questions in the interview protocol concerned the importance of e-tools for career development, e-support for career development, and control over career development.

Technical effectiveness of career development was defined as perceptions of how well the organization supports and promotes operational career development activities aimed at supporting organizational needs, and was addressed by questions about: (1) achievements in technical career development processes; and (2) helpfulness of technical career development processes.

Strategic effectiveness of career development was defined as perceptions of how well the organization promotes its employees’ career development aimed at supporting organizational needs. An interview protocol was developed consisting of three components: (1) satisfaction with career development results; (2) achievements in career development; and (3) helpfulness of organizational policies to improve career development.

Data collection and analysis
During data collection 21 interviews were conducted: 10 with line managers, and 11 with employees. e-HRM applications within the field of career development included: (1) performance interview; (2) personal development (competence management); (3) 360° feedback; and (4) mobility bank. The respondents were randomly selected based upon their availability and willingness to participate in the research. Our sample comprised five different departments: (1) Document management; (2) Juridical affairs; (3) International collaboration; (4) IT; and (5) Knowledge and information centre.
The interview protocol was based on the research framework and definitions of its dimensions. The interviews aimed to obtain both a consistency and diversity in responses in order to develop a better understanding of the perceptions of e-HRM implementation. The interviewer played an active role rather than being a ‘speaking questionnaire’. Questions were oriented towards encouraging diversity by active intervention, provocative statements, informal information exchange, and encouraging disagreements. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and verified by the respondents. Further, the first two authors independently coded transcripts along the dimensions of the research framework. Specifically, the authors compared expressions of line managers and employees and evaluated whether the data revealed new insights into the link between e-HRM implementation and HRM effectiveness.

**Findings**

**Goals of Emplaza**

Our analysis showed that during the two-year development process of Emplaza, the goals were changed. The Emplaza project documents, dated October 2002, reveal that during its first phase the HRM Department Store’s aim (HDS) comprised the realisation of three functional clusters. These were considered a coherent set of information and web applications that focused on: (1) increasing the efficiency and quality of administrative processes; (2) generating and spreading of management information; and (3) developing the employee and the organization. The overall goal was formulated as increasing the efficiency and improvement of the quality of HRM at the Ministry.

In January 2003 Emplaza took on a new direction, with the primary aim to improve employee self-service. The latter was intended to achieve an independent development of employees, and to support managers in HRM tasks.

November 2003 brought yet another orientation for Emplaza. The updated goals were documented as: (1) increase efficiency in the administration (setting of a task and general efficiency); (2) decrease vulnerability and mistake percentages in administrative processes; (3) work with employee and manager self-service concepts; (4) effective support of the introduction of the new HRM policy; and (5) support the changes in the organization, including the decrease of the support by decentralized Personnel and Organization Department staff.

Although the goals changed, the overall tendency was similar throughout the project and was made up of cost reduction and making the administrative processes more efficient.

Users of Emplaza include HRM professionals, managers and employees; by using the system they are enabled to perform the following activities: search and read information about internal and national HRM policies; store personal information for HRM purposes (digital personnel file); process transactions in the area of HRM (filling in forms, address changes, course enrolment); and produce HRM products (letters, reports).

**Results of the interviews**

From the interviews it was concluded that managers intensively used on-line appraisal talks, 360° feedback, and competence management. Compared to those tools, the mobility bank was used far less. Employees, on the other hand, mostly used the mobility bank and on-line appraisal talks. Using the language of the IT research it meant that line managers and employees accepted Emplaza although the extent of the acceptance varied.
Managers about the use of e-career development

When speaking of the digital Appraisal Talk tool, managers expressed their full satisfaction with its information quality. The main reported reason was that this information was filled in by employees and managers while directly communicating, and therefore reflected the latest news.

If we agree upon something that could be improved in an employee’s performance, then we put it in the ‘AP’ and we formulate clear goals, and then within half a year we will evaluate whether the person has improved or not. This could be adventurous because if a person’s performance has improved, he or she can create more career opportunities. This is an example of an ideal consequence of a performance evaluation talk, but this will not be the reality in all circumstances (Man-1).

Moreover, managers thought that putting Appraisal Talks on-line contributed to trusting the data: once filled out, it could not be changed without electronic permission.

According to the managers, information concerning sick leave administration was not always correct. For example, Emplaza seemed to fail to administer part-time sickness. If an employee worked part-time on the basis of his/her health conditions, this possibility could not be registered in the system as it accepted either sick or fully recovered options, but not part-time.

How important were e-tools for career development? First of all, managers expressed the importance of the administrative side of e-tools. In this sense on-line Appraisal Talk fully met their requirements: they could retrieve information from previous Appraisal Talks, compare agreements, and observe the progress reported:

I like it this way, if we purely speak of the performance evaluation report, then I’m glad that this is digital. You can look up the agreements made during the former evaluation, click on a rule and then the text of the former evaluation report is opened. And in the new form I react on the points that are in the former report. So I write: ‘point 1, that is okay’, or ‘Yes, you executed it perfectly’, or ‘He is still working on it. (Man-6)

Another issue raised by the managers was that the HRM department did not use the data coming from Appraisal Talks. Many managers perceived this as a lost opportunity as in their view, electronically stored data can provide useful overviews for the HRM departments. In this sense it is important to realize that it is not the presence of wonderful e-tools that makes career development move forward but the actions and real work that is performed as a result of using these tools:

It would be wise if the HRM department would come to talk and explain about the meaning of all this. You are offered different separate parts over the years, it is not that you just integrate it easily in your work . . . Years ago more mobility was needed already, all kinds of projects, but they did not lead to observable results, honestly speaking. Complete files were compiled, but then nothing happened. (Man-8)

Managers acknowledged that since its installation, over time, Emplaza had improved and has become easier to use. Appraisal Talk in their view is simple and works well. The same applies to the Mobility Bank. However, Competence Management was perceived as too complicated, with many screens and too many button clicks needed. For example, on-line sick leave administration requires filling in a huge number of fields, and in the end there were still mistakes in the administration result. The speed of working with Emplaza is perceived as good enough and definitely speeds up the administration processes, although managers find that the speed can be improved if they skip some extra clicks.

It is not extremely slow. I find it fast in the sense that the screens follow one another quickly. It is still a lot of clicking, but okay, that is I think, part of the digital era. But usually you have
Managers found navigation through Emplaza irritating. They felt that they did not have a clue about the best and quickest way to search for information and retrieve the necessary data. Working with Emplaza required lots of effort to get used to changes in the traditional way of working. Although they found that the applications were not too difficult to use and in principle useful, they still thought that effort should have been invested to improve its use.

**Employees on the use of e-career development**

As employees mostly used two of the career developments on-line tools in Emplaza (e-mobility bank and e-appraisal talk), those were what they mainly talked about. The majority of respondents were happy about the quality of information in the mobility bank. They stressed that the mobility bank had lots of useful information and was clearly presented.

However, some small remarks made by various interviewees added extra nuances to the total picture. For some employees it was important to have a contact telephone number for further information about vacancies, meaning that they still preferred to talk and ask extra questions:

> I find the information of a satisfactory quality level... It always provides a telephone number and that is a useful reference. (Empl-5)

For some respondents the mobility bank functioned as a wonderful tool for searching for a job, yet was perceived as being additional to the Internet. Many noticed that they searched for jobs on the Internet, and supplemented it with looking at the mobility bank.

> How important were e-tools for the employees in their career development? The first impression was that Emplaza speeded up the process of searching and applying for a new job. In the employees’ view, the process was much faster than searching through newspapers. A second benefit was that the employees could retrieve information from Emplaza at any time. Some still preferred to print all the documents out to have them in ‘physical form’:

> The tendency to achieve things physically will persist to a certain extent. I keep on printing things because it is easier to make additional notes. If I have to go to a meeting, I find it more comfortable to have a paper version. How would you participate in a meeting with a laptop to look things up on continuously? (Empl-4)

In the employees’ view, the career development policy at the Ministry needed improvement and clarification. Possibly, this outcome is one of the basic reasons for the reluctance to use e-tools for career development. Respondents referred to many barriers at the Ministry to their career development, such as lack of support from immediate managers and difficulties in changing current job positions due to many rules.

> I want to make my career within the public service, but to be honest I don’t know how exactly to realize that.... Career development planning is in its infancy within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Some of my colleagues are now leaving because it is all stuck, and you get few opportunities. (Empl-7)

Another issue raised was the privacy of information. If an employee declares sick leave, this information becomes available to the whole department. And sometimes if a person is off from work due to illness for a long time, he/she prefers that colleagues do not see this information on screen:
What I do not like is that if employees are sick for 20 days that this just stays in the cockpit. It creates a negative image for colleagues or the department if employees can see over and over again that a colleague is sick for a long time. (Empl-3)

The interviewees acknowledged that they needed a short course to learn how to work with Emplaza. Although the project team assumed that employees engaged in self-learning of the system would not encounter many difficulties, in the employees’ view, experimenting with the system involved a lot of effort before they could get a sense of understanding the main functions of Emplaza.

The career development applications in Emplaza were not perceived as a user-friendly design by the employees:

I find Emplaza not user friendly and therefore not easy to use. I tried to work with it many times and I practised, but only to establish a form and to observe how to do this . . . that is not a quick fix. In the end, you will get there, by a lot of reading and asking colleagues, but regarding user friendliness a lot can be improved. (Empl-2)

**Managers on Emplaza and HRM effectiveness**

The strategic effectiveness of career development was perceived by the managers as being independent of the use of Emplaza. There were strong opinions such as:

That’s a bit difficult, because if you formulate results in terms of can I fill in a form quicker? Yes. But if you formulate results in terms of will I get a more interesting job more quickly? No. (Man-9)

On-line Appraisal Talk seemed to be valued highest by the managers and was considered a helpful tool for advancing career development. Managers noticed that they could make overviews based on the results of appraisal talks with all employees from their departments. The other tools did not make much sense.

E-Career development applications were seen as facilitators for quicker communication, finding documents, or making overviews. However, they were not perceived as supporting career development. The HRM policy at the Ministry was such that everybody was responsible for his/her own professional development. Obviously, Emplaza could only give technical support for some actions.

The technical effectiveness of career development was seen as contributing mainly to the ease of different aspects of personnel administration. For example, in the managers’ view it was easier to have the reports from the appraisal talks on-line and available for the different people involved:

During the performance evaluation talks I have them ready in my cockpit, the employee at stake has them in his cockpit, and my supervisor can check them in his cockpit, the HRM advisor has them in his cockpit, so yes, it is handy, as everybody has the same form digitally at once. (Man-4)

**Employees on Emplaza and HRM effectiveness**

Regarding the contribution of Emplaza to the strategic effectiveness of career development, some employees felt that on-line appraisal talks did not make much sense in their career development whereas the mobility bank did.

The mobility bank was seen as directly connected with career development as it helped in the search for new jobs. However, many interviewees saw it only as an instrument that could not do much without their own initiative. Active self-promotion and looking actively for new developments in their careers were considered to be the primary driving forces in career development, with or without Emplaza:
I am always quite active, and in this way you get involved in all kinds of things, but if this is not immediately connected to the tools that came to me or tools that were offered by the organization, then I would be stuck to the place where I am. If you express what you’re doing and where you’re heading for, etc., then you make bigger steps than if you don’t express that. In the way it is going now, I am satisfied with my career development. (Empl-7)

Employees also noticed that the career development policy within the Ministry played a basic role. In their view, the Ministry did not force the promotion of career development but left it completely in the hands of employees. Some felt that various departments in the Ministry were busy with reorganization and cutting FTEs (Full Time Equivalents), which did not allow them to deal with such questions as career development (as administrative HRM became more important).

The technical effectiveness of career development was not immediately linked with the use of Emplaza by the employees. Some felt that Emplaza slowed down the speed of administration of personnel data:

By coincidence I was looking for information about some of my employees recently and then I had to search for so long, to be honest. Therefore, concerning the administrative side it is not that terrific. You really have to concentrate on it and search very well. (Empl-1)

At the same time they greatly appreciated the fact that they could access a lot of information about possibilities for career development in Emplaza, and that they could search in their own personnel documents faster:

I think it is handy for people to have direct/immediate access. In the earlier days it was all in a file somewhere. I think that it is a smaller step now for people to quickly look on-line and then you’re busy with it automatically instead of when it was in some sort of archive. (Empl-10)

Discussion

e-HRM research has made considerable effort insisting that by making HR digital, HRM systems will become strategically oriented by freeing HRM professionals from administrative work and devolving HRM tasks to line managers and employees. Many studies show that e-HRM applications are introduced with the hope and promise to increase HRM administrative efficiency (Lepak and Snell 1998; Lengnick-Hall and Moritz 2003; Ruël et al. 2004; Marler, Liang and Dulebohn 2006). Much has been done to show conditions of the e-HRM acceptance by the targeted users (Ball 2001; Ruta 2005). However, less attention has been paid to finding evidence for the contribution of the use of e-HRM to HRM effectiveness.

Our findings, revealed by the interviews with managers and employees, showed that Emplaza was perceived differently by these different groups of users. Unfortunately, those differences were not fully taken into account in the content design of Emplaza. Table 1 portrays these differences.

The differences revealed call for a multi-stakeholder approach in e-HRM studies. Line managers and employees do have different, sometimes conflicting viewpoints that result in their different perceptions of usefulness and value of e-HRM.

Conclusions and future research

Effectiveness of HRM was clearly shown to have different meanings for different stakeholder that corresponds with suggestions of other recent studies (Colakoglu, Lepak and Hong 2006; Lepak, Liao, Chang and Harden 2006). This highlights at least two issues. First, if HRM professionals delegate their administrative tasks via e-HRM applications to
Table 1. Differences in Emplaza appreciation by employees and line managers.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews topics</th>
<th>Main findings</th>
<th>Research observations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals of Emplaza</strong></td>
<td><strong>Documented in 2003</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research observations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announced in 2002</td>
<td>- Increasing efficiency in HR administration</td>
<td>Changes in goal setting, the overall tendency was made up of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increasing the efficiency and quality of HR administration</td>
<td>- Decreasing vulnerability in administration</td>
<td>- Cost reduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Generating and spreading of management information</td>
<td>- Support for introduction of new HR policies</td>
<td>- Efficiency of HR administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Developing employees</td>
<td>- Support changes in the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use of Emplaza</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managers</strong></td>
<td>Emplaza was perceived differently by two stakeholders groups, although it was not reflected in its design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Different quality of information in different applications, e.g. sick leave administration contained mistakes</td>
<td><strong>Employees</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- The most useful was on-line Appraisal Talks, although its content needed improvements</td>
<td>- Mobility Bank was perceived as an extra tool to the Internet</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Navigation was difficult</td>
<td>- e-tools were not perceived as very useful as the general policies at the Ministry did not support career development</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived HRM effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>- Only Mobility Bank was associated with career development</td>
<td>E-tools were not considered as supporting career development</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Independent on the use of Emplaza</td>
<td>- Appreciation of faster search for documents</td>
<td>The Career Development Policies played the basic role, and e-tools could not advance policy making</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Appraisal Talks were perceived as the most helpful in advancing Career Development</td>
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<td>- E-tools were perceived as facilitators of quicker communication, finding documents, or making overviews</td>
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<td>- The amount of administration has increased</td>
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the line managers and employees, then we should probably not talk about HRM efficiency as the main goal of e-HRM. Rather we suggest considering the main role of e-HRM in its contribution to the perceived effectiveness of HRM by different stakeholders. Such a switch in the traditional belief in e-HRM creates an opportunity to investigate interests of different groups of e-HRM users in HRM, and make practical improvements. Our key point is that relying exclusively on efficiency measures will camouflage other important measures of the e-HRM contribution to the HRM effectiveness.

Second, for practitioners there is a guideline: they should focus primarily on the quality of the e-HRM application (the content and design), instead of on the ease of use and job relevance, to make e-HRM contribute to HRM effectiveness. In other words, e-HRM is more than just another Information Technology in organizations. Targeted groups of users may well accept the e-HRM technology and operate with it based on its ease of use and some relevance. However, such an acceptance doesn’t necessarily gear HRM towards its effectiveness. Our second key issue is that technological and HRM successes of e-HRM applications are not equal in the complex organizational life. We encourage more research to integrate findings of IT and HRM studies.

Our present study is limited. First, all data have been collected within one professional sector in one country. Further research is needed to investigate the extent to which our findings generalize to other occupational settings and/or to other countries. Second, all data have been collected at one point of time, that is, the study is cross-sectional. Nevertheless, we think that our results are noteworthy and provide challenges for future research and cross-validation in different settings.

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